

# YOU, TOO!

Prior to the Council no layman had been canonized for over 500 years. An invisible wall seemed to have risen between clergy and laity. The Pope saw that something had to be done.



by John M. Haffert

Cover picture shows the author receiving the blessing of Pope John Paul II on April 24, 1994, just after His Holiness beatified three lay persons whose stories appear in these pages.

### About the Author

The apostolate from which this book developed resulted from a vision to a Carmelite Brother in 1933. It is described in one of the author's earliest books: *The Brother and I*. Twenty other books followed.

From 1940 he was director of the Scapular Apostolate in New York City and editor of *The Scapular* magazine which had 163,000 subscribers by 1948. In that same year he wrote *Russia Will Be Converted*, his first major book on the message of Fatima.

In 1949-50 he founded the Ave Maria Institute and the magazine *SOUL*, promoting the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima. At the time of his retirement 38 years later the magazine had 243,000 subscribers and the Blue Army had become established in over 100 countries with over 25 million members.

### Recent Books

From 1988 until 1993 he completed books on which he had long been working: *TO PREVENT THIS* and *HER GLORIOUS TITLE*. Both speak of a possible world chastisement which he believes Our Lady of Fatima will prevent if Her requests are heard.

At the request of Bishop John Ito, of Akita, Japan, during this same period he translated the principal source book on the apparitions of Our Lady of Akita and wrote a small book on the apparitions, *THE MEANING OF AKITA*, of which almost 200,000 copies were in print within just two years.

His major book on Fatima, *HER OWN WORDS TO THE NUCLEAR AGE*, began through an interview with Sister Lucia, visionary of Fatima. The future may judge it to be the major basic work on Fatima. He also wrote *MEET THE WITNESSES*, an original work on the

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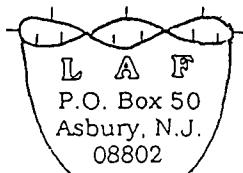
# YOU, TOO!

## GO INTO MY VINEYARD

*"The call of the Lord Jesus 'You, too, go into My vineyard" never fails to resound in the course of history: It is addressed to every person who comes into this world."*

Pope John Paul II *Christifideles Laici, par. 2*

*by*  
*John M. Haffert*





The symbol of LAF (Lay Apostolate Foundation) is derived from the miraculous light which constantly accompanied Blessed Anne Marie Taigi and in which she saw events taking place in the world, many of which were made known each day to the Pope and some of which called Anne Marie to acts of reparation or special acts of charity. God had chosen Anne Marie as a model of holiness in the world. This "miraculous television" was a gift never known to have been given to any other saint. For further explanation see page 212.

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## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

The original title of this book was to be **SHARERS**, based on the description of the lay apostolate given in paragraph 31 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: "**Sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ.**"

The word *sharers*, as used by the Council, seemed an especially apt description of my own more than fifty years as a lay apostle. It was only because of wonderful Bishops and priests who had anticipated this view given by the Council that my apostolate was made possible.

I have written this book, drawn largely from personal experience, with the prayer that others of the "faithful laity" called to serve the Church in some special way will be as fortunate as I in finding a "sharer" like Fr. Gabriel Pausback, O. Carm. who was my "sharer" in the Scapular Apostolate, and Msgr. Harold Colgan, "sharer" in the Blue Army; and that they will have trusting superiors like Bishop Eustace, Bishop Ahr, Bishop Hastrich and Bishop Venancio, following the lights of the Holy Spirit shining from the Second Vatican Council concerning missions of the laity in the Church.

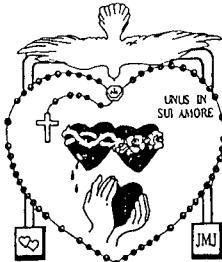
My debt to them has already been partially acknowledged in the book *Dear Bishop...* but for this book in particular I must express special thanks to them, and to some in particular.

Even in retirement Bishop Jerome Hastrich was always on the go as Founder-President of the *Queen of the America's Guild* and U.S. National President of the *World Apostolate of Fatima (the Blue Army)*. It is, therefore, especially appreciated that his Excellency took the time to study the manuscript of this book and to write several pages of helpful suggestions. Archbishop George H. Pearce, S.M., not only read the entire manuscript but also sent several pages of detailed, very helpful suggestions.

Other individuals who read the manuscript and made valuable criticisms are John Downs, Founder of *Apostolatus Uniti*; Al Williams, for years custodian of the National Pilgrim Virgin, and his wife Betty (they are wonderful examples of married apostles!); Bob Ziener, Founder-President of *Rosaries for Peace* and Public Relations advisor to several major apostolates; Daniel Sullivan, Founder of *Knights of Fatima* and himself author of a book on the lay apostolate.

Final and special thanks are due to Dr. Rosalie Turton, founder of the 101 Foundation. Her help was enhanced by the example of her own generous response to the teachings of the Council on the role of the laity in today's Church. Dr. Turton gathered and contributed biographies of lay candidates for sainthood and reviewed the manuscript over and over during its development, a work of almost five years. A word of thanks, too, to Father Joseph Penna who, far beyond the duties of diocesan censor, offered patient and invaluable counsel.

We believe, with Martha Robin (who lived 30 years solely in the Eucharist): "*The Church will be renewed by an apostolate of the laity.*"



John M. Haffert  
Revised Edition  
July 16, 1996

*Imprimatur:* This book has been examined by a duly appointed ecclesiastical censor and nothing therein has been found contrary to faith or morals.

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## **Chapter One**

Little Rose Marie Ferron

### **THE YELLOW ROSE**

**I**n the morning John and Janice received Communion together. That afternoon Janice was dead. A car in the opposite lane had leaped the center barrier.

Having survived almost miraculously with only minor injuries, John continued to speak of Janice even a year later as though she were still alive. Childless, they had been all things to each other. Their oneness had deepened through a lively faith which had carried them through great trials together.

#### **Communion of Saints**

John said he felt a communion with Janice and with "Mary Rose."

"Janice always spoke to Mary Rose Ferron," John told me. "When she asked Mary Rose for a favor it was not only granted but soon afterwards Janice received a yellow rose. That was the special sign that the prayer was answered. Now I receive yellow roses."

I expressed surprise that a comparatively unknown lay person such as Mary Rose could be the object of such confidence and devotion when she is not a recognized saint.

"Oh, there are many who pray to Mary Rose," John assured me. "And many receive yellow roses."

I wondered if her cause for beatification had begun.

"No, the same of 'Little Rose,' as she has become known, spread mostly from one person telling another because of answers to prayers. Many speak of a fragrance of roses when she is invoked, and mysteriously receiving yellow roses after praying to her."

At the age of 80 I had never been given a yellow rose. It was not to put Little Rose Ferron to the test but because I felt she was a neglected lay saint that I asked her for help in making the role of lay apostles better understood.

*The next day I was handed a yellow rose.*

### **Why?**

At my request John sent me several pamphlets and books on Little Rose which had belonged to Janice. To my surprise, *many* books and pamphlets had been published about her. For more than a quarter of a century there had even been a magazine published to make known her saintly life and to report many favors received through her intercession.

*Yet the local bishop had never undertaken a canonical process of investigation.*

### **Why?**

Not only was she not a *saint* in the sense of Church recognition, but the Church did not seem interested.

Born in Quebec in 1902, she was three when her family moved to Fall River, Mass. At that early age (as in the case of St. Therese, the Little Flower) it is recalled that she showed extraordinary holiness and grace, wishing to offer herself to God. In later years the wounds of Our Lord appeared on her body... the flagellation, the crown of thorns, tears of blood... and on Fridays her face was transformed into the appearance of the Holy Face.

In 1925 the family moved to Woonsocket, R.I. where, four years later, Rose was heard by five witnesses to ask Our Lord if she would suffer much longer. They saw her count seven on her fingers as Our Lord asked her to suffer for souls another seven years. She died seven years later at the age of 33.

### 3.

Only three years after her death, in 1939, a biography of Little Rose (by Rev. O. A. Boyer, S.T.L., who had been her confessor) was published with the imprimatur of the Bishop of Ogdensburg. Another imprimatur was granted by a succeeding bishop to the fourth edition of this book in 1945. A novena to obtain favors from Little Rose was also approved, and tens of thousands of copies distributed.

The Little Rose Magazine, published since 1965, reports numerous favors obtained through this little victim soul. The editor, Eugene N. Syznkowski, says that many of the favors seem most certainly to be miracles. Mildred Coyne was cured of tuberculosis on Oct. 17, 1949 immediately after a young Redemptorist priest blessed her with a relic of Little Rose. Immediately afterwards X-Ray revealed that the diseased area had cleared and the cavity closed.

In a book of excerpts from the Little Rose Magazine (*Virtues and Glories*) many such wonders are recorded in detail.

So WHY, during *more than fifty years, was not a single canonical step taken towards having her considered a saint?*

#### **Follow-Through Needed**

The past thousand years of experience in the Church would suggest that after persons like the editor of the Little Rose Magazine are gone, she will be gradually forgotten. She will be another very holy lay person who inspired many while she was alive, was close to many during the time she was remembered in the half century after her death, but would ultimately be forgotten.

It was at first to answer the question of why and to implement the *Lay Apostolate Foundation* (See page 211) that this book was begun just after the second Vatican Council.

The one adult lay person who had been canonized in the five hundred years before the Council was St. Benedict Joseph Labre whose canonization seemed mandated by Heaven. When he died the bells of Rome mysteriously rang and children ran in the streets chanting "the Saint is dead! the Saint is dead!" Even before the opening of the cause 131 miracles had been certified. Shortly we will tell his story.

But must God ring church bells and have children cry out in the streets to have lay sanctity recognized?

Our special curiosity began with the case of Estelle Fagquette.

She was a pious servant girl who had fifteen apparitions of Our Lady. The room of the apparitions was made into a chapel-shrine, with pilgrimages approved by the Diocese and even led by the Bishop. A Dominican convent was erected next to the chapel. But it was over a hundred years (1983) before the event was officially declared to be supernatural. And even to this day Estelle Fagquette is virtually ignored.

This compelled our attention for two reasons:

1) The messages given to Estelle were important (they became the basis of a book which I wrote in 1995: *Her Glorious Title*, published by the 101 Foundation);

2) *Estelle was told specifically by Our Lady that she was to be a lay apostle.*

### **Even Before The Miracle**

The very first apparition of Our Lady to Estelle took place at the moment the poor servant was dying of an incurable disease. Our Lady promised that she would be cured to make known Her message. And Estelle's first question (even before the miracle) was:

*"What Order shall I join?"*

It was natural in those days (as we shall see later on in such cases as those of Louis and Zelie Martin) for anyone who felt called to total commitment to God's service to think only of the priesthood or of a religious community.

But Our Lady told her she was to remain in the world: *"As you are you will promote my glory."*

As in the case of Sister Faustina, after whose beatification the devotion of the Mercy of God swept through the Church, it seems important that Estelle be recognized so that her message will become more widely known and accepted. But the cause of this holy woman, *even though her lay vocation was confirmed by a great miracle solemnly recognized by the Church*, has not even begun.

Is it not natural to wonder why?

If, as we must suppose, the majority of saints in Heaven are from the ranks of the laity, why have we

5.

never had a statue of a lay person in our churches, or a lay person (other than a martyr) in the litany of saints?

### **A More Difficult Question**

We suggest two answers: one natural and one supernatural.

The first is that *no organization has existed in the Church for the promotion of lay causes.*

The second is that *it was not yet the time* for the assertion of the "priesthood of the laity" as defined in the second half of the 20th century by the Second Vatican Council.

That definition is not only the most revolutionary action of the Council. *It is a revolution which is about to change the Church of the 21st century.*

To facilitate that revolution there is a more difficult question we will try to answer in the coming pages which too few are willing to face:

Why is there often a sort of wall between laity and clergy? Where such a wall exists, what can be done to pull it down? And as a part of this question, why are clergy so often closed to events like Fatima and Akita despite recognition by the Church, leaving the laity often isolated in following in such matters?

A greater tragedy than the crisis of faith is that the Mother of the Church weeps over the crisis, and no one asks why. A greater tragedy than growing disbelief is that She performed a miracle at a predicted time and place so that all may believe, and the miracle goes unnoticed.

A "revolution" in lay-clergy relations seems certain to follow in the 21st century as a result of the declarations of the Second Vatican Council and the signs and needs of these apocalyptic times.

## Chapter Two

### NEW LAY SAINTS

**O**n April 24, 1994, Pope John Paul II beatified three lay persons: A young man from Zaire and two Italian mothers. It was the *year of the family* and in his introduction the Pope said:

"Today is in a most singular way a feast for the family and for the laity in that *the seeds of holiness have flourished in family homes*. We all must rejoice and show our gratitude to the Triune God Who never ceases to work in the members of His Church. We now prepare ourselves to receive the witness and message of a lay man and two mothers of families who have intensely lived the Christian vocation in an exemplary manner."

Shortly we will give this witness. But for the moment we wish to remark only that since the Council the Church seems anxious to make up for lost time by accelerating beatification and canonization of lay saints. Indeed the current word in Rome is that lay causes are being "put at the top of the pile." The revolution inaugurated by The Council's document on the laity has begun.

The second Vatican Council had gone so far as to declare that lay persons are not only called to great holiness but to such great and heroic service for God and for the salvation of souls that *the future of the People of God depends upon their response*.

The absence of lay persons from the litany of the saints is not a denial of sanctity in the laity. Even one saint like Benedict Joseph Labre proves that. As we said before there is a perfectly natural reason for the absence of lay causes: there had been no corporate, continuing body (like a religious order) to undertake and to promote them.

But the second Vatican Council has both sounded the alarm against such misconceptions and issued a



On April 24th, 1994, Pope John Paul II beatified Isidore Bakanja who became a convert in his teens. He was the only Christian in his region which, after his death at the age of 24, became 70% Catholic. Conversions began especially after Isidore's death. He submitted to beatings rather than remove his Scapular which he called "the habit of Mary". The Pope called him a model for the laity.

clarion call. Its message to the laity, as we have said above, was *the real innovation of the Council*.

Indeed we might go so far as to say that probably the most original message of the Council is the call to the laity reiterated twenty years later in a special synod and then by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Christi Fideles Laici* in which His Holiness seemed to cry out: "You lay persons! You, too, go into the vineyard!".

The Council has declared to the laity today what Our Lady said to Estelle Fagquette: "*As you are, you can promote my glory.*" As you are, *in the lay state*, you can fill a great mission.

The Council has vigorously addressed the false impression, perhaps due to some extent to the almost total omission of lay persons from the litany of the saints, *that lay persons do not have holy vocations, that they are not called to great holiness*, that their sole vocation is to raise families and to be saved, and the added false impression that marital love itself is not altogether holy.

The Council said: "Modern conditions demand that the lay apostolate *be thoroughly broadened and intensified*"

If we ask why there is to be a "revolution" now, that is the answer: "Modern conditions demand..."

In ages past active involvement of the laity in education, evangelization, apostleship, did not seem so necessary. But now, as the Council has stated, *modern conditions* demand it.

On Jan. 31, 1996, the Pope said that the future of the Church depends on the laity: "Lay people today have need of a deep spiritual life required by *the nature of the tasks they have to carry out... the building of God's kingdom.*" (Osservatore Romano, Eng. Ed., March 11, 1996, pg. 4)

We have mentioned St. Benedict Joseph Labre, the "great exception" to five hundred years of no lay canonizations, and we will shortly tell his story. But first let us look at the suggested *supernatural reason* why the canonization of many lay persons may have been deferred until this actual moment in history, this 21st century.

## Chapter Three

### A NEW MESSAGE

The most novel of all the teachings of the second Vatican Council is the call to the laity for greater involvement in the life of the Church. It was never so vigorously addressed in any previous Council in history. And it is urgent.

*There is a whole world to be evangelized.* Millions outside the Church do not know Christ. Millions within the Church no longer frequent the Sacraments (especially the Sacrament of reconciliation). God's Chastisement hangs over a sinful world if things go on as they are.

The Holy Spirit, speaking in the second Vatican Council before the worst evils of this age became manifest, provided an answer. As we said in the last chapter, the Church seems anxious to make up for lost time and to raise many different examples of holiness in the lay state to the glory of sainthood. One obvious reason for the lack of canonization of laity has been the lack of any continuing organization to promote lay causes. But there may be a deeper reason.

#### Permitted by God

This has been permitted by God. God could have done for many lay persons in history what He did in the case of St. Benedict Joseph Labré. God could have caused the bells of the churches to ring and little children to sing the praises of any layperson who died and then, after getting people's attention, could have showered miracles on those who invoked his name.

This is now happening with the suddenness of an explosion.

But that God did this in the case of St. Benedict Joseph Labré was already proof enough: "*The world can be as sanctifying as the cloister.*" (This will become very evident when we tell the rest of his story.)

If God has permitted until now that all the persons canonized and pictured in paintings and statues in our churches were priests and religious, could it not be because until now He relied primarily on priests and religious for His work in the Church? Now many seminaries are almost empty. Many convents have closed "because of lack of vocations."

Is there REALLY a lack of vocations? Has God stopped calling His workers into the vineyard? Or is there a lack of holiness in the world and is God now issuing an additional call?

### **Three Grim Facts**

Does it seem extreme to say that until the second Vatican Council God willed that no lay persons be canonized, with a single exception (and that one virtually unknown), in more than five hundred years? Was the call to serve God, during all those centuries, only to seminaries and convents?

We cannot say God willed this, but there are three grim facts, all three of which were *permitted* by God right up to the time of the Council:

- 1) The *only models of holiness* represented by statues in shrines and churches were of priests and nuns;
- 2) Marital relations, although necessary for procreation and therefore good, were not seen as *holy*;
- 3) It was generally accepted that *total commitment to God meant leaving the world* for seminaries or convents.

Were these three realities the result of ignorance, or could they at the same time have been permitted by God for a good reason? Whatever the answer there is now a NEW fact: A Council of all the Bishops of the world, convened by the Pope under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has affirmed *the priesthood of the laity*. It has opened a whole new phase, with active and multi-level involvement of the laity in the life of the Church.

"*You, too, go into My vineyard*" (Mt. 20:3-4) is a call addressed now to *the laity of the world*. "It is addressed," said Pope John Paul II, "to every person who comes into this world" (*Christifideles Laici*, par. 2). And even before the Pope said this (which he did after a synod of Bishops on *Vocation and Mission in the Church and in the World*,

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*Twenty Years after the Second Vatican Council*, the Church had proclaimed it in a most solemn manner.

If one were to analyze the second Vatican Council and ask what it said to the world that no other Council had said before, the answer would be: *A call to the laity to share in the active life of the Church, even including evangelization.*

### **Four Reasons**

We might suggest four reasons why the Church has waited until now to make this call so loudly and so clearly:

1) Prior to the reformation and the so-called age of science, the Church itself was different;

2) The lay faithful were mostly ignorant, but now they are mostly educated;

3) We are at the hinge of history. A very radical division has taken place in the history of the Church and of the world: in the Church mainly because of the sexual revolution (with controversy and division over *Humanae Vitae*) and the Council; in the world because of the atomic bomb. Ultimately it will be seen that the miracle of Fatima is as great a dividing line in New Testament history as was the parting of the Red Sea in the Old Testament.

4) With the third millennium we are entering an entirely new era, an era of the Holy Spirit.\*

### **Impelled by the Holy Spirit**

Having lived during most of the twentieth century, at the hinge of history, I vividly remember when Pope John XXIII convoked the Council. I remember that it was at St. Paul's, oddly enough, rather than at the Vatican. He unexpectedly told the Cardinals with him that he had decided to convoke a Council, that he felt the *Holy Spirit impelling him to do so*, adding that he would make a pilgrimage to Loreto (which is the Shrine of the Holy House) to ask the help of Our Lady (see picture, pg. 138).

Can you imagine what it is like to have over 2,000 Bishops drawn from their dioceses all over the world, housed in Rome, and meeting day after day to make solemn pronouncements for the Church from then until the end of time?

Forget the logistics, which are mind boggling. Forget the cost. But think of the worldwide effect on the Church



Over two thousand bishops from all over the world were gathered together for more than four years.

from the Pope on down to every diocese in the world. And not just for weeks, not just for months, but in this case more than four years.

I had lodgings in Rome during most of the Council and was privileged to be present at some of the more dramatic moments. I had first hand knowledge, from some of the Bishops who were personal friends, about things which were not secret but nevertheless important. All of this made me more aware of what many came only gradually to grasp: That the Council was such a peak event that it *divides the history of the Church* into Pre-Council and Post-Council.

What was the principal fruit of it all in concrete terms? *What new dictums, what new documents emerged?* Most of us think of changes in the liturgy. But they are wrong. Many liturgical changes were not dictates of the Council. They came after the Council, in the postconciliar atmosphere of experimentation.

### **Laymen Necessary in Mission of Church**

What is really NEW in Vatican Council II has been largely ignored. *For the first time in the history of the Church a Council set forth the concept of laymen as necessary in the mission of the Church* (in a special document and in the Council's principal document on the Church itself: *Lumen Gentium*).

Was the world, was the Church, ready for this? After all we had had over a thousand years of sheep and shepherds mentality in which it had become no longer Jesus the Shepherd and all the other sheep, but clergy as shepherds and the laity as sheep. And for centuries nothing much had changed.

Even after a *Council of the Laity* had been established as a new division of the Roman Curia, at first not much seemed to happen. *No one seemed to have really noticed what the Council did and said.* Therefore, Pope John Paul II convoked a Synod of Bishops in Rome *twenty years after the Council*. After the synod the Pope issued a document which is nothing less than a book (the English translation is 181 pages long): *Christ's Faithful Laity*.

This present book is hardly longer, and it does not begin to cover all that the Pope and the Council have said.

It is intended just to emphasize and to focus attention on what the Popes of our time and the Council say about the primary need in the Church today for involvement of the laity as "Sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ."

### **The Bottom Line**

All these documents emphasize that, to make that involvement a reality, the first requisite is **holiness**. And that is a message from God not only through the Council but also emphasized in the message and miracle of Fatima.

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a REAL apostle who is not a daily Communicant. If you bring to mind someone you know who is a vital force in the parish (not just as a lector or collection-taker, but promoter of Forty Hours, Rosary before Mass, *holy things*) is it not a daily Communicant? And if you dig a little deeper, is this not the kind of person who says the Rosary and wears the Scapular... and quietly tries to get others to do the same?

*The message of Fatima, which is a call to universal holiness, is like a flood of light over this era of the second Vatican Council. Our Lady calls us to join Her in saving the world... in bringing about the triumph of the Church, the triumph of Jesus in the world.*

To put us all on a path to holiness She told us to pray the Rosary, to think of Her Immaculate Heart... the ultimate symbol of purity... and to be united to that Heart. In the light from Her Heart She revealed the presence of God in the Eucharist. She held the Scapular out of the sky as a sign of consecration to Her Heart, and *She performed a great miracle "so that all may believe."*

We have thought of the Fatima message in the terms of bringing an end to world communism and preventing atomic war. It is time we began thinking of it in terms of *Christifideles Laici*. The voice of the Council, the working of the Holy Spirit, proclaims in loud and clear terms: If we are to have the triumph of the Church, we need laity with commitment like that which Our Lady inspired in the children of Fatima.

## Chapter Four

### NEED FOR LAY-CLERGY UNDERSTANDING

An apostolate founded to create communication among lay apostolates invited me in June of 1991 to speak at a national seminar, in Washington D.C., on the lay apostolate.

Just a few weeks before I was to give this talk, I was surprised to read the following item released by the news service of the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops:

STEUBENVILLE, Ohio (CNS) — The greatest issue in the future of the Catholic Church is clergy-laity tension, not such issues as priest shortages, women's ordination, married clergy or problems related to sexuality, according to Bishop Albert H. Ottenweller of Steubenville. Writing in the *Steubenville Register*, his diocesan newspaper, Bishop Ottenweller said, while he doesn't want to minimize the importance of those issues, he believes clergy-laity tension is a deeper issue in "shaping the future of the Church."

Perhaps Bishop Ottenweller wished to stress that a sort of chasm has sometimes developed between clergy and laity and that the message of the Council has not yet permeated the Church in this regard. Lay persons wanting to do more about holiness in parishes, about catechetical instruction and other matters vital to themselves and their families may at times feel frustrated or even deprived of their rights as "Sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and or even kingly functions of Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, par. 31). But now at its highest level, the Church has affirmed that charisms of the lay apostolate are to be recognized and fostered.

Martin Work, in his preface to the Vatican Council's *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* in the English edition of the *Documents of Vatican II*, quotes: "The lay apostolate has been simmering on the 'back burner' of the Church's apostolic life for nearly 2000 years and finally the

*Fathers of this Council moved it up to the ‘front burner’ and turned the heat up all the way.” (Reference: Pg. 203)*

Now there is a church body at the highest level concerned about this entire problem... including that of providing role models for the laity. Already we have Anne Marie Taigi, Bartolo Longo, and Juan Diego on the way to sainthood. There is new interest in great lay innovators like Pauline Jaricot (Founder of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith), Matt Talbot (Model of an apostolate of alcoholic abstinence), Frederick Ozanam (Founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society), and Edel Quinn and Frank Duff of the Legion of Mary.

In the very opening statement of its *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* the Council said: “Modern conditions demand that the lay apostolate be thoroughly broadened and intensified.” It speaks of conditions “which cry out for the skillful concern and attention of the laity.” Long before most in the Church began to sense what was happening, the Council said that “an indication of this manifold and pressing need is the *unmistakable work of the Holy Spirit in making the Laity today more conscious of their own responsibility, inspiring them everywhere to serve Christ and the Church.*”

### **Work of the Holy Spirit**

We have recently seen a proliferation of apostolates founded and directed by lay persons *for safeguarding doctrine, for standing against abortion, for holiness in the family, through telecommunications, for fulfillment of the message of Fatima, for drawing lay persons together in a strengthening of their apostolic vocation. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.*

Out of the Philippines, with the strong backing of a Cardinal and twelve Bishops, has come a worldwide call for an alliance of lay apostles for the ultimate victory of the Sacred Hearts. This is an effective response to the command of the Council that the priests and the hierarchy are to hold such lay initiatives “in highest esteem.”

Indeed a major appeal of the *entire decree on the laity* is for *lay-clerical cooperation*, giving greater scope to the lay initiative and *even limited control*. The hierarchy “Should promote the apostolate of the laity and provide it

with principles and support" (v, 24). The decree states further that, "As long as the proper relationship is kept to the Church authorities, *the laity have the right to found and to run such associations*" (iv, 19). Furthermore (and we shall look at this later on) "*the faithful should exercise their apostolate by way of united effort... the group apostolate is highly important... much better results can be expected than if each member were to act on his own.*"

Unfortunately, as Frank Sheed put it, this teaching of the Council has not been sufficiently taught. *Yet it may be the Council's single greatest initiative.*

### **Priesthood of the Laity**

We all have an obligation to follow a Divine calling. The Council says explicitly that *all* lay persons are "called to this type of apostolate and *are obliged to engage in it*. The laity derive *the right and duty* with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ... they are consecrated into a royal priesthood and a holy people" (i, 3).

Would you read that again?

In the past (that is prior to the Council) it was too often felt that it was up to the priests and nuns to educate children in the faith and that the only obligation of lay Catholics was to receive the Sacraments and save their own souls. At least concerning education of children, the postconciliar period has been one of rude awakening. The call for lay involvement in each of the areas designated by the Council has become sharper (not perhaps from the pulpit but certainly, as the Decree does not seem to tire in pointing out, from the Holy Spirit).

In a word, the Holy Spirit, Who inspired Pope John XXIII to convene the second Vatican Council as the Pope himself declared, foresaw this present moment. The time that is coming... the time of the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary foretold at Fatima... will be a time when the role of the laity will be of *supreme* importance.

When the book *Explosion of the Supernatural* was written back in 1972, it was intended primarily for that time of victory, a time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit over the earth. **It will be a time of shock.** It will be a time requiring radical adaptation on the part of the Church.

If the decrees of Vatican Council II concerning lay

involvement in the life of the Church are not obeyed, particularly the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity and Chapter 8 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *we will not be ready.*

The Council has solemnly and emphatically declared that it is not just up to the clergy to lead the way and see that the Council is obeyed, but *each and every one of us...* whatever our vocation may be... "*shares in the priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ*" (i, 2).

Note: After the seminar at which I spoke on the Lay Apostolate and the Clergy-Lay relationship, on the very day I returned to my office I received a lengthy paper in the mail titled *THE LAY APOSTOLATE, BY A LAYMAN*, written by D. G. Sullivan. Mr. Sullivan, who originated the phrase "First Saturday, Parish Day," repeats in perhaps stronger words much that is said here, even stressing the lack of role models for lay apostles. His paper also stressed the importance of apostolic formation and suggested that, like the Mormons, Catholic laypersons should offer to volunteer a period of full time to the apostolate... a few months, a year, even more. He may be contacted through LAF, P.O. Box 50, Asbury, N.J., 08802.



**Chapter Five****LAY APOSTOLATE NOW**

Some of the greatest achievements in the Church can be ascribed to laypersons. In this century one need think only of Frank Sheed.

Frank's main message to the laity was: "Know your faith and the reasons for it." He said: "Anyone who does not know more theology than myself, does not know enough." And he was a Doctor of Theology. Frank squarely faced the postconciliar shock which brings into bold relief the need for an active and enlightened Catholic laity. As a Catholic publisher he gave us Belloc and Chesterton and a host of others who brought new zest into Catholic intellectual life and set an incomparable example of lay apostolic success. "And if I can do it," he would say, "so can you."

In 1979 Frank wrote a foreword for a reprinting of his book *To Know Jesus Christ* which had been published eighteen years before. *The Church had changed so much in those eighteen years that Frank said it was "almost impossible to recall how it felt to be Catholic before the Council. Before the Council"* he said: "we were in the Ark and outside was the flood," with most of the Catholic laity relying on the "Church" to do everything for them. He said that the laity before the Council might have been described by the poet Gray when he wrote:

*Alas, regardless of their doom,  
The little victims play.*

"Only the rare ones," Frank wrote, "sensed the explosion to come," an explosion *which propels the laity into the mission of the Church as never before.* Unless we stop looking to the Church to educate our children and to lead us to God with no effort on our part, we are indeed doomed. *We are the little victims who played and who now blame everyone but ourselves because our children*

*are not properly instructed and our churches often closed.*

Gradually, often without knowing what the Council taught, much of the laity shows increasing interest and concern with every passing day... for Catholic education, right to life, even sound doctrine!

### **Greatest Need**

*The Holy Spirit was at work in the Council, and the Holy Spirit knew that there would be tens of thousands of priestly defections in the postconciliar world and a crisis in priestly vocations. The Holy Spirit led the Council Fathers to write of the priesthood of the laity.* But another term, that of “lay apostle,” more readily reveals the Council’s amazing message for today’s laity.

An apostle is a person with a mission. One of the strongest messages of the Second Vatican Council is that *the laity, like priests, have MISSIONS.*

Perhaps we have not gotten very far in our response to this mandate of the Holy Spirit because of misunderstanding of a proper relation between the “priest apostle” and the “lay apostle.” But whether we face this obliquely or head on, two hard realities challenge us. We lay persons are seen as not adequately instructed in theology. Very often we are not seen even as persons with any special mission in the Church. A second hard reality is that no matter how we may perceive our mission, we usually need clerical support to fulfill it.

### **Our Special Calling**

We KNOW... not only by mandate of the Second Vatican Council but from the very condition of the world and of the Church... that we are NEEDED. But what IS our mission? And where will we get the authority and the means to fulfill it?

Some lay persons are called to local missions, like joining the Legion of Mary or starting a Blue Army cell in a parish. Some may be called to missions which will have a major impact on the Church and the world.

Do we feel a *need* for more Eucharistic devotion? Do we feel the need for a more adequate response to the urgent message of Our Lady in today’s world to bring back persons who have abandoned the Sacraments? Do

we feel a *calling* to respond to such needs as did Frank Duff, Founder of the Legion of Mary who began with an apostolate to rehabilitate prostitutes?

### **The Authority**

Do we see a need for greater holiness in ourselves and in the Church? Or a need to help the poor, like the layman in Lyons who started the St. Vincent de Paul Society? Or a need to help the missions, like the laywoman who founded the Society for the Propagation of the Faith? Or a need for evangelization like Frank Sheed who spoke on street corners and who impacted the Church through Catholic publishing? Just seeing the need is the beginning of a vocation. *And the need for lay involvement increases each passing day.*

It does not have to be a spectacular involvement. As said above it may seem little more than daily Communion and a weekly prayer meeting. But "little saints" are formed. Grace flows. And many "little" saints come to lead lives of unknown heroism that holds back the Hand of God's Justice and rolls back the tide of evil.

The complaint we have heard most from lay apostles is that priests are often not co-operative when asked to permit something even so simple and apparently good as having the Rosary said before or after Mass, or having First Saturday devotions. Sometimes years pass before lay apostles (and that is what they are) finally obtain a pastor's permission to help meet such needs.

But through humble perseverance and sincerity it is *from the pastor or from the Bishop that the lay apostle obtains authority.* The key is a holy, intimate co-operation with a holy and understanding priest. From a pastor, from a Bishop, from the spiritual director of some apostolate (like the Legion or the Blue Army) lay faithful can obtain "at hand" support.

After a member of the Blue Army founded the All Night Vigil movement in England, members of the apostolate tried repeatedly to get the vigils started in New York City. Year after year every pastor who was approached refused. Finally a letter was prepared to go to several New York parishes offering to take full responsibility for all promotion, for security, for conduct of the entire program,

and it was signed by a well known Monsignor. (Actually the lay apostles made the promises, *but the Monsignor was good enough to back them up by signing the letter.*)

As a result, a vigil was started in St. John's next to Madison Square Garden in the very heart of Manhattan. It was amazingly successful. One of the big newspapers (*Daily News*) published the story. Everyone marveled that some four hundred people, in a city in which it was said they would be too afraid to go out at night, flocked every month to pray before the Blessed Sacrament on the night of the First Friday-First Saturday. Little by little some other parishes followed suit including that of New York's great Cathedral. When the 25th anniversary of the all night vigils at St. John's was celebrated in May of 1994, the Cardinal Archbishop of New York told the vigilers they were bringing down blessings not only on the city of New York but upon the entire world.

*It helps so much if one can approach a pastor not so much in one's own name, but in the name of a recognized apostolate or by being able to say that Father So-and-So recommends it. It most certainly does not mean that we are to give up if the pastor shows no interest.*

### **Lay RESPONSIBILITY**

What if the man who worked to get that first vigil started said, "If the priests refuse, I have at least done my part," and left it at that? The Council says that the laity have not only a calling but a *responsibility*. Often it is precisely because the pastor does not know that his flock will respond, or that he shows no interest, that there IS a lay responsibility. It is consoling to realize that the Holy Spirit saw the present crisis of faith when He inspired the Fathers of the Council to speak of the mission of the laity and of the need, now perhaps greater than ever in history, for an ACTIVE participation of the laity in the mission of the Church.

One of the holiest men this writer has been privileged to know, the Most Rev. John Venancio (second Bishop of Fatima and the first elected International President of our apostolate), said that a REAL lay apostle worthy of the name will always do two things:

First: **Pray.** And one might add, seek the prayers of



Above: Bishop Venancio with Pope Paul VI and Sister Lucia at Fatima, May 13, 1972. For the message of the Bishop to Fatima apostles, see Appendix, pg. 213. "Keep Asking!" he advised.

others, especially of the sick and suffering... the most holy persons you know.

Second: **Keep asking!** No matter how many times a pastor may say "NO," if you see the need and know that it will not be filled unless YOU do something about it, keep knocking at the door. The holy Bishop gave the example given by Our Lord Himself of the person who kept knocking on the door until (if only to get rid of him!) the answer became "YES." And many today are knocking!

In July 1991 George Gallup released the results of a poll made on real holiness in the United States. His polls, which are considered highly accurate, found that about 10% in the U.S. are really "holy" in the sense that God not only comes first in their lives but that prayer and the Kingdom of God on earth are paramount to them. (Incidentally the poll found that this 10% was among the happiest, and also most influential.)

In the light of God's word to Abraham concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, this statistic means a great deal. *Already much is being done.* And Heaven itself is issuing a clarion call to all men of good will.

At Fatima God sent His Mother not only to foretell the crisis in the Church and the possible annihilation of nations if men do not stop offending God, but for the first time in the history of mankind there was a miracle at a particular time and place "so that all may believe."

God wanted us to KNOW, *beyond the slightest doubt*, that if the requests of His Mother are heard, not only would Russia be converted but *the entire tidal wave of evil will be turned back*. Bishop Sheen said She chose the name *Fatima* (the name of the daughter of Mohammed) because She came also for the conversion of Islam. The promised triumph of Her Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart, with an era of peace for *mankind*, means *the triumph of Jesus in all the world*.

So far this message has not reached many pulpits. I was born shortly before the Fatima miracle, and in over 75 years, *I have never heard it mentioned in a Sunday sermon in any parish*. When I was privileged to bring the Pilgrim Virgin for the first time to the United States in 1947 it was received into Buffalo by Bishop O'Hara, later Cardinal Archbishop of Philadelphia. The future Cardinal became a personal witness to the wonders of which Pope Pius XII was to say a few years after His Holiness had crowned Our Lady at Fatima as Queen of the World: "*Through the Pilgrim Virgin She went forth as though to claim Her dominion and the favors She performs along the way are such that we can hardly believe what we are seeing with our eyes.*"

"I will have Her paraded through the streets and I will be responsible for Her visits throughout the nation," the future Cardinal exclaimed in his enthusiasm. Then he hesitated and went to the phone to speak to what was then called "the American Vatican." When he came back he was silent, somewhat sad. Then he said: "*This is something which must come from the people.*"

Note: The all night vigils were begun in England by the Hon. Henrietta Bowers. Her wonderful story is told in her own book *Challenge to Godlessness*. Cf. *Dear Bishop*, by Hassert, pg. 292.

## Chapter Six

### DIFFERENT VIEWS

It is at once painful and difficult to speak of that "chasm" between clergy and laity of which Bishop Ottenweiler spoke as critical to our time.

Father Roussel-Galle, founder of *Donum Dei*, called it "a wall between the Church and the masses which must at any price be broken down."

Is it a communication gap? Is it something we can define? Is it "treatable"?

Fr. Boniface Hanley, O.F.M., in his biography of Dorothy Day writes that, back in the thirties when she joined picket lines with signs which read "the Pope favors unions", refusing to place herself in opposition to any clergy who disagreed with her, said: "I have been invited many times to wage war with the Church (i.e., certain priests)," but she added: "*Differences are inevitable* with a Church made up of men and women." Commenting on Fr. Romano Guardini's wry observation, "The Church is the cross on which Christ was crucified," Dorothy said: "I want to live and die on that Cross."\*

When the children of Fatima went to see Our Lady for the second time (June 13, 1917) it should have been with great anticipation because the first time, four weeks earlier, they were filled with joy. But Lucia says: "On that day I was *overwhelmed* with bitterness." It was because of the attitude of the local clergy.

Does it seem strange that the greatest suffering of these holy and sincere little children came from priests? When the children saw priests coming, Lucia said, "We prepared to make our greatest sacrifices." However, some of the priests who came to see the children brought consolation and direction, and the children had only the greatest respect for ALL priests.

There is a meaningful message here. We know that the parish priest was negative and very harsh with Lucia because he feared, as did Lucia's mother, that the child was deceived. He had the grave responsibility of judging. We presume that most of the other priests had the same motive.

It must be remembered that this was a terrible time for the church in Portugal. Only a short time before the apparitions of Fatima the government had proclaimed Lisbon "the atheist capital of the world" and had vowed to wipe out all religion. Little more than eighty years before, all religious orders had been expelled from the country. The persecution of the secular clergy which survived had subsequently escalated.

In her memoirs Lucia speaks well of Dr. Formigao, who asked the children many questions but with kindness. He was actually the priest sent by the Archbishop of Lisbon to report on the matter. His notes and testimony are among the most important documents on Fatima after Lucia's own memoirs and letters. His sincerity was evident to the children.

But all the above taken into consideration, there seems to be a generally negative attitude towards events like Fatima among much of the clergy. The most frequent complaint of those who want to start prayer cells or First Saturday devotions in parishes is that the pastor will not allow it... or that when he does allow it, he does not participate.

The reaction of the laity must be always like that of the children of Fatima, never diminishing respect and reverence for the priesthood and yet humbly to persevere. Bishop Venancio, one of the four to whom this book is dedicated, used to say: "Always respect and obey the pastor." And then he would add: "But never take 'no' for an answer. Keep asking."

### **Fatima at the Chasm**

Perhaps nothing so quickly and immediately emphasizes the clergy-laity chasm as does difference of emphasis on a message like that of Fatima, affirmed by several Popes but more affirmed in the Church by the faithful laity than by many of the clergy.

If we could understand this particular chasm perhaps we could begin to understand why there is any chasm at all.

It would seem that the usual view held by the clergy about apparitions (including one as important and as well recognized as Fatima) is that we are speaking of only a private revelation. Even if it reaffirms the Gospel, *it is not to be taken too seriously in itself* but only in the context of public revelation. Not infrequently it will be added, *often with unnecessary emphasis*, that “we do not have to believe in Fatima.” And to many of the lay faithful this seems a rejection of a Divine Intervention which, as Pope John Paul II said, compels us to act. As Jean Guitton puts it: An intervention of God of *very great importance as it comes* “*At the hinge of history, before and after Hiroshima, dividing history forever.*”

Those who hold the first view either oppose apostolates inspired by private revelation or accept them in degrees varying from toleration to reluctant support. Those who hold the second view are usually active in degrees which range from just making the Blue Army pledge to making the First Friday-First Saturday Vigils, and from, just getting family members and neighbors involved, to increasing Eucharistic devotion in an entire parish or even beyond.

A few... usually very few, but quite vocal... become what some seem to delight in calling “religious fanatics.” As is usually the case, virtue is in the middle. Even though Fatima is not what we call *de fide*, it is a credible revelation from God approved by the Church. When we know all the facts, we are bound to give it human belief. *We cannot deny what we know and understand is true.*

### **Lack of Knowledge**

The negative attitude of much of the clergy is certainly attributable to lack of knowledge... which may seem curious to say about priests because of their years of training. But *it is unlikely that seminarians*, in all their years of study, *would have even three or four classroom hours on Fatima... if any at all.* This may change, but it should not be such a surprise. *Medical doctors*, in all their years of study, get on the average *only four classroom hours*

*on nutrition.* Yet some would say that nutrition is as important to health as medicine. The study of the miracle of Fatima in itself could be a major work. Dr. Alonso, one of the great Mariologists of our time was documentarian of Fatima and his findings fill eighteen volumes.

While no one can be expected to know it all, is there any reason why seminarians would not be taught the basic facts?

### The Great Sign

Fr. Robert O'Leary was a seminarian in Vienna on the night of January 25, 1938.

During night prayers a great red glow illuminated the windows of the seminary chapel. The superior, Fr. Aloysius Von Gross-Kappenburg, ordered night prayers cancelled so that everyone might go immediately to put on work clothes to fight a fire which was apparently raging in the town. Fr. O'Leary relates:

"I went to my room on the fourth floor and opened the window. *The sky was red with billowing clouds of flames.* But to my amazement, there was no fire in the town.

"We all went outside, as the superior had told us, to help the burning town. But no place could we find the fire. *It was as though there were rolling flames over the world.*"

The next day the seminarians asked various professors what that extraordinary phenomenon might have been. Fr. O'Leary recalls that the professor of philosophy simply refused to answer. *"I had the impression that he knew something because he was nervous about it.* The professor of moral theology also refused to comment. But the professor of scripture, Fr. Vollmacher, said:

*"Oh, that was Fatima, the warning, the warning of Fatima!"*

Fr. O'Leary said he had never, until that moment, heard of Fatima. He was amazed. When he asked what Fatima was about, Fr. Vollmacher said:

"Oh, you all know about Fatima."

There were 114 seminarians from thirteen different countries, and Fr. O'Leary said *that not a single one of them had ever heard of Fatima.* So Fr. Vollmacher began to explain that Our Lady of Fatima had predicted that



Fr. O'Leary in 1938

# "GREAT" SIGN

Above: Title and picture from article in SOUL magazine, May, 1984, in which Father O'Leary told of his disillusionment at not having been told of the great sign while in the seminary in Vienna. Two months later Hitler took the city.

Below: Three children to whom Our Lady appeared at Fatima. Their "greatest suffering" came from meeting with priests who seemed unable to accept the visions.



**"when you will see a night illumined by an unknown light, you will know that it is the GREAT SIGN that God is about to punish the world."**

Fr. O'Leary many years later vividly recalled his feeling of disillusionment for never having been told. He said he felt convinced that several of the professors in the seminary had known about the Message of Fatima but, he said, "Even after the warning they seemed embarrassed to speak about it with the exception of Fr. Vollmacher who replied quite simply that the extraordinary 'night of fire' was the great warning of Fatima. He said: 'We are going to have a war'. *Just two months later Hitler marched into Austria. And we had never been warned.*'"

### ***Not a Question of Good or Bad***

Fr. O'Leary was not saying that his seminary professors were not good and holy priests. It is not a question of good or bad or even good versus not-so-good. It is a difference of mindset.

I feel free to write about it because I had the same mindset, and to some extent still suffer from it.

I say "suffer" because I could have known Martha Robin, I could have witnessed the events of Garabandal or Medjugorje but never went because the local bishop had not approved. And in the case of Garabandal I had inside information confirming its credibility.

We have been taught that signs and wonders are always suspect. That they are not needed. That it is best to avoid them.

St. John of the Cross, one of the saints who lived a life full of signs and wonders, has contributed to this because he, and other Doctors of the Church, have warned us to look on signs and wonders as *incidental* to holiness. We are not to mistake them for what is essential. *Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.*

But after the Church decides that certain signs and wonders *are* from GOD it must be another matter.

Not having this limiting mindset, many of the laity have been able to grasp the importance of Fatima while many of the clergy have held back. Despite the statement of Pope John Paul II that the message of Fatima "compels

the Church," not too many of the clergy seem to have felt "compelled."

How important is it to bridge the mindset, the chasm?

### **Turning Point in History**

To this day Jews refer over and over, as also do we, to the miracle of the Red Sea. It recurs again and again in our liturgy, in our worship, in our acknowledgment of what God has done for His people. *Yet the miracle of Fatima could be considered even greater than the miracle of the Red Sea for at least five reasons:*

1) It was intended to *deliver the world* not from Egypt but from Communism, and *from a tide of evil which merited that "several entire nations be annihilated,"*

2) Just ONE element of the miracle of Fatima was essentially the same as the miracle of the Red Sea: The vast hollow at the place of the apparitions which had become a lake of water and mud, *dried instantly.*

3) But more than this, the miracle of Fatima was essentially the same as the miracle performed by Elias "*That all may know that God is God,*" when the prophet called down *fire from Heaven.*

4) It is furthermore essentially the same as the miracle of Joshua causing the *light of the sun to shine independently of the sun.*

5) But over and beyond all the reasons above, it was the FIRST miracle in history permitted by God *at a predicted time and place* "so that all may believe."

Certainly all the Popes since Fatima have taken it very, very seriously as a Divine intervention at a most critical moment in the history of man. It is more than a reaffirmation of the Gospel. It is like a new Sinai reminding us of often-forgotten truths and commandments. And there seems to be a special call *for the laity* to respond.

\***A Hunger for Justice**, the *Anthonian*, 1988, Vol. 62, p. 21. Dorothy Day lived evangelical poverty, chastity and obedience in the world. She might be called "the Lay Mother Teresa" and was greatly esteemed by Mother Teresa. She died in 1980.

## Chapter Seven

### APOSTOLATE CONTINUITY

**A** new age is coming very soon: the age of the Triumph of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Clear signs of its arrival *are already here*. In this new time we will need to understand and follow all that the Council says about the priesthood of the laity and the special missions of lay persons to complement the full mission of the Church.

Many of these missions *are already apparent*. As we have said, more and more enlightened lay persons are getting involved in communications, in care about sound doctrine, in great moral causes, in special apostolates like that of response to the conditions of Our Lady of Fatima for the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart in the world.

It will be a pity if any of these missions are curtailed... or even worse, cut off... because of a failure to grasp what the Council and the Magisterium have been saying to the Church in this most serious matter.

Under the direction of the Cardinal Prefect, the Secretary and the officials of the Congregation for the Clergy an important symposium was held in 1944 on the *Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry*.

It was attended by bishops appointed as delegates of Episcopal Conferences from all over the world as well as by special guests and experts. Speaking to them at the close of the symposium (April 22, 1944), Pope John Paul reaffirmed the demand "*for an appropriate collaboration of the lay faithful in the ministry of priests.*"

At the same time His Holiness also affirmed (as we do repeatedly in these pages) the essential difference, in nature and degree, between vocations to serve God at the altar and vocations to serve Him in the world. His Holiness spoke of "**the unchangeable differences willed by Christ and the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church:**

**the diversity of vocations and states of life, the diversity of ministries, charisms and responsibilities."**

The shortage of priests can be met only partially by lay participation. Through holy families we must increase the field of vocations, and then pray to obtain and to sustain them.

At the same time *vocations in the world*, like the examples we are soon to present, while "unchangeably different" *are also needed*, not because of a shortage of priests but *of and in themselves*. As the Pope told the members of the Symposium: "Diversity of vocations and states of life" are "willed by Christ and the Holy Spirit for the good of the Church."

### **Not A Competition**

No priest should feel that he is being "outshone" by a layman who may speak more languages than he does or who has a special gift of communication by written or spoken word. *No layman can outshine a priest because the priestly vocation is the greatest on earth.*

But as the Council teaches, there are other vocations and other missions which God entrusts to some who are not called to the priesthood. In my own experience (which is what impelled me to write this book in the first place), I never once doubted that I was specifically "called" to an apostolate in the lay state. The story is told in my book *The Brother And I*.

My Bishop believed I had a special calling. He took it seriously. "Let us pray every day in the coming month of Mary," he said, "and by the last day we may hope to know God's Will." (The bishop prayed thirty days for light!)

There was no desire on my part to be married. My heart was full of my "calling." I had nothing else in mind. Believing that the voice of the Bishop was the voice of God I had perfect peace even when the Bishop said: "I have no idea how this will be possible." But he felt that *only as a layman could I accomplish it.*

So I can say with absolute assurance, from personal experience, that there are specific lay vocations which are intended by God for the "laity to contribute to the welfare of the Church" (L.G., ch. 4, p. 30). The Council goes so far as to say: "They are assigned to the apostolate by Our

Lord Himself... consecrated into a royal priesthood..." (*Decree on the Laity*, ch. 1, p. 3).

There is no need here to summarize the entire book.\* What is most important is that when I interviewed Sister Lucia in 1946, I was amazed to find that the message I had received, and which I had already been promoting for seven years, was the message of Fatima. It was formulated into what is commonly known as "The Blue Army Pledge" which was subsequently signed by more than twenty-five million persons in over a hundred countries.

### **The Chasm**

Since my personal experience may be taken to exemplify a "lay" vocation, it may also help to illuminate the intellectual and perhaps even psychological chasm between laity and clergy of which most are aware.

As I say in the acknowledgements at the beginning of this book, I found that being a "sharer" with bishops and priests was the whole secret to success. The so-called chasm was hardly ever in the way. Only a few times it loomed large and deep.

The Bishop of Fatima, because of Lucia, encouraged me to establish an international center at Fatima and to spread the apostolate throughout the world. His Excellency appointed a Canon Lawyer of the diocese to draw up a constitution. Cardinal Tisserant, who was then the Dean of the College of Cardinals, took a personal interest and arranged for a meeting with the appropriate congregation which then approved the constitution *ad experimentum*.

The apostolate became established in several countries based on the constitution. Almost all the international meetings, year after year, *studied the constitution* as the Congregation had instructed. It was never found necessary to make any substantial changes. In good time the Bishop of Fatima, supported by signatures from many Bishops throughout the world, petitioned the Holy See for final approval.

Then came the Council. Everything stopped. When the dust had settled (if indeed it still has!) our apostolate was assigned to a newly created congregation: The Council of the Laity. It has taken a few paragraphs to get to the



Above: The 120-room International Center of the Blue Army at Fatima as seen from the Basilica. Its primary purpose is reception of pilgrims and spiritual formation in the message of Fatima.

Below: Adoption of the first International Constitution of the Blue Army. Left to right, facing camera: Bishop Rupp of Paris; Bishop da Silva, first Bishop of Fatima; Cardinal Tisserant, Dean of the College of Cardinals; Bishop Venancio, successor to Bishop da Silva; and Msgr. Harold Colgan, co-founder of the Blue Army (speaking).



important point: The Council advised just one change in the Constitution which said that a priest or Bishop would always be President. The Council (in the person of Msgr. Danos who communicated this to us) said that *the President should be a layperson*.

I can still remember that moment. To me it seemed unthinkable that a LAYPERSON should be president of the World Apostolate of Fatima. That was the age old mindset of the time.

The chasm was there, and the path of our apostolate traveled along its edge and there, at the edge, came upon one of the great "Catholic Action" apostolates of the century: The Queen's Work.

### **The Queen's Work**

*The Queen's Work* was a lay apostolate founded by Father Daniel Lord, S.J., who long before Vatican II seemed to anticipate the Council's Decree on the laity and organized thousands of devout lay persons with the help of eighty *full time* lay workers in a multi-storied headquarters in St. Louis.

At the time there was much talk about *Catholic Action*, a name used to describe involvement of the laity in the apostolic life of the Church. Everywhere (especially in France) there was much talk but little *action*. With Father Lord it was really action and the lay faithful were given opportunity, training, and the support they needed.

It was built on the age-old Sodality of Our Lady, also known as the Children of Mary. Father Lord's "right hand" was an intelligent, sound, dynamic laywoman by the name of Dorothy Willmann. She, with the other eighty full time employees, were motivated and encouraged by Father Lord to build the entire "*Queen's Work*" upon the willingness and zeal of lay Catholics all over America. Every summer The Queen's Work conducted *Schools of Catholic Action* on college campuses from the Atlantic to the Pacific. They were courses of lay apostolate formation.

The power and influence of this movement in the Catholic Church in America became awesome. To a certain extent it *controlled Hollywood movies*. No film maker in the forties would dare produce a film if the Queen's Work did not approve because, mobilized through-

out the nation, it blacklisted any indecent or immoral film with devastating effect at the box office. But the influence on film-making was only a small part of the Queen's Work vitality in the American Catholic Church. The general influence on youth, on Sacramental life, and even on the clergy was to be felt everywhere.

Father Harold Colgan, with whom I became associated in founding the Blue Army, was a "Queen's Work" priest. He personally attended the Queen's Work Catholic Action seminars at Fordham University (as I did). When I founded A.M.I. in 1950 and launched SOUL magazine, I asked Father Lord what he would think if Father Colgan and myself were to join forces. Without a moment of hesitation he said: "*There would result an explosion for Our Lady.*" And there was.

Father Colgan, like Father Lord, believed that lay persons could have special missions. His confidence in my particular mission never faltered even in the midst of some incredibly black moments and trials which a priest of lesser holiness and trust could never have survived. (Without that support, neither would the apostolate have survived.)

### **Ceased To Exist**

But let us get back to the example of the Queen's Work. Its headquarters was in a tall, multi-storied building in St. Louis with over 80 full time lay employees. *After Father Lord's death it did not decline but CEASED TO EXIST. Even the age-old Sodality fell into oblivion.*

In trusting and training lay apostles, had Father Lord been before his time? Were eighty full time apostles phased out and almost at once forgotten because there was no one to give what is now mandated by the Council: Encouragement and support? And will things be different now after the Council, after *Christifideles Laici*?

Father Lord had heard the Voice of the Holy Spirit. It was the Voice which called Pope John XXIII to convoke the Council. But that Voice had certainly not been heard by a great majority of the clergy, most of whom seemed indifferent to lay initiatives, and sometimes even annoyed by them. *The current of Catholic Action had begun to flow,* but it was sporadic, hesitant, hindered and frequently

just disappeared into the dry ground. The Council's Decree on the laity refers to this brief period of "Catholic Action" in Paragraph 20:

"More than a few decades ago the laity in many nations began to dedicate themselves increasingly to the apostolate. They grouped themselves into various kinds of activities and societies... produced excellent results for Christ's kingdom... often described as the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy (cf Allocution of Pius XII to *Italian Catholic Action*, A.A.S. 32, p. 362). Whether these forms of apostolate have the name of 'Catholic Action' or some other title, they exercise an apostolate of great value for our times."

### **Concern for Blue Army Continuity**

Thinking of the Queen's Work I was concerned for continuity of the Blue Army. For almost forty years we had seen the apostolate as a militant effort to obtain worldwide response to the basic requests of Our Lady of Fatima for the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart. But after my retirement the emphasis was placed on catechetics. I seemed to see happening again what had happened to the Queen's Work and to another apostolate in which I had previously served.

Catechetics were important, but so was the message of Fatima. And while almost the entire Church was necessarily occupied with the need for Catechetics, only the Blue Army formed a worldwide response to the urgent message of Fatima. I had felt immense relief to have responsibility for the apostolate lifted from my shoulders. Should I now just leave all in the hands of God?

I went first to my diocesan Bishop and then to the Bishop who was the National President of the apostolate. If either of them told me just to be silent I was resolved I would say nothing, write nothing, and do nothing. But neither Bishop gave such a command. So, although it seemed almost too late, a valiant effort was made to restore the apostolate to its original purpose. Meanwhile there was some consolation in that it was still flourishing in many other countries (although, because of the prominence of U.S. leadership, the apostolate in the entire world had been affected).

Frank Duff at the age of ninety, when asked if he had concerns about the future of the Legion which he had founded almost sixty years before, answered: "The Legion could be terribly easily destroyed! Pervert its particular outlook in regard to Our Blessed Lady. Ah! just a little twist, just a little twist, the whole thing is gone! Like the proverbial screw which comes out and brings a vast mechanism into inaction."\*\*

It cannot be expected that all who join an apostolate will have the same understanding of its purpose or the same zeal and enthusiasm of those who have sacrificed their lives for it. Frank Duff had seen instances of the Legion drying up in places where priests who were arbitrarily appointed as spiritual directors chose to emphasize its social dimension at the expense of its profound Marian devotion. Fortunately he lived long enough to be a personal force of continuity. He had provided that the most valued members of the Legion, after retirement, should be Counselors and their advice heard. How would the Blue Army survive?

\**The Brother and I*, published by AMI Press, Washington, N.J., 07882.

\*\**Frank Duff, A Living Biography*, by Msgr. Charles T. Moss, published by Maria Legionis, 1983, p. 11.

Below: The author with the Most Rev. John Venancio, Bishop of Fatima, "Sharers in the... functions of Christ". See pg. 213.



## Chapter Eight

### DIVISION BECAUSE OF FATIMA

Perhaps one reason for the so called “chasm” between clergy and laity which Bishop Ottenweiler goes so far as to say creates the greatest of all problems for the Church is, as we have said, often a chasm of understanding and acceptance of recent Divine interventions.

Canon Laurentin opens his book titled *When God Gives a Sign\** with a quote from Victor Hugo: “When the baby appeared the family circle applauded with cries of joy.” The famous theologian comments: “When an apparition takes place, the family circle of the Church does not applaud with cries of joy. The welcome is normally troubled, tense, and nervous. The number one problem often seems to be: *How to get rid of it.*”

But we live in an electronic age. People are educated, well informed, often well traveled. Many feel very strongly about heavenly interventions like Fatima and Akita because they have gone to these places and *have personally* experienced their reality or have actually met others who have. In our Fatima apostolate the complaint we heard most often was of open opposition from the clergy on four grounds:

- 1) Fatima is only private revelation; 2) It frightens people with “annihilation of nations”; 3) It says that “many souls are going to hell”; 4) It places emphasis on mere sacramentals.

Laurentin offers reasons similar to these although in a more detailed and scholarly fashion. He then gives five reasons why this attitude is wrong. The last is: “These signs (like Lourdes, Fatima, Akita) have prophetic functions. St. Thomas stresses that they reawaken faith and ‘*above all, hope.*’ They remind us that the transcendent God remains present and near... Apparitions are, first of all, a pastoral problem before being a theological one.”

The faithful, sensing the urgency of the atomic age and seeing it reflected in the message of Fatima, may have felt that if Our Lady spoke to three children about Hell, so should we. And if She spoke of the "annihilation" of entire nations, it must have been because She wanted us to listen and to respond.

### **Why This Difference of View?**

All the Popes since 1917 have accepted the miracle of Fatima, and all have encouraged the People of God to listen to it. Pope John Paul II, as we feel compelled to repeat, went so far as to say that the message of Fatima "*compels the Church.*" It is *like Sinai by which God reaffirmed the commandments.* "It is a reaffirmation of the Gospel" (Pope Pius XII).

*It is difficult for the laity to understand pulpit silence* about matters which to them seem so important. They wonder "why isn't something being done?" when the Pope says it is urgent. They know Our Lady prophesied "annihilation" of entire nations because *She came to prevent it.* Indeed She said explicitly at Akita that She has "So far been able to hold it back" because of the response of a few. Must the laity be those few? Will many of the clergy refuse to cooperate? Must there be a chasm?

Our Lady used the word "annihilated" (it is virtually the same in Portuguese) even though the children had no idea what it meant. In 1939 Our Lord appeared to Lucia to complain that the Collegial Consecration had not been made. He said: "The time is coming when the rigor of My justice will punish the crimes of various nations. *Some of them will be annihilated.*"

Why do we hesitate to tell people this?

### **Similar Problem: Conversion of Russia**

We had a similar difficulty in speaking of "the Conversion of Russia" because we felt that we in the West were perhaps even more in need of "conversion" and it seemed an offense to the devout Orthodox. Bishop Hasstrich (the U.S. national president of our apostolate) often brought this up, and understandably.

But despite misgivings (we do not always understand God's reasons), we had the simple belief that Our Lord and Our Lady must have had *Their* reason for using

these expressions (not just once but repeatedly).

We were literally amazed during our visit to Russia in October of 1992 when the Metropolitan of Moscow, speaking in the Cathedral in the name of the Patriarch of all Russia, publicly *thanked* the Blue Army. Yet all the while we had been told that the Russians *hated* the Blue Army, not only if they were communists, but even if they were good Orthodox. The first were said to hate us because they saw us as a major deterrent to the success of their world atheistic revolution; the second because we were making worldwide propaganda for their "conversion" (with possible implication that they should renounce Orthodoxy and become Roman).

But it turns out they *they understood* that it was OUR LADY who used this term, and since they loved Our Lady they knew that by the "conversion of Russia" She meant *the end of religious persecution in their country* (which is specifically, as we know from Lucia's letters to her confessor, precisely what She meant).

Now at Akita Our Lady has been more explicit. The "annihilation" is still coming. It is "at hand." *It seems that most of the "lay apostolates," at least in America, are motivated to reparation by this belief.* Is this not worthy of support?

### **Objection Not Universal**

We may not like the words used in these times by Our Lord and His Mother. It is understandable that we may even greatly dislike speaking about an impending chastisement. Is there anyone who would not far rather keep shouting from the housetops that the Immaculate Heart of Mary will triumph, as indeed we know it will?

But to the average simple believer, who pushes for daily Rosary and Eucharistic Adoration, the sinful state of the world *makes it increasingly urgent and important to use the terms Our Lord and Our Lady have used.* They often cannot understand why some clergy object.

Can any of us know better than Our Lord and His Mother? Is it difficult to believe that Our Lord and Our Lady have asked for the First Saturday Communions of reparation and that *without reparation* the world will suffer a chastisement "worse than the deluge?"

Let us hasten to say that the situation is changing and more and more bishops and priests are responding with needed support. The most dynamic leaders in Asia (in the Philippines and in Korea) are priests. Literally thousands of priests (whether in the Marian Movement or not) are deeply moved and motivated by the twentieth century evils and the Divine interventions for reparation. Yet for some mysterious reason which God has not made known to us, as Cardinal O'Hara said: "*This is something which must come from the people.*"

### **Call to the Laity**

Could part of the reason be that GOD WANTS THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO BE INVOLVED... *that He does not want reparation solely to be "mandated" from above but to come also from personal conviction?*

Please, read that question again!

A final question: Could the very fact of the "chasm" (if that is not an overstatement) be because God wants us to listen to the voice of the Council, that He wants lay responsibility, lay involvement... because He wants everyone to merge the stream of *personal involvement* into a river so deep and strong as to *wash away passivity and indifference and bring new life into the Church?*

"You, too, go into My vineyard!" is the cry of Pope John Paul II. It is the time for the harvest! The servants now in the vineyard, priests and religious, are insufficient and overtaxed and sometimes bored by it all. God and His Church, by the Council, strive to get our attention and to get us to act. It is an hour of darkness. Also it is the hour of Mercy! So He calls the laity into His vineyard.

Is not Jesus also saying to all: "*Work in My vineyard as Sharers?*"

\**When God Gives a Sign*, Eng. ed. of *Quand Dieu Fait Signe*, published by Trinitas, 1993, 139 pp.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **WHO IS CALLED?**

The “sheep and shepherds” concept, rather than “sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ,” was with us for a good 1500 years. That is what makes the Council’s decree on the laity seem so starkly new... while it is as old as primitive Christianity.

Life apart from the world in monasteries began in the fourth century to be the ideal for becoming “holy.” Dominique le Tourneau writes in *Opus Dei*, “The net effect was that at the time Opus Dei was born many lay persons felt wrenched and as though torn between a desire for spiritual life, which seemed to imply a distancing from the world, and a desire to remain in the world... where they felt called both to holiness and service.”

The struggles of Blessed Escriva to found Opus Dei must have contributed greatly to the Council’s decrees on authentic vocations in the world, and the solemn teaching that *all* laypersons are called even to the very highest holiness in their lay state.

The opposition to Opus Dei at the time was almost violent.

In a masterpiece of understatement Le Tourneau writes: “Perhaps Spain in the 1940s and 1950s was not ready for it, *particularly in clerical circles*.” He describes some of the opposition:

“Some attacks were made in the confessional or from the pulpit. Others were served up by the press or by those good people in their visits to the families of Opus Dei members. No little anxiety was caused when *parents were told that their children ‘could go to hell’ because they had been led to believe that one could be holy in the world*. Students were sent to spy on Opus Dei centers and to denounce the heresies and deviations that took place there. One day Father Escriva’s first book, *The Way*, was

publicly burned in a convent school in Barcelona."

We are not talking of the dark ages. We are talking of the years just before the Council. Why, according to Le Tourneau, did it seem almost *heretical* in certain "clerical circles" that lay persons could be holy and assume important apostolic roles in the Church? Could there have been a conception of lay persons as not educated in the faith, addicted to "signs and wonders", tending to be superstitious rather than solidly holy?

#### **When a Priest Was Not Available**

Blessed Escriva saw a different picture. He saw humble lay persons at daily Communion. He saw them striving for holiness. He saw them as truly the People of God. And he saw that not only was each one called to the very highest sanctity but among them there were specific *apostolic vocations*.

To illustrate at once the problem and the real truth there is the case of Louis Kaszmarek. The priest who had been traveling with the International Pilgrim Virgin was not available. (Al Williams, another lay apostle of whom we will speak in a moment, was traveling with another statue blessed just for the U.S.)

While we were looking for a priest, Louis volunteered. It was to be only temporary. It was necessary to speak in churches day after day, sometimes in as many as three in one day. We all felt this called for a priest.

But one clear sign after the other indicated that Louis *had been called*. He had never married, so he was free. The family plastic business was willing to sacrifice his services. He was filled with the message of Fatima and its urgency. As he himself tells in his book, the signs were so clear that it was as though Our Lady had come Herself to say: "Louis, I want you to accompany me, the Pilgrim Virgin, and be my voice."

Priests and Bishops were invariably present wherever he spoke. In the aggregate, in 18 years, tens of thousands heard him deliver Our Lady's message. *All that time we kept looking for the ideal priest for this job*, but none came. A layman had been called. He was accepted almost everywhere and his success was little less than phenomenal.

Surely we can understand the reluctance in clerical circles to trust lay persons to fill responsible positions in the life of the Church. We can understand it especially in the case of Bishops who have a firm control with priests whom they know, who are "professional," and who can be changed by a letter or phone call if they do anything "out of line."

### **Need for Apostolic Formation**

But like much of today's laity, Louis was well educated and well formed in his faith. One could say he was a specialist in the matter of which he spoke. The Council documents speak much about apostolic formation for the laity. Some colleges (like Seton Hall University) have special courses for lay formation, and there is formation within many of the apostolates themselves.

In the Blue Army in the beginning we used our religious community, Handmaids of Mary Immaculate, solely for apostolic formation. We had a school in Detroit and weekly seminars were held on various college campuses in the U.S. Other seminars were held at our international center in Fatima. In his book, *Gems of Wit and Wisdom*, Alfred Williams tells how just one week at the Blue Army school of formation at Fatima changed his whole life: "There were some 35 people who were invited to take this course of studies mainly because they were already active in the Marian movement to some degree. The school was held at Fatima for its aura of holiness and to experience the reality of Our Lady's appearances and the urgency of Her message.

"Indeed they studied, sometimes as late as 11 o'clock at night. Then on April 9, 1967, they received a diploma from the Bishop of Fatima. The very next day John Haffert, who conducted the school, asked: 'Al, how would you like to work *full time* for Our Lady of Fatima, for the Blue Army?'

"I seemed to feel a special grace. I said Yes."\*

A few weeks later, on May 13, 1967, Pope Paul VI came to Fatima and blessed several statues as Pilgrims to various countries including the U.S.A. The Bishop of Fatima himself brought the statue to Columbus, Ohio. And again, as in the case of the International Pilgrim



Above, delegates at meeting of the international council of the Blue Army on the front steps of Domus Pacis, international center of the World Apostolate of Fatima.

Below, in the auditorium of the Blue Army international center at Fatima, left to right: the author, Bishop Hnilica and Canon Laurentin (speaking). The internationally celebrated theologian said: "Events like Fatima remind us that the transcendent God remains present and near."



Virgin, we had no priest immediately available... so Al Williams became its custodian. He visited some 6,000 churches and over one thousand schools during twenty three years as part of one of the major apostolates of the 20th century. The Rev. Joaquim Alonso, official documentarian of Fatima, went so far as to say: "Never in the history of the Church have charisms descended in such abundance upon the people of God as through the Pilgrim Virgin... movements of masses of people... without precedent in the religious history of the Church."

"I owe my whole life to that school at Fatima," Al said after the publication of his last book.\*

Discernment was one of the primary purposes of that "school." We did not presume that in a week we could *form* lay apostles. We knew that *daily communicants* were to a great extent *already formed*. So, by conveying our own sense of the urgency of Our Lady's message right there at Fatima where one could **FEEL** it, we hoped to help them discover their own special vocations in the world.

### **Rich Harvest**

Several other apostles from that same class worked effectively, like Al Williams, for over *twenty years*, and were still working as this was being written: Rosa Lim in Malaysia; Fatima Furtado in Singapore; Dave Blum who founded an apostolate of Divine Mercy; Martha Loya who, like Al Williams, traveled all over the nation especially to schools, influencing thousands of school children as well as adults with her illustrated lecture of Our Lady's message. The fact that the Blue Army in the United States obtained over two million petitions for the collegial consecration and some five million signatures to the pledge to fulfill the basic requests of Our Lady of Fatima (out of 25 million worldwide) is due largely to such individual zeal.

If we had held such mini-schools *every week for years*, just those few apostles would have been worth it. But many, many more caught the flame and spread the fire.

Many of the "good Christian faithful" are just waiting for the spark! Apostolic formation for daily Communicants, is little more than that. They are like tinder. They catch the flame. They spread the fire.

A sense of urgency caused us to look to persons already schooled in the faith for an immediate response. But in the long term, education is needed. We will speak later of this. Frank Sheed, as we shall see, was most emphatic on the subject.

One problem is that an apostolate can grow so big that it loses its spark. It might even lose the very awareness of the need to light new fires, content with those already burning. And when the old fires burn down there is nothing but ashes.

*But the apostles, formed and "activated", go on.*

#### **Marian Museum**

Many come to mind from those apostolic formation seminars at Fatima such as Jimmy Williamson and Joey Lomangino. Like many others, these men were called to great things. The seminar had little to do with it.

Jimmy Williamson came to the U.S. from Belgium in 1940. The war prevented his return so he joined the U.S. navy. After the war he joined the Blue Army and built up its center in a borough of New York City. He organized all-night vigils and even a Rosary Rally at Madison Square Garden. But Jimmy will be remembered especially because, when statues were being removed from churches, he founded a *Marian Museum* (officially recognized by the State of New York) in which he gathered statues of Our Lady from all over the world.

Since Our Lady manifests Her presence often through even one statue, could not this museum be called "the museum of Our Lady's moral presence in the world?" I mention Jimmy for another reason. In his later years, living in the world as a widower, he made the evangelical vows.

Can we not wonder how many other lay persons, following along the path of holiness shown by Our Lady at Fatima, have secretly come so far?

How sad that we cannot add pages and pages and pages of examples! I can still see Dottie Willmanns' face before me. Most of the world will already have forgotten her name, but she was the right hand of Father Daniel Lord who said that if Msgr. Colgan and I got together there would be an explosion for Our Lady. He had a

precedent. It happened when Dorothy Willmann teamed up with him for the *Queen's Work*.

### **All Those Committee Hours!**

And how about the men and women who give their time to attend meetings, often losing their identity in committees?

Albert Setz-Degen, executive of an international shipping firm in Basle, Switzerland, headed the Blue Army International secretariate. With absolute fluency in English, French, German and Italian, and years of executive experience, he became a voice to the world for the World Apostolate of Fatima.

Joe Plevyak was an inventor and manufacturer who was deeply moved by the message and miracle of Fatima after he and his wife, Anne, participated in one of the Queen of the World Peace Flights. He subsequently devoted hundreds of hours to the apostolate at the expense of his own business.

If the time of such highly qualified "apostles" (make no mistake, that is what they are!) were calculated in dollars, the figure would be mind boggling. Just in the Blue Army such contributions might be measured in the millions.

*Out of that glorious throng comes a distinct pattern of God using saints in the world.* He uses the special talents of generous individuals formed by Himself.

If Jesus in the Eucharist sustained Martha Robin, Alexandrina, and others, without any other food, to what extent does He sustain and enlighten the souls of those who receive Him daily? If the Blessed Sacrament could replenish each day the normal loss of calories without any other food, to what extent does It replenish the soul? Consider all the lay persons at this moment formed by the Divine Teacher through daily Communion!

\**Gems of Wit and Wisdom*, A. Williams, 1112 S.E. 5th Terrace, Cape Coral FL 33990.

## Chapter Ten

### JUAN DIEGO: A MODEL

The Council documents on the laity and *Christifideles Laici* are not meant to shake up the clergy perhaps as much as to shake up the laity. During all those centuries when the thought of a “vocation” was almost at once taken to mean a religious or priestly calling, something of even greater concern had gripped the Church. *It was lay passivity.*

First it became generally acceptable that the *clergy* rather than parents would give spiritual education to the children. The clergy would lead the faithful to Heaven; the latter had but to follow.

Second, most seemed satisfied to save their own souls without any sense of responsibility for the souls of others. *Evangelization was the job of the Church.* And the laity did not see themselves as “the Church.”

#### **Don't Talk About Religion!**

Some older persons reading this book (and some younger ones, too) may recognize this mindset. It travels under the slogan: “Two things one never talks about are politics and religion.”

It seems incredible that religions with only partial truth, like the Mormons and Jehovah witnesses, have a militant laity spreading it from door to door while Catholics, with the whole truth, sit on it.

We seem content to enjoy the benefit of the Sacraments without considering the obligation to share these unique and special treasures of our Church with others. That has been the job of “the Church.” And we are only members, followers, the spoon-fed children. We said early on that perhaps one of the reasons for this mindset is that all the statues on our altars, all the canonized models held before us, have been religious nuns and priests. There have been few strong signals of holiness

and evangelical zeal in the laity. But the Council, and Our Lady appearing to three children at Fatima, are to change all that.

The light of Fatima casts an illuminating glow over the second Vatican Council, shining from the Immaculate Heart of Mary on three children causing them to "feel lost in God". It holds the promise that this light of evangelization, "A reaffirmation of the Gospel" (Pius XII), can bring all the world into the light. Indeed, is this not what Our Lady actually PROMISED with the words: "Finally, My Immaculate Heart will triumph?"

And this was not the first time Our Lady chose lay persons for such a great mission to the Church and to the world. *Almost all of the messages of the past one hundred years have been given by Heaven through lay persons*, and does this not underline the role and the responsibility of lay persons to make these messages known and lived in the world?

Blessed Juan Diego, a 57 year old man to whom Our Lady appeared at the geographical heart of the Americas, begged Our Lady to choose someone else for Her message. He thought Our Lady should have gone to a priest or directly to the Bishop. But Our Lady answered:

*"Listen, little son, you must try to understand that I have many messengers and servants whom I could charge with the delivery of My message and cause to do my will. But it is altogether necessary that you yourself should undertake this entreaty and that through your own mediation and assistance my purpose should be accomplished."*

Could any words speak more clearly of the lay vocation? Did Our Lady say them also for YOU? Is there a lesson here for you to seriously ponder? And to whom did Our Lady send Her lay apostle, Her messenger? She sent him to the Bishop. There could not be a more perfect example of all we are trying to say in this little book.

While this was being written...Juan Diego was beatified after almost five hundred years. So were several other lay persons whom we shall presently mention. But as Dr. Juan Alva, of the Militia Immaculata located in Chapel Hill, N.C., points out: "*Our Lady chose one particular,*

*unknown, middle aged widower who would have preferred to be left alone.* She told him that he was Her man. He was the necessary instrument of Divine Providence for his poor people. One unlikely layman was to be the key to unlocking graces for a nation."

### **Special Need in Third World**

Mexico, at the time of the mission given by Our Lady to Blessed Juan Diego, had only a few missionaries for millions of natives, and those few missionaries were struggling with a totally alien language.

The mission of Juan Diego had far greater scope than a miraculous picture. *It involved the conversion of eight million pagans in as many years!*

This book has been written and published in one of the world's most affluent countries, and all that is said here about lay involvement in the life of the Church applies *a fortiori* to the Third World where priests are scarce.

In an address on the lay apostolate delivered at the International Congress of the Dominican Third Order on August 29, 1958, Pope Pius XII said much of what we read in John Paul II's *Christifideles* and adds: "We think particularly of the immense needs of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, which we illustrated in our address of October 5, 1957. The intervention in those areas *of an active and determined Christian laity has become urgent.*"

A Catechist in his home town of Cuapa, Nicaragua, was favored with visions of Our Lady of Fatima (which were recognized as authentic by the local bishop) as though Our Lady wanted to call attention to Her love and gratitude *for the laity who respond to the call of the Sovereign Pontiffs and the Council to act... to get the Rosary going before Mass... or to have the Rosary and catechetical instruction in some remote mission where there is no priest, no organized prayers, no instruction... in a word, to think not only of their own salvation but of the spiritual needs around them.*

Such is the example of Bl. Juan Diego, the 57 year old man who spoke to Our Lady, who seemed only about 18, as though She were the older and he the younger. Our Lady spoke to him as though he were indeed a tiny child

Right: Statuary group in the old Basilica (seen below) showing Juan Diego presenting Our Lady's "sign" to the Bishop. As the roses which Our Lady Herself had arranged in his mantle tumbled forth, Her miraculous image appeared. "Fear nothing" Our Lady had said, "Do you not know that I am here?"



whom She could hold in Her arms. And who is not touched by the effort of Juan Diego to avoid seeing Our Lady the next day when he was hastening into Mexico City to get a priest for his dying uncle... but Our Lady intercepted him on his detour and told him not to worry about *anything*.

"I, who am your Mother, am I not here?" And She assured him that even from that moment his uncle was cured. (Indeed Our Lady actually appeared to the uncle and brought him back from the brink of death.)

### **We Interrupt to Ask WHY**

We must speak more about Juan Diego, but here we would like to ask one question: Why did Our Lady insist that only this humble layman be Her messenger? And why is the Church now raising to the altars exemplars like Bartolo Longo and Juan Diego and others whose stories we will soon tell?

The answer was given by Pope St. Pius X who asked a group of Cardinals: "What is the thing *most necessary at the present time to save society?*"

One suggested: "To build schools."

"No," said the saint.

"Increase the number of churches," said another.

"No," again said the Pope.

"Increase recruitment of vocations to the priesthood" said a third.

"No, no," said St. Pius X, "*what is most necessary at the present time is to have in each parish a group of laity at the same time virtuous, well-instructed, determined, and really apostolic.*"\*

When Our Lady first appeared to Juan Diego he was on a walk of several miles to a catechism class. He was much like the recently beatified Isidore Bakanja with basic instruction, almost heroic faith, determined and really apostolic.

Ever remaining humble and simple, Juan Diego lived constantly near the marvelous picture given by Our Lady as Her sign of evangelization. In effect, *he became the spokesperson of Our Lady of All Nations, Mother of the Church.*

At first the call seemed merely that he should show the miraculous sign to the Bishop. But the Bishop confirmed him in a greater mission. As Dr. Alva remarks, "as Joseph had cared for Mary Herself, he was a part of the miracle, Her representative, Her salesman, a living proof that Heaven had smiled on the poor and lowly."

This was far from easy because he was indeed such a humble and retiring person. Those millions affected by the miracle all wanted to touch the miraculous image as has been the case in all the years which followed. And how many times he had to answer the same questions over and over.

But for those millions of converts *Our Lady wanted Her lay apostle there in their midst*. His spirit is there still... and his story inspires every one who hears the appeal of his or her Mother crying out at Fatima or in tears at Akita, begging help to bring Her message to the world for the triumph of the Church, for the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart.

What is *most necessary* at the present time to save society? *It is to have a Juan Diego in every parish.* It is "to have in each parish a group of laity at the same time virtuous, well-instructed, determined, and really apostolic."

\*Sharkey, *The Woman Shall Conquer*, p. 265.

**Below: The oldest picture of Juan Diego, center; Cortez at right.**



## **Chapter Eleven**

### **OTHER MODELS**

**Joan Carroll Cruz**, devoted wife and mother of five, wrote a book of almost 800 pages titled *Secular Saints\** in which she addressed these words to the reader:

“Recall, if you will, those works of art in which a saint, dressed in the habit of his or her Order, is poised with hands folded... gazing lovingly towards the Heavens. Have you ever wondered, as I have, if these saints *would ever have won recognition by the Church if they had remained in the world to combat against its vanities and difficulties?*”

#### **Mostly Martyrs**

At the end of her book she lists the manner in which her more than 200 secular saints died. Almost *all* were martyrs (for purity or faith). Until very recently the majority of lay persons were canonized because of giving one's life for faith or virtue. That is a sure sign of getting to Heaven. A striking feature of this book, *Secular Saints*, is a listing at the back of those who were women who married very young, some whose marriages went sour, some whose marriages were healed, some whose marriages survived despite difficulties.

Then follows a list of major problems they endured such as disappointment in love, childlessness, separation and divorce, in-law problems, unfaithful spouse, spousal abuse, infidelity, surviving death of a spouse, remarriage, parenting, death of children, having an illegitimate child. There is a similar list for married men and another category for children: kidnapped, orphaned, raised in foster homes, poor and rich.

Joan Cruz said she wrote this book in the hope that the readers would find saints who had experienced and survived problems similar to their own, for two reasons: 1) To be consoled and inspired; 2) “to pray to them in

your troubles and to ask for their heavenly assistance." We are more likely to find consolation and inspiration in the lives of martyrs than in the lives of non-martyrs. The latter almost always are expected to have led heroic lives from the day they were born.

### **Consider the case of Maria Virgili.**

Maria Virgili was a typical holy person in the world wanting to make a total commitment. Her first thought was to become a nun. The same old story. But because of the need of a dowry her father said: "We are too poor. *You can be a nun in the world.*"

Prophetic words! That was indeed her vocation. She made a lasting mark on her entire community. She worked in the fields with her father. When he died she was just a teenager, now poorer than ever. As the eldest child she did all kinds of work: in the fields, housework, laundry, anything... and not only for her family but for other needy poor.

Later, like Frank Duff, she worked to rehabilitate prostitutes. She took them home, arranged to get them work and even marriage. Often her reward was insults, even threats. But she almost invariably succeeded by patience and prayer. But we do not have space here for her amazing life. Here is what happened to her cause:

### **Almost a Lost Cause!**

It was completely stopped after it had reached an advanced stage when it was learned that a command sent to her by the Holy Office to cease certain activities had not been obeyed. She had apparently been guilty of negligence, perhaps even disobedience!

But the people (*the people*) said she was a saint. Many claimed favors through her intercession. Soldiers who returned from the war attributed their safety to her. They kept appealing to Rome. But again and again, more lately in 1900 and 1909, the cause was denied. In 1984, 250 years *after her death*, the whole town, including the Communists, decided to celebrate the anniversary by dedicating a school to her.

Maria Virgili had been a Third Order Carmelite. When the Carmelite Postulator in Rome learned about the action of her town of Ronciglione, he investigated again

the life and miracles of Maria. He found enough to persuade an official "historian for causes" to look into the matter.

After the kind of extensive research that contributes to the expense of canonical causes, the historian found that the Holy Office had sent the command for Maria to her BISHOP. Instead of giving her the command, the Bishop had placed her under investigation for several days. Then, personally convinced of her authenticity, the Bishop *never gave her the command*.

One might wonder that it took 250 years before the necessary research cleared Maria Virgili's holy name.

Father Redemptus Valabek, O.Carm, the postulator who rescued her cause, remarked: "If God wishes to raise a model to the altars, nothing will prevent it no matter how long it may take."

Once again the voice of the people in such matters proved to be the voice of God. The ban against the cause for Maria's beatification was lifted while this very book was being written.

"You can be a nun in the world," her father had said. And Father Redemptus exclaimed: "What a life of holiness and spiritual benefit to her community followed! *She achieved perhaps far more in the world than she ever could have done in religion, rehabilitating prostitutes, organizing catechism for children, alleviating suffering in sick beds and prisons. She spent whole nights in prayer. When she died at the age of 73, as poor as ever, practically the whole town came to pay her a final show of affection and gratitude which they printed on her tombstone: "The poor, the orphans, the widows, placed this here for the kindest of mothers."*"

But if we have so few exemplars like Maria Virgili raised to the altars, we do have saints from the past and many martyrs. The monumental work of Joan Cruz opens vast treasures.

Is it not wonderful to realize that God, through the evidence of MIRACLES, wills that the Christian faithful have models to follow to Heaven, often in the path of a specific vocation? Since miracles are needed for beatification and canonization, and since only God can

work miracles, our Heavenly Father thus indicates the examples of holiness He wants, in His great Love, to give us, as Joan Cruz says, *for our consolation and inspiration*. That is why the *biographies* of the saints are so important.

### **Need for Modern Examples**

Unfortunately we have hardly any detailed biographies of the early saints, especially those who lived before the invention of the printing press.

Despite many miracles, St. Philomena was removed from the calendar because there was no biography; we knew hardly more than that she was a martyr. St. Simon Stock, whom we know to have been a great saint from the very fact that he received the Scapular from Our Lady, has a feast only in the Carmelite calendar for the same reason. There are many other medieval saints about whom we know too little. We must treasure the Saints the Church puts before us and especially those of our own time. They are God's Heavenly Showcase of Holiness.

### **BLESSED ISIDORE BAKANJA**

In 1994, when Pope John Paul II beatified Isidore Bakanja, the suffering Pope said that it made him *happy* to present such "*a model to the laity of the world.*"

Isidore, like Juan Diego, was a convert from his native animist religion. Like Juan Diego he was uneducated. The light and strength of the grace of his Baptism was a wonder. Becoming a Christian meant giving up his family and his entirely pagan village... and he was only a teenager. What is most amazing is that he had only three bases for heroic faith: Elemental catechism, the Rosary, and the Scapular.

In his language the word for the Scapular was *Bonhoto Malia* which means the uniform or *clothing of Mary*. The French speaking people of Zaire call it *Our Lady's Habit*. The missionaries had taught Isidore that it was a sign of his faith and also of Our Lady's personal relationship to him. Wearing it, he was *under Her Mantle*.

In almost every example of lay holiness we will find *consecration to Mary*, as practiced by Isidore through the

Scapular. That consecration seems a sure starting point of holiness.

Next was the Rosary, a prayer he could understand and which led him, through Mary, into the mysteries of Jesus.

### **Often Without Priests or Sacraments**

After leaving his family and village Isidore got a job on a rubber plantation. He was usually *without priests or sacraments*, but he experienced Jesus and Mary with him more and more as, wearing *Bonhoto Maia*, he prayed the Rosary and grew in faith. When others asked him about the Scapular, which was conspicuous as his only upper clothing, he told them about Jesus and Mary.

He soon experienced the hatred of his bosses. "You'll have the whole village praying and no one will want to work" one boss shouted at him. And he was told to discard his Scapular. He refused. It was Our Lady's Garment!

The boss tore it from him and ordered him flogged. When the boss was gone, Isidore picked up the Scapular and placed it again over his aching shoulders. The next time the boss saw the brave young man wearing the Scapular he flew into a rage. He ordered two men to hold him and a third to flog him so viciously that Isidore's poor body was torn so that some bones could be seen. He cried for mercy. But the perhaps satanically enraged boss kept kicking him in the neck and head and ordered the scourging continued. The whip made of elephant hide, with nails at the end, was murderous.

Isidore was thrown into a shed where he might have died unknown. But God had other plans for this hero of faith. He was able to crawl out into some bushes. An inspector of the plantation who passed there tells us what followed: "I saw a man come from the forest with his back torn apart by deep, festering, malodorous wounds, covered with filth, assaulted by flies. He was leaning on two sticks in order to get near me. He wasn't walking. He was dragging himself."

"If you meet the priests," Isidore said, "tell them that I am dying because I am a Christian." Two missionaries were with him when he received the last sacraments six

agonizing months later. He explained to them that the reason he was flogged was because the boss "did not like Christians. He did not want me to wear the Scapular... He yelled at me when I said my prayers."

All during his suffering he kept praying the Rosary. When asked if he forgave the man who had him flogged he said he had been praying for him, adding: "When I am in Heaven I shall pray for him very much." He died with the Rosary in his hand and the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel around his neck.

### **Ideal Example**

Blessed Isidore comes before us as a very special example of the formula of holiness given by Our Lady to the three children of Fatima. It is a formula which places all who follow it upon the path of solid holiness in the world.

One might liken it to a tricycle with a big, guiding wheel in front and two small wheels behind.

The big wheel is the essential request of Our Lady: The sanctification of our daily duty. The two back wheels are consecration and prayer.

Consecration to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart was seen as a most important, basic element of holiness by founders of major lay apostolates like Frank Duff and Blessed Jose Maria. Both recognized the value of the Scapular devotion to implement that consecration. Sister Lucia said the reason Our Lady of Fatima held the Scapular from the sky at the climax of the great miracle was "*because it is our sign of consecration to Her Immaculate Heart... She wants everyone to wear it.*"

And the Rosary is an almost perfect form of prayer not only for beginners on the path to holiness but as well by the greatest saints.

Blessed Isidore makes this real to us. He is almost the perfect model of the basic message of Fatima as fulfilled in the Blue Army.

Please note the word *basic*.

He became a saint with just those basics. Some missionaries put him on the tricycle and he rode it through the gates of Heaven.



Above: Pier Frassati three months before he died of an illness contracted while serving the sick (insert), and scene at his beatification on May 20th, 1990.

Right: Picture of Pier chosen for display on front balcony of St. Peter's on day of his beatification.

Pier Frassati said:  
*"Today, after a terrible war, which has affected the entire world, bringing material and moral ruin, we have a strict duty to cooperate in the world's regeneration so that a radiant dawn may break..."*



As we come closer to those gates more may be asked of us. When it happens, may we have the grace of giving that more with the same childlike simplicity, in confidence and joy, really believing in the words of our loving Lord: "My yoke is sweet, My burden is light."

### **PIER GEORGE FRASSATI**

So many lay persons are now being raised to the altars since the second Vatican Council that we have to limit our examples for the purposes of this book. We have scarcely mentioned Blessed Narcissa Moran who, like Estelle Faguette (to whom we shall soon give very special attention), gives exceptional affirmation of the lay vocation.

We choose to speak of Pier Frassati because he could well be the model of any modern young man. He was rich, handsome, well liked. He "had it all." And he was a saint.

*La Stampa*, one of the leading newspapers of Italy, was published by his father, who was also a senator and at one time (before Hitler) Ambassador to Germany. Pier loved and honored his parents, but they did not have much time for him. It was a dysfunctional family.

We normally expect child monsters to come from dysfunctional families. But Pier's sister Luciana, still living in 1994, wrote a book about her brother titled *Man of Beatitudes*.\*\* That was the title used by Pope John Paul in 1990 when he declared Pier Frassati to be in Heaven.

How could this be? How could a boy who never saw his mother receive Communion, or his father go to Mass, become a saint? And how could the Church KNOW he was a saint?

### **Body In corrupt**

Forty-five years after Pier's death *his body was found perfectly incorrupt*. It was as though he had been sleeping in his tomb for forty-five years. Study of his extraordinary life revealed that he had not only overcome his environment but had turned it into a means of saintliness! His sister tells us how, and we find it a very familiar story:

*"He had great a love for the Blessed Mother. He prayed*

*the Rosary daily. He had a great love of the Blessed Sacrament. He made night Eucharistic vigils."*

With these basic devotions he was still all boy, and all young man. He loved mountain climbing and all sports. His goodness attracted other youth to him. He managed to organize a circle of prayer, usually the Rosary, before any activity.

### **Model of Purity**

The virtue of purity goes together with devotion to Our Lady and to the Blessed Sacrament. But even so, knowing Pier's generation and the milieu in which he lived, it is wonderful to hear Father Carlos del Rey, a confessor of Pier, say: "I am not betraying any secrets if I tell you... Pier still wore the Baptismal stole of innocence." Is that *possible* in today's world... for a handsome, athletic boy... in a milieu of affluence?

It was possible because Pier had been led by Our Lady, like the children of Fatima, along the basic step stones of holiness. The biography written by his sister is a must for today's youth.\* Pier spoke to all generations when he said: "Today, after a terrible war that has affected the whole word, bringing material and moral ruin, we have a strict duty to cooperate in the world's regeneration so that a radiant dawn may break in which all nations recognize Jesus Christ as King not only in words, but in all their peoples' lives."

Do not those words summarize all we have wanted to say in these pages? Pier died of polio, an illness he contracted on one of his frequent visits to the sick. He was 24 years old.

### **BENEDICT JOSEPH LABRE**

Perhaps by now the reader may be curious about the only layman, other than a martyr or political figure, to have been canonized in more than five hundred years until the time of the Council. Benedict Joseph Labre was the eldest of fifteen children. He was in line to inherit a sizable farm and store in the northeastern corner of France, near Calais. He was well educated and, like Pier Frassati, he was handsome.

Here was another young man who had “everything going for him.” But since he felt a “calling” to belong entirely to God he decided to be a Trappist. To please his family he compromised and applied to the Carthusians first at Longueness, then Neuville. After being rejected at both because he was not yet twenty, when he reached that age he applied again at Neuville. Rejected again, he finally went to the Trappists. Rejected there, he returned to Neuville.

After a time he was sent out with the words: “*Providence is not calling you to us. Follow the inspirations of Grace!*” Even after all these five rejections, he did not see how he could fulfill his desire of *total commitment* to God *without becoming a religious*. So now he joined the Cistercians at Sept-Fons. After less than a year he was sent out a sixth time. *Didn’t God want him?*

#### **“Follow the Inspirations of Grace!”**

With feelings of rejection difficult to imagine, the saint went to a local Shrine of Our Lady to beg Her direction. Although he did not get an “answer,” he felt consoled. He decided to go to another Shrine, and then another. Thus he began to travel the highways of the world from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, and from the Adriatic to the Atlantic. On foot he traveled thousands of miles finding His Beloved in the “cloister” of crowded roads and cities.

Several times I have visited his tomb in the church of Santa Maria ai Monti at the foot of the Esquiline Hill in Rome and have led hundreds of lay pilgrims there to be inspired by his story.

How many good lay persons have felt that the only way of fulfilling their “calling” to be saints, and to give themselves wholly to God, was by becoming a religious or a priest? It is the same old story. They have never been told that there are “other vocations.” They have never been shown lay models of holiness.

In northeastern France, in the little village of Amettes, the birthplace of Saint Benedict Joseph is now an open Shrine. On the walls of this house where he lived most of his life one reads the simple message of holiness in the

world. He has been called "*The most amazing and significant saint of the eighteenth century*" (*The Beggar Saint*, by John Seward, ISBN 0 85 183 561 9).

Elsewhere we have remarked that laymen are rarely canonized not so much because there are no lay saints but because there is no "lobby" for them. (Indeed by sheer force of numbers there MUST be more lay saints than in the ranks of clergy or religious.) So how did God, Who willed that Saint Benedict Joseph should be an example of great holiness in the world, arrange to have him canonized?

God kept the body of Pier Frassati incorrupt to draw Rome's attention. In the case of Benedict Joseph, *when he died the bells of Rome rang and little children ran into the streets crying, "The saint is dead! The saint is dead!"*

Up on the Quirinal, where the Pope resided at that time, they must have wondered what Cardinal or Bishop or what holy Confessor of the Eternal City had died. And it must have been a cause of some amazement that the excitement was over the death of a homeless man who collapsed on the steps of Santa Maria ai Monti clothed in rags and with nothing on his person but a Rosary around his neck, a Rosary in his hands, and a sack which contained the Office, the Imitation of Christ, the New Testament, and a dry crust of bread.

What was more amazing than the ringing of bells and the shouts of children hailing the death of a saint was that miracles were reported where his body was laid out and the crowds grew so great that even though it was Easter Sunday it was not possible to celebrate Mass there, (no problem, because there were so many other churches close by).

Two miracles are required for a canonization. Even though thousands of favors are often recorded, many a canonization has been held up for decades, even hundreds of years, for lack of one miracle. But in the case of Saint Benedict Joseph the Church acknowledged no less than 131 miracles within a short time of his death.

It was God's Will that the laity should have a model, that they should know beyond doubt that not only are many religious rules "canonized" in their founders and



Above: The home of St. Benedict Joseph in Amettes, now a Shrine. Stations of Cross at left go around the grounds. Church, with memorial of the saint, is just across the street.

Below the author points to sign in the Saint's house which reads: *Benedict Labre had as his cloister the highways, the crossroads, the streets and woods. He calls us all to live the adventure of faith IN THE SEARCH OF GOD.*



foundresses. The lay vocation also is “canonized” in men like Benedict Joseph and women like Anne Marie Taigi. The cloister can be found in the world, and the church is affirming this today as *never* before.

This is so new that we have no statues of them and we are just getting to know them. But they come from every walk of life. Some reach holiness at a very early age, like Saint Dominic Savio. Some are doctors, some lawyers, some even politicians. Through miracles God has chosen to show them to us at this hinge of history.

### **ST. JOSEPH MOSCATI and BL. CONTARDO**

St. Joseph Moscati, a medical doctor, was canonized (the first\* since Benedict Joseph!) in 1987. He is a lay saint worth the five hundred year wait.

But even after 500 years, it was the same old story. As Moscati grew in holiness he felt a desire to belong entirely to God. So he decided to join a religious order.

He had several degrees and taught at the University in addition to his practice. So he was a natural for the Jesuit Order, right? Wrong. They turned him down. They said: “You are needed in the world.” And in the world he became a great saint.

Anyone reading his marvelous story would pray to have such a doctor administer to them. Any doctors reading his story would pray to be like him... touching the lives of those to whom they minister not only with compassion but with the wonders of God’s Grace.

#### **Lawyer and Politician**

In 1927, at the funeral oration of St. Joseph Moscati, Cardinal Salotti likened him to a law professor, Contardo Ferrini, who had died just 25 years before. The Cardinal said: “Two truly worthy scientists of fervent and sincere piety, two pure souls who remained untouched by the filth of our times and by the lusts of the senses.”

Contardo Ferrini was a professor specializing in Greek and Roman law. He was also briefly a politician (elected to the City Council of Italy’s greatest industrial city, Milan). He also has now been beatified.

Unlikely saints, these laymen! Lawyers, doctors,

politicians! Oh, the power of the Rosary and Communion!

### **VEN. MATT TALBOT**

Matt Talbot, well on the way to canonization, was a “hopeless” alcoholic until he was 28 years old. Hitting an all time low, on a mixed impulse of desperation and grace, he went to confession. The next morning, for the first time in years, he received Jesus. He went to Holy Communion.

Not only did he never again touch alcohol but, although a very heavy smoker, he soon gave up tobacco as well. (That proved to be even more difficult.) He died at the age of 69 after forty one years of daily Mass and penance. Six years after this death, in 1931, his cause was begun. Just six years later came the Papal decree declaring him Venerable.

“Saint” Matt’s example fairly cries out to despairing homeless and addicts: “Jesus is in the nearest tabernacle! Take up the Rosary and go to Him! He is waiting to make YOU a saint!”

### **A Former Satanist**

Bartolo Longo, beatified in 1980, is an extraordinary example for our times of every degree of satanic cults, and the times in which Our Lady offers the Rosary to drive Satan from the world. He was not only a satanist, he was a lawyer consecrated to Satan and “ordained” a priest of Satan by a “bishop” of the sect.

The prayers of his family finally prevailed and he returned to the Faith. But the mark of Satan seemed to cling to him. On the edge of despair, thinking that despite his return to the Sacraments his consecration to Satan was “forever” and that he would be damned, there came to his mind the words of Our Lady: “He who promotes my Rosary will be saved.” Bartolo devoted the rest of his life to propagation of the Rosary devotion and was founder of the most famous Rosary Shrine in the world. It is located not far from Naples, adjacent to the ruins of the ancient city of Pompeii.

Having visited there several times (perhaps 20 or more!), standing in the ruins of Pompeii and seeing the beautiful dome of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary

towering over the city which was annihilated by an eruption of Vesuvius within 24 hours, the words of Our Lady of the Rosary at Fatima took on vivid meaning: "Several entire nations will be annihilated, but if My requests are heard... My Immaculate Heart will triumph."

Thanks to Blessed Bartolo Longo, a graphic example is seen at Pompeii: The triumph of Our Lady of the Rosary over a priest of Satan, and a visual reminder of the prophecy of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima to our atomic age!

We regret the paucity of detail in the examples of lay vocations given in this chapter. But now we shall single out a few more detailed examples, beginning with a lay person specifically told that, to accomplish a special mission for the Church, she was to remain in the world.

\*When we speak of St. Benedict Joseph Labre as the only layman canonized in the more than 500 years before the council, we are excluding martyrs and the child saint, Dominic Savio.

\*\*The book can be obtained from the Frassati Society, P.O. Box 360, Orangefield, TX 77639, or from LAF.

Below: The room (now a chapel) where Our Lady appeared to Estelle Faguette, brought her back from the brink of death, and formed her as a lay apostle: *"As you are you can promote my glory."*



## Chapter Twelve

### THE APOSTLE FORMED BY OUR LADY

**E**stelle Fagquette, of whom we have already spoken, was dying. And greater than her death agony was her grief that her mother and father and an orphaned niece, whom she had helped to raise, were dependent upon her poor salary as a servant.

She wrote a pitiful letter to Our Lady lamenting that if she died these three loved ones would be forced to beg in order to live.

It was near the last moment. The doctor said it was only a matter of hours. Suddenly Satan appeared at the foot of the death bed. Instantly Our Lady appeared at the other side and said to Satan: "*What are you doing here? Do you not see that she is wearing My livery and that of My son?*"

Our Lady was referring to the Brown Scapular Estelle was wearing. I have written of this at length in my book, *Her Glorious Title.*\* So I will speak here only of Estelle's vocation.

The miraculous cure of Estelle has been recognized by the Church and her apparitions declared genuine.

The room of the apparitions is now a chapel adjoined to a Dominican convent in the village of Pellevoisin in the Diocese of Bourges, France, not far from the city of Tours. Estelle is buried in a simple grave in the cemetery of the village only a short distance from the place of the miracle and apparitions.

When Our Lady told Estelle that she would be cured, *Estelle wondered what religious community she should join. The same old story!*

This time she had her Heavenly Mother right there to set her right. Our Lady told her to remain in the lay state

saying: "As you are you can publish my glory." And for those who are called to holiness in the world, Estelle is a special example because during the course of fifteen apparitions Our Lady formed Estelle as a lay apostle.

### **Her Mission**

Never before, in the more than seven hundred years of the Scapular, had it been called not only the livery (or special uniform) of Our Lady but also that of Her Son. In one of the apparitions the *Sacred Heart appeared on a white panel of the Scapular* which Our Lady wore. When Our Lady invited Estelle to kiss it, Estelle was aware of the living, beating Heart of Our Lady beneath the Scapular on which she had been invited to kiss the living resurrected Heart of Jesus.

This seemed a peak experience of *devotion to the Two Hearts*, the devotion of these latter times.

However since this is described in the book mentioned above, let us get on with Estelle's "lay vocation." Every word Our Lady spoke to Estelle, after telling her to remain in the world to make Her message known, is a word of deep meaning for each of us.

### **Value of Life**

When Our Lady was about to cure her, Estelle (like the children of Fatima) expressed the desire to return with Our Lady to Heaven rather than remain on earth. (She had also received total confidence in God's Providence to care for her loved ones.)

"*Ungrateful one*" Our Lady said to Her, "*if My Son gives you life it is because you need it. What has He given man on earth more precious than life? In regaining life, do not think that you will be free of suffering; no, you will suffer and you will not be free of troubles. That is what makes life meritorious. If My Son is touched, it is by your great resignation and patience. Do not lose the fruit of your choice. Have I not said to you: If He gives you life, you will publish My glory?*"

And then Our Lady said: "Let us look at the past."

Estelle reports: "I am still full of confusion at the faults Our Lady made known to me which, in my eyes, had been slight... I wished to cry out for pardon! But I could not. My pain was too great. I was stupefied. The Holy Virgin

looked at me with kindness and then disappeared without saying more. How I was filled with remorse!"

### **Three Lessons**

So in the first two (of fifteen) apparitions Estelle was given some inkling of her mission, told that she was to fulfill this mission in the lay state, and taught the value of time in this world to make reparation and to grow in holiness.

In the next apparition Our Lady consoled her and said that the past was the past; already Estelle had made up for her faults by her *resignation*.

Then Our Lady consoled her by recalling some of the good deeds of the past. But Estelle was still so conscious of the evil of venial sins as offenses against the great Goodness of God that anything she had done of good seemed poor in comparison. And Our Lady said: "I am all merciful... In the future try to be faithful. Do not lose the graces given to you and publish my glory."

### **Mission Reaffirmed**

Once again Estelle was told to be a saint in the world, that she had a mission: She was to publish Our Lady's glory. Our Lady does not command her to be faithful to this mission but to TRY to be faithful. She is not to be discouraged by apparent failures and lapses. And if authorities say "NO," and she feels helpless, impotent, even apparently prevented from fulfilling her mission she will still be fulfilling it by her *good will and resignation*, her readiness to keep trying.

How is she to accomplish this? She has no money. She is a poor servant. The little she does earn goes to support her family. Without money or position, how can she accomplish ANY mission, let alone one so important?

In the next apparition Our Lady remained longer than previous times. Nothing was said. But all the words Our Lady had addressed to her previously passed through Estelle's mind. Then, before leaving, Our Lady said simply: "You will publish my glory."

Estelle struggled to say that she did not know how that would be possible.

Our Lady's final words were: "Do all you can."

We must consider the example of Estelle to be of special importance because, unlike most visionaries, who were children, Estelle was an adult chosen and formed by Our Lady Herself for a mission in the world.

In the fifth apparition Estelle promised to do all she could to fulfill her mission. In return Our Lady said: "If you wish to serve me, be simple and let your actions conform to your words."

### **Begin At Once**

Estelle asked if she should begin this mission at once and Our Lady said: "Yes, yes, publish my glory. But before doing so you will await the opinion of your confessor and director. You will have hindrances; you will be treated as a visionary, as imagining things, even crazy. Pay no attention to all that. Be faithful to me. I will help you."

Since Estelle was to begin at once, but only with the consent of her confessor and director, must she not have wondered: "What if they say NO?"

The lesson now given by Our Lady is of utmost importance. The authority for Estelle's mission is not from the visions. It will come from her confessor, her director. Our Lady has given her the calling, but a priest will give her the authority. But WHAT priest?

Judging by Our Lady's warning that there will be hindrances, and that she would be considered a visionary and even crazy, how was she going to get a priest? And would she not need backing of a bishop?

### **If Necessary, Go Higher**

It is interesting that at the very end of the fifteen apparitions to Estelle Our Lady's very last words to her were to be: "Courage. If he (referring to the Prelate) cannot agree with your requests, and if he offers difficulties, you will go further. Fear nothing. I will help you."

Could this have been the reason for Estelle's concern, her lack of calm? In the sixth apparition Our Lady smiled and looking at Estelle intently said: "Be calm, my child. Patience. You will have troubles but I am there."

The seventh apparition was again one of beauty and encouragement. Our Lady appeared as She had to St. Catherine Laboure with showers of Grace streaming

from Her outstretched hands. The message She wanted Estelle to make known to the world was an expansion of the message given to St. Catherine Laboure and "iconed" on the miraculous medal. (*St. Catherine was taken to Heaven this same year that Our Lady was appearing to Estelle.*)

The humble servant girl, filled with the wonder of her miraculous cure, began at once *to speak to everyone* about Our Lady's appearances despite fear of ridicule. This alone caused Our Lady to say:

*"You have already published my glory. Continue. The Heart of My Son has so much love for Mine that he cannot refuse My requests. Through Me He will touch the hardest hearts."*

Then Our Lady showed Estelle some blank paper and told her it would be used '*To publish the accounts as will be judged by several of my servants. There will indeed be contradictions but fear nothing, be calm.*'

### **Importance of Being Calm**

It is important to note again that command: BE CALM. Obviously, Our Lady is preparing Estelle for some rocky times ahead. Estelle suggested that some sign of Our Lady's power would help the mission and Our Lady said: "*Is not your cure one of the greatest proofs of My power? I have come especially for the conversion of sinners.*"

In the next vision (the 8th) Our Lady tenderly reproached Estelle: "*I would wish that you have greater calm.*" The ninth apparition was an almost shocking confirmation of the need of calmness of soul, of the peace which comes from resignation, as Our Lady said: "*You were deprived of my visit on the fifteenth of August; you were not sufficiently calm, wishing to know before learning, to understand before knowing. Yesterday again I would have come; again you were deprived. I was awaiting from you this act of submission and obedience.*"

So much reassured by Our Lady, through prayer and grace Estelle almost at once acquired the peace of resignation. How could she fail to place her total trust in Our Lady who had worked on her behalf so great a miracle and now promised that in all Estelle's concerns and in the difficulties she would face: "*I am there!*"

And now she was given a great message: Our Lady told Estelle that the treasures of the Heart of Jesus *had long been opened to the world* (since the apparitions to St. Margaret Mary) *but that the world had not shared in these treasures as Jesus intended*. Then taking a small scapular She was wearing about Her neck Our Lady held it out saying: "*I love this devotion. It is here I shall be honored.*" Then Our Lady gave Estelle an actual *experience of union with the Heart of Jesus and Her own Immaculate Heart* as she invited Estelle to kiss the panel on which the Sacred Heart had appeared.

### **Remember My Words**

In subsequent visions that great message unfolded. But let us continue to examine Our Lady's "formation" of Estelle as a lay apostle.

In the 11th apparition, on September 15, Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady complimented Estelle for her efforts to be calm and said: "*It is not only for you that I ask it, but also for the Church... In the Church there is not the calm I desire.*" Then after a pause She added: "*Let them pray and have confidence in me.*" Our Lady concluded by again telling Estelle: "*Have courage and confidence.*"

In the fourteenth apparition Our Lady said: "*You did not lose your time today; you worked for me.*" (Estelle comments that she had made a scapular that day.) Again Her parting word was: "*Courage!*"

In the fifteenth and last apparition Our Lady said: "*Remember My words.*" In that moment Estelle saw all that Our Lady had told her flash through her mind, especially the words "*You know well that you are My daughter... My Son's Heart can refuse Mine nothing.*"

That was to be the source of her calm, of her resignation, of her peace. No matter how many said "no," no matter how many called her "fool," no matter WHAT, she knew she was Our Lady's child. Indeed is this not the whole heart of the Scapular devotion?

Our Lady then confided to Estelle that the greatest offenses to Her Immaculate Heart are *careless Communions*. (This helps us to understand the reason for the Communion of Reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the First Saturday devotion.) Our Lady



Above, left: The statue depicting the first vision to Estelle in the chapel of the apparitions in Pellevoisin, France. Our Lady appeared much as on the miraculous medal. She rebuked Satan who had just appeared beside the bed of the dying Estelle saying: "What are you doing here? Do you not see that she is wearing My livery and that of My Son?" (referring to the Brown Scapular).

Above, right: Bas relief in the chapel shows small scapular Our Lady wore in the fifteen apparitions. In one apparition She invited Estelle to approach and kiss it. When Estelle did so there appeared upon it the pulsing, living Sacred Heart of Jesus. Beneath it Estelle was aware also of the pulsing Immaculate Heart of His Mother and of *the union of the Two Hearts* inviting her to union in Their Love.

also said that Her Immaculate Heart is gravely offended by persons who assume an attitude of prayer without praying. Estelle, knowing this was the last apparition, cried out: "What will I do in the future without you, O good Mother?"

"*I will be invisibly beside you,*" She answered. At that moment Estelle saw a crowd of all sorts of persons who threatened her with angry gestures. "*You have nothing to fear from them,*" Our Lady said. "*I have chosen you to publish my glory.*" Referring to the streams of Grace flowing from Her hands Our Lady said: "*These Graces are from My Son; I take them from His Heart; He cannot refuse Me.*"

Estelle died on August 23, 1929, at the age of eighty-six. In 1983, in this dawn of the lay apostolate, the Church declared the authenticity of her miraculous cure and opened the door to the recognition of this lay person to whom Our Lady Herself had given a mission for the Church and for the world.

#### **Again: Remember My Words!**

Estelle never married. She bore witness. When obstacles seemed insurmountable Our Lady told her to "*Go higher.*" And no less than the Pope himself, Leo XIII, received Estelle in audience and sanctioned her message. A man who dedicated his entire life to the lay apostolate remarked: "Any advice I could think to give to anyone called as a lay person to a mission in the Church was given by Our Lady to Estelle."

"*Remember My words,*" Our Lady told her.

So should we all!

Estelle, brought back from the edge of the grave, was taught *the importance of life as a lay person* to publish Our Lady's powerful mediation to bring to men the Treasures of the Heart of Her Son through Her Immaculate Heart.

Before speaking of other wonderful examples of holiness for the laity may we recall what was written in 1972 in our book, *Explosion of The Supernatural*.

\* *Her Glorious Title*, by Haffert, published by the 101 Foundation.

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### **LITTLE CHANGE IN TWENTY YEARS**

We need no longer ask WHEN the great victory, the triumph of the Immaculate Heart will take place. It has already begun. And it is no coincidence that now is also the moment when the Church cries to the laity: *You, too, go into My Vineyard!* It is also not a coincidence that at this hinge of history, with Islam and Christianity in confrontation, Our Lady chose the name of *Fatima*.

Will apostles be coming from Russia to convert the West? Will a miracle take place in Islam, and millions of converted Moslems overwhelm the amorality of much of the world? Will Our Lady Herself come on a golden globe across the sky from the East as She did at Fatima, this time to manifest Herself *not just to three children but to nations?* Will there be another great miracle like that at Fatima in 1917, but this time evident to all the world? Is Jesus Himself coming to rule?

ALL is possible in God's Power and Love. In the sixties the world was shaken by a wave of charisms described by many as an "outpouring of the Holy Spirit." After 1972 it seemed to recede. *But was it a Divine prelude? Will it return to overwhelm evil in the world?*

*An outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the Immaculate Heart of Mary will become the triumph of the Sacred Heart of Love Itself Incarnate.* That's Her promise.

It seems that each of the Popes from Pius XII on had a premonition or even a precognition of this. Pius XII spoke, in a time of great darkness, of "the Springtime of History." John XXIII certainly had the vision. I was personally present in St. Peter's in 1972 when Paul VI seemed literally carried on the wave of what was probably the peak of this experience.

With what was then little more than a vague perception of all this, I wrote the book *Explosion of the Supernatural*. In 1972 it was an evaluation of the current renewal and a plea for acceptance by those who felt overwhelmed by its enthusiasm. What we observed in the renewal seemed a glimpse behind the curtain of the great renewal that is coming.

Two chapters of that book were specifically about the lay apostolate and it is a bit surprising, twenty years later, to find myself repeating the same message about the lay-clerical chasm which still has not been heard in all these postconciliar years. This is what I wrote:

In the United States in 1957, only fourteen percent thought religion was losing its influence, but in 1973 almost half (forty-five percent) of all Americans felt that religion was losing its effect on American life. The Gallup poll of religious attendance showed a steady and relentless decline for a full sixteen years up to 1973, and the overall decline was *almost entirely among Catholics*. From 1964, the peak year of Vatican Council II, Catholic attendance at Sunday Mass dropped from seventy-one percent to fifty-five percent in just nine years.

Many factors are necessarily involved, but it is noteworthy that *Protestant church-going in the same period remained virtually unchanged*. Unfortunately we rarely hear of the wonderful priests who have become more vital and more apostolic. We only seem to hear of priests who drop out—often to the scandal of their flocks. Some renegades have written books—almost always painting the priesthood in a bad light, and many have had TV and press coverage.

Bill O'Shea who became a feature writer for Associated Press, did a feature in the spring of 1974 which was carried in millions of copies of newspapers under such headlines as AN EX-PRIEST TELLS WHY HE QUIT THE CHURCH and I FELT HYPOCRITICAL. He cites one instance of a classmate who is a good priest, but against this one he paraded a whole line of dropouts like himself who "felt hypocritical acting as a go-between in Sacraments that I thought had little effect or relevance" and predicted that only one out of five of his classmates would still be priests in another ten years.

When the number of dropouts is added to the drop in vocations (plus the drop in respect of the faithful toward their priests) *there is obviously additional need for spiritual leadership. Will this be filled by charismatic laymen? If so, how, and within what limits?*

Once we admit above all that a layman's role is that of a witness rather than a teacher, only the highest heavens are the limit to his possible contribution to the vitality of the faith. Experience shows that a vital, charismatic flock affects the vitality of the shepherd.

To cite an exceptional example, when the Pilgrim Virgin statue began to travel in the United States, we did not have a priest who was free to accompany it. We had a layman (*the reference here is to the National U.S. Pilgrim Virgin and the layman in question was Mr. Al Williams*) who was capable but we felt odd about sending a layman to talk in churches. (This is now authorized by the new Canon Law, Canon 766.) We finally compromised and said: "When a pastor invites you to speak, do so, but your mission is primarily to set up the program and to speak (when invited) in the schools."

#### **Laymen More Sensitive**

As it turned out, most pastors had no objection to having a qualified layman speak in church, even after the Gospel. We proved to have been much more sensitive about this than the pastors themselves. They were saying in effect: "After all, we are right there. He is not taking our place. He is giving facts about which he has special information and if he were to say anything unorthodox we are there to correct it. And the people know this."

In other words the layman, even talking in the pulpit, was not the teacher. He was a specialist who had spoken on this particular subject many times and had personal experiences to which he could bear witness. It proved helpful for the pastor to have a specialist bear witness, even in the pulpit. If only for the sheer novelty, people listened with great attention; the message was conveyed more completely because it was the fruit of much experience; and there was even a new, subtle improvement of relationship between the pastor and his parish, as though by using this layman he was himself identifying and recognizing the layman's role as a witness.

This was confirmed by Father Joseph M. Champlin, who wrote a rather amazing testimony for the Catholic Press which appeared in April 1974 under the headline: I BECAME A BELIEVER. It is such an unusual testimony, and so relevant not only to this example but to the total context of this book, that we consider it worthy of more than passing attention. Father Champlin was writing, after all, of one of the types of charismatic experiences of which we are speaking. He says the congregation was attracted in greater numbers than for other "well planned, carefully executed, creative and liturgical and



Above: Al Williams, custodian of the U.S. National Pilgrim Virgin with his wife, Betty. Below: Louis Kazmarek with the International Pilgrim Virgin. These two laymen traveled tens of thousands of miles and spoke to hundreds of thousands in churches from coast to coast on the message of Fatima.



*paraliturgical functions*" in that same parish "including a unique blessing ceremony with two Bishops and fifty priests in attendance!" This is his testimony:

**On an icy, rainy, snowy Sunday afternoon, 1,500 persons came to honor Mary at Holy Family Church. Other parishes throughout the diocese experienced similar reactions — capacity, overflowing crowds, many times on harsh wintry days or nights which usually bring cancellation of our meager attendance at religious functions.**

**This overwhelming response stunned everyone in our diocese, including some who in the beginning expressed a certain hostility or skepticism about the event.**

There have been many explanations for the huge crowds, but those throngs make two points very clear: American Catholics today feel a great hunger for such devotional services, and Our Lady still has the power to draw persons toward God.

I offer these observations: Mary leads worshippers to Christ, not away from Our Lord. A few critics assert that Vatican II directives stress devotion to Jesus and urge a diminution of Marian prayers in view of that emphasis. Our American bishops in their pastoral letter, "Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith," answered that objection.

In the weeks afterwards I heard of individuals who once again prayed the Rosary, later made their way to confession and, finally, returned to Our Lord in Holy Communion for the first time in years.

#### **Power of Laity**

Father Champlin does not even mention that the talk given in explanation of the statue's visit was given by a layman. He probably did not consider this important. Only the result was important. Lay people bearing living witness to the supernatural life can greatly vitalize all parochial life and this must be true in all the traditional churches. It is interesting to note that in the Jewish religion, where the rabbi has always been the one and only teacher, there has been an increased lay voice in recent years and a concomitant two percent increase in synagogue attendance.

It is up to the pastor, or the immediate ecclesiastical authority, to decide on the use of the voice of the laity. Thus it is the teaching authority using that voice. As we said above, it would seem that a wise and unselfish pastor would use such voices as often and as effectively as he could. The best opportunity is in the All-Night Vigils, where it is becoming customary for lay voices to be used for intentions and brief

meditations during the night while priests give no more than the homilies at the Masses and lead the vigil prayers. Lay persons can equally be encouraged to give the Rosary meditations in preparation for the Eucharistic liturgy as we have said elsewhere. Even in large congregations at least a given number can voice intentions during the prayer of the faithful. On First Saturdays, the necessary quarter-hour of meditations can be given by lay persons, preferably eight different persons assigned in advance for two minute meditations each. Spontaneous meditations on the Way of the Cross, in which different members of the congregation speak at each station, can bring amazing vitality into this rich, highly indulged and most valuable extra-liturgical practice.

#### **More is Needed**

For the holiness to which Jesus commanded us, daily Mass is not enough and Sunday Mass is far from enough. Other devotions highly recommended by the Church (and encouraged by rich indulgences) are necessary for the fullness of the Eucharistic life. Public participation by the congregation in such devotions is often of very great value, creating the opportunity for charismatic experience by which the congregation, and the entire parish, can be vitalized. Preparation for the Eucharistic liturgy, and a prolongation of its effects, can be implemented.

In addition to spontaneous Rosary meditations and prayer intentions, why not special prayer meetings in preparation for the Eucharistic liturgy and in thanksgiving afterwards? Also, special prayer meetings for extraordinary needs — such as to defeat a local abortion bill, for the sick, for conversions, for a combination of intentions or even for a church-building campaign?

In our age we have heard repeatedly of the important role of the laity. The council documents assert the "priesthood of the laity" and every Pope of our time, beginning with Leo XIII, has asserted the important need for a lay apostolate. There is even an expression heard from time to time: "The age of the lay apostle" or "the age of the laity."

A positive effort made in Belgium and France was called the Jocists — the Young Catholic Worker Apostles. An auxiliary bishop to the cardinal archbishop of Paris was appointed to encourage and coordinate this colossal (on paper) movement, but it all came to nothing.

The problem of deeper lay involvement in Church life is complex. The greatest obstacle within the Church is a wall between the clergy and the laity which is for all the world like

the wall between the professional and the amateur. Priests feel free in each other's company but often seem to feel "on the spot" in the company of laymen. This is not healthy.

#### **Why Uncomfortable?**

If a priest feels more comfortable in the presence of fellow priests it is usually not because he can exchange spiritual experiences or discuss higher forms of mysticism. Since this writer has been flattered by having been occasionally included "in the club" it would not be a betrayal to say that the typical exchange among priests is a normal, healthy, manly camaraderie of a special profession.

It is certainly not, as some of the dropouts imply, an unhealthy or even immoral camaraderie. Certainly any objective observer who really knows a good cross section of Catholic priests knows them to be sincere, good men who take their difficult vow of celibacy with seriousness and with respect for the awful dignity with which God and the successors of the Apostles have endowed them.

What makes them uncomfortable is the pedestal on which lay people place them. Among themselves they do not have to pretend to be the "supermen" that lay people seem to think they necessarily became simultaneously with the awesome power of administering the Sacraments of God.

#### **The "Pedestal"**

Jesus did not give the Holy Spirit to the world like rain but like water channeled through those in the cenacle and those whom, by His authority, they ordained. And our greatest problem for a lay apostolate is insufficient communication.

One reason we cited above: the pedestal. Another is an intellectual valley, a chasm of knowledge, a desert which the priest has crossed in six or eight years of special study, leaving the laity behind. Words across this vast space of knowledge become like a hollow echo. The same words do not mean the same on both sides. The priests know what a fellow priest thinks about God and morality because they have the same training and speak the same language, but a priest does not always know what the individual lay person thinks.

There is no ready ground of understanding. He is disturbed by the person who collars him to talk about a vision, a meaningful dream, or to pour out a stream of abuse because the statue she liked was taken out of the church or how awful it is that such dreadful things as this or that are being taught in the schools. In self protection he avoids contact. The vitality of the Church, the active people of God in whom the ordained minister of God should be a vital factor, suffers almost to death.

As was said in the beginning, almost all in this chapter *was written more than twenty years* before this present book. Can we feel that the Voice of the Council has been heard any more clearly since then? Have we seen much change in the lay-clerical relationship? Will the Pope's recent 181 page exhortation on the "Faithful Laity of Christ" (*Christifideles Laici*) begin to make a difference? Sad to say, in some areas the situation seems rather to have deteriorated.

A grave cause of concern for the future is that *the 3rd Secret of Fatima*, according to such experts as Rev. Dr. Joachim Alonso, includes a *reference to a crisis in the Church*. At Akita Our Lady spoke explicitly of this and asked extra Rosaries for the Holy Father, Bishops and priests.

It could be that today's call of the Pope to the laity is far more important than anything we have said or could say. If we are truly "Christ's faithful" we will not wonder why. We will just respond with all our minds and hearts, perseveringly, humbly. As Frank Sheed gave early warning, *this is a very serious matter*. We are not in the ark looking out at the flood. We are in the flood.

## Chapter Fourteen

### ARE LAY PERSONS SO DIFFERENT?

After reading about Benedict Joseph, Pier Frassati, Estelle, Juan Diego, and so many others, do we feel that saints in the world differ much from saints in the cloister? And does reading about them help to bridge the chasm?

Perhaps it would further help to reverse that "same old story" if we would face the fact that still many of us readily accept charisms in priests and religious *but not in lay persons*.

When Padre Pio was alive thousands from all over the world traveled across the world to assist at the Mass of this priest whom God had marked with the stigmata. I myself went many times, all those thousands of miles, and counted myself blessed to have served Padre Pio's Mass. (When a famous person asked him if it was good to join the Blue Army, the saintly stigmatist replied with the question: "*Could you do anything better?*")

At the same time in the United States there was a woman in Canton, Ohio, who had the stigmata. The miracle was recognized by local ecclesiastical authority. The Chancellor of the diocese personally directed her. But until her death (and even now) how many knew? Her name was Rhoda Wise and her story a simple one, common to many wives and mothers.

Her husband was a drunkard. When she became afflicted (if I remember correctly by tuberculosis of the bone in her leg) she offered the crippling and the pain for the conversion of her husband, and for her poor family reduced to direst poverty.

What became "different" in the life of Rhoda Wise was that when her husband saw her relive the agony of Jesus,

with blood flowing from the wounds, he was converted. Maybe God wrought this miracle in response to the prayers of an anguished wife and mother primarily for the conversion of her husband rather than for many others.

But consider another lay person, Theresa Neumann. One of the best priests I have ever known was changed when he saw Theresa relive the passion on a Friday with blood streaming down her face and from her hands, feet and side.

*It is said that there are actually, at the present moment, some five hundred stigmatists in the world... almost all lay persons and most of them married.* The married state is sublime, and it is a school of holiness. How many trials, how many humiliations, how many DAILY opportunities there are in the married state for perfection! Could there not be even more than in religious life? Consider just the question of chastity in the married state. Consider, too, how many devout older persons... beyond the years of child bearing... lead celibate lives. (I believe this is the "secret" to which Frank Sheed refers in his final tribute to Maisie.)

### **Scandalous!**

If the special and "new" message of the Council was on the role of the laity in the life of the Church, the special and new teaching of Pope John Paul II was on the sanctity of marriage. And it has been largely ignored.

Two priests who collaborated in writing the marvelous book, *Covenant of Love*, say that seldom in history "has there been such an important new approach to Christian teaching on sex and the family". They say further that "the fact that it has been all but ignored is scandalous".  
*(See VOICE of the Sacred Hearts, Vol 1, No. 3, pg. 4)*

A bold headline across the top of a page in an August, 1994 edition of *L'Osservatore Romano* read: MARRIED LIFE IS A TRUE WAY OF HOLINESS. It announced one of the latest of many, many such messages of this Pope who said:

"Fulfilling the task of procreation contributes to the sanctification of married life," adding: "When it is not turned in on itself but according to the impulse and law of nature is open to new life, it becomes with the help of

God's grace an exercise of holy and sanctifying charity." (Osservatore Romano, N. 32/33, pg. 11)

One might ask: Then, why do we not have married priests?

Among the many reasons, two which stand out are: 1) While procreation is holy, to give up the right for a *higher calling* is holier; 2) parochial paternity is enriched by giving up personal paternity. (Even as this was being written there was a news item about a married Protestant pastor who gave up his ministry because the obligations to his family interfered with his obligations to the parish.)

Moreover, purity is perhaps the virtue most pleasing to the most pure and immaculate Heart of Mary and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Absolute virginity can be part of a great and special calling. The flower of purity is so delicate that even in the married state it must be carefully esteemed and guarded.

When the Holy Father affirms sanctity in marriage he does not diminish the sanctity of the vow of virginity. He merely affirms that there are *different callings*, both of which are holy. And even though they are holy in different degrees, each of us is to be a saint *where God calls us*.

Great holiness exists in the laity, whether married or single. And as in religious vocations, there are vocations in the world which include the call to virginity. Each of the special vocations mentioned in this chapter included *virginity in the world*.

Before considering the special examples of holiness in marriage, such as the extraordinary example of Louis and Zelie Martin, consider the number of lay persons, all of whom lived virginal lives, who have lived *solely on the Eucharist*.

### **Living, Continual Miracles**

Martha Robin, who died on February 6, 1981, was a stigmatist who relived the passion every Friday and did not take any food OR DRINK for thirty years. She lived solely on the Eucharist.

At the very time that I and many others were going to see Padre Pio (with, of course, solid spiritual benefit) we were only vaguely aware that there was a person named



PEDE SE  
RESPEITO SILENCIO  
E QUE  
EM NADA TOQUEM



The bed on which Alexandrina lay paralyzed, living solely on the Eucharist the last 13 years of her life.



Martha Robin. A priest in Paris whom I greatly esteemed told me about her. I could have gone to see her. *But I was affected by the same suspicion of LAY "holy persons" which is the consequence of more than a thousand years of neglect of charisms in the laity.*

I had no desire to go out of my way to see her. I looked for living saints only in the clergy and in the religious congregations. After all, *these were the only ones who were ever canonized. I expected them to be holy.* It was easy to believe they were the ones most likely to transmit Divine experience. But on reflection, I do not know of any priest who lived solely on the Blessed Sacrament (although St. Anthony Mary Claret had the Eucharist physically present within him for the last sixteen years of his life).

*But this very, very great miracle has not been uncommon among the laity.*

Alexandrina of Balasar, Portugal, was a victim soul who lived the last thirteen years of her life solely on the Eucharist. Our Lord told her to ask the Holy Father to expedite the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as requested at Fatima. Because of this the Holy See asked the Archbishop of Braga to verify her "authenticity." She was supervised day and night in a Braga hospital, sometimes in almost brutal circumstances by unbelieving attendants, and *not one drop of nourishment passed her lips except daily Communion while her weight remained constant and the state of her health unchanged.*

Fortunately the cause of Alexandrina has begun, and undoubtedly the cause of Martha Robin will go forward. No less than the great French philosopher Jean Guitton (member of the French Academy) wrote her story. Five bishops and two hundred and fifty priests attended her funeral. And please remember: *Each of these holy lay persons (might they one day actually be called saints?) had a MISSION.*

Alexandrina shared in the mission of the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Martha Robin had a mission which was singularly direct: Annual retreats for lay persons. (Such retreats are advised in the Council's Decree on the Laity.)

Theresa Neumann, who was born on Good Friday in 1898, is another of these special lay vocations. The eldest of eleven children, she wanted to be a missionary sister but had to help support the family.

### **The Vocation of Theresa Neumann**

When she was 20, a dislocation of the spine crippled her and, one year later, left her totally blind. She received her mission to be a "spiritual missionary" in the blazing light of a miracle five years later.

On the day of the beatification of St. Therese of Lisieux (the Little Flower), April 29, 1923, suddenly a bright light shone in the room where Theresa had been suffering. From the light she heard a voice say: "Resl (her nickname), wouldn't you like to be well again?" She replied: "Everything is all right with me: living or dying, being well or sick, whatever my dear God wills. He knows what is best."

"Wouldn't you like to be able to get up this very day and be able to walk and take care of yourself again?" the voice asked.

*"I want anything and everything that comes from God,"* was Theresa Neumann's answer. "I am happy with all the flowers and birds, or with any other suffering He sends. What I like most of all is our dear Saviour Himself."

Then the voice told her to get up but at the same time announced that her beautiful offer (to accept lovingly *anything and everything* that comes from God) would make her a special kind of missionary: "Only through suffering can you best carry out your desire to be a victim and thereby help the work of priests. Through your suffering you will gain more souls than through the most brilliant sermons."

Theresa got up and walked. But she was to walk over and over with Jesus to Calvary. The year after her cure came the stigmata and a reliving of the passion on every Friday (except when a major liturgical Feast happened on that day) for the rest of her life.

Thousands saw her suffering and, like the priest friend whom I mentioned, were never the same afterwards. Indeed, how could anyone actually witness the

passion, with all its agony and blood, and be the same?

What is most remarkable, in this writer's opinion, is that Theresa Neumann never lost her humble, childlike attitude. She was like a St. Therese of Liseux *in the world* ... a world at war (she lived through the first and the second world wars)... a world which warred against her, claiming she was part of a monstrous fraud in which her doctors and priests were in collusion. And in and through it all she responded with a beautiful smile and childlike simplicity.

It will perhaps throw special light on this mission of Theresa Neumann if I divert here a little to tell of a personal experience with Padre Pio.

Several times (perhaps twenty) I attended, and once actually served, his Mass. Calvary was present not only mystically but almost visibly. This stigmatized priest suffered through the Mass. At the consecration he almost gasped the words "This is My Body."

### **Two Incidents with Padre Pio**

Two incidents I witnessed helped me to understand this special vocation of suffering given to so many lay "saints" like Rhoda Wise, Bertha Petit, little Rose Marie, Martha, Alexandrina, and other "lightning rods" of God in an often wicked and undeserving world.

One day I was looking through the convent for Padre Pio and he was nowhere to be found. Brashly a local man took me to the cellar where, without knocking, he opened a door. There, in a bare room with only a packed dirt floor, two Capuchin friars were washing Padre Pio's bleeding feet. They were astounded (perhaps "shocked" would not be too strong a word) at the intrusion.

From that day on I had not the slightest doubt about Padre Pio's stigmata. (And I realized that before this incident they had seemed *unreal*, as do most miracles). There was such reverence for the miracle itself in the faces of all three priests: The one who suffered it, and the two who helped. And the world could be fooled, but the members of Padre Pio's own community could not be fooled. And, oh! how true this is of the *families* of our lay victims!

Right: Theresa Neumann in 1926 in the parish garden, shortly after she received the stigmata (concealed by long sleeves). From this time onward she lived on the Blessed Sacrament.

Below: Padre Pio. Thousands traveled from all over the world to assist at his Mass. "Calvary was present not only mystically but visibly."

Both Padre Pio and Theresa Neumann spoke of the importance of the Blue Army pledge.



The world denies, calumniates, slanders, as the devil rages against the good done by these victim souls. But the devotion of their families, of their pastors or of their confessors, cry out, "This is from God!", while they themselves often become co-victims as they, too, suffer from the slander and accusations of fraud.

Concerning the second incident: I forget whether it was when Padre Pio was getting up from the kneeler after Communion or when, as was usually the case, he began to suffer before going to the altar. There was such suffering on his usually smiling face that I was amazed. Suddenly he looked at me and said: "And do you think these wounds are *decorations*?"

There is something else (which to me seems important) relating again to Theresa Neumann.

#### **The Blue Army Connection**

One of Padre Pio's most illustrious spiritual children, the Marquesa Boschi, asked whether it was a "good thing" to join the Blue Army. And Padre Pio answered:

"This is not only an act of prayer, it is also an apostleship. *What better thing could you do?*" And on another occasion Padre Pio said that the promise of Our Lady of Fatima to free Russia from atheistic communism would be fulfilled "*when there is a Blue army member for every Communist.*" And by "Blue Army" is meant the legion of those who make the PLEDGE to fulfill the three basic requests of Our Lady of Fatima, as mentioned elsewhere in these pages.

Theresa Neumann said something similar when she was asked by Alfred Williams (the custodian of the Pilgrim Virgin previously mentioned) for her opinion on a leaflet describing the message of Fatima. He explained that hundreds of thousands of these leaflets would be distributed and he wanted to be sure everything important in Our Lady's message was included.

After reading it carefully the saintly victim said firmly: "*Add the pledge.*" It is not enough to know, she explained. *People must also respond.* And the Blue Army pledge was the needed response.

In a later chapter we have chosen the Blue Army and Opus Dei as special examples of response to the mandates

of the Council for lay involvement in the life of the Church. Our decision was reinforced by those words of Theresa Neumann and also by the words of Padre Pio to a lay person who, as his spiritual child, was seeking direction for holiness in the world.

### **The Mission of Bertha Petit**

Perhaps none of these special souls had a greater mission than Bertha Petit.

When she made her first communion at the age of ten, Bertha said: "It is decided; I shall be a religious and, because I must be like Jesus, I shall suffer much."

She was right on the second count. God willed that she should be like Jesus in the world for sixty three years after that first Communion. And from the age of 38 until her death her body would rebel against any food but the Eucharist. And like Martha Robin, for years she would not sleep.

### **"I Am Your Real Nourishment"**

On a visit to the Holy House in Loreto, when she was forty, Jesus said to her, "I am your real nourishment. Do you know that I, and nought beside, am your life?"

Unlike Alexandrina, or Martha, or little Rose Marie, Bertha was not bedridden. Her life, to most who met her, seemed perfectly normal. But it reads like a novel: Well-to-do parents (her father an attorney), skillful athlete (ice skating, horsemanship), accomplished pianist, and with a voice so beautiful that friends urged her to a theatrical career.

But she felt a calling to belong entirely to Jesus. So naturally she decided to become a nun.

Yes, it was the same old story, that same old mindset. But what a different road Bertha was destined to take! She fell from a galloping horse and was dragged. But she survived and still entered the convent. Soon afterwards her father lost all his money, so she had to return to the world to help support her parents.

When her father was re-established in the legal profession, she became his secretary and aide. She helped him with a book on legacies (which became a text on the subject for other lawyers, still consulted). And

finally her concern for her parents was marvelously resolved when she herself came into a legacy from a cousin and was able to provide her parents with a lovely house. As I said... like a novel.

By now the convent was out of the question. But by now Jesus gave her to understand that she had another vocation and it was to be fulfilled in the world. She told Our Lord, that since she could not belong to Him in a convent she wished to offer her life to give Him a good priest. And Jesus *confirmed her vocation to holiness in the world* telling her that not only was her gift accepted but even that one day she would know the priest her life-offering had obtained for Him.

*Little did she know that she was to have a mission for the world, and that the priest her life-offering obtained would be her "sharer" in that mission.*

### **The Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart**

She was shown the Hearts of Jesus and Mary united, as though interpenetrating, in flames of Love. She was told by Jesus that *her mission would be the consecration of the world to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary.* He wanted all in these last times to recognize the role of His Mother as Co-Redemptrix. Bertha was to "Teach souls to love the Heart of My Mother pierced by the very sorrows which pierced Mine."

Cloaked in the ordinariness of the world, humble to a degree which amazed priests who came to know her, she began her mission. It had some success during her life. It continues now since her death, which finally came on March 26th, 1943, in her 73rd year.

Of the devotion to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of His Mother, Jesus said: "It is as a Son that I have conceived this devotion in honor of My Mother. It is as God that I impose it."

Alexandrina had had a similar message. She and Bertha, victim souls living in different parts of the world and without knowing each other, helped to bring about the several consecrations to the Immaculate Heart of Mary which were also requested by Our Lady of Fatima. It would appear that one final consecration may still be made, this time related to the dogma of Mary as Co-

Redemptrix and adding the title *Sorrowful* before that of *Immaculate*.

"I wish that the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of My Mother, united to My Heart, be loved and glorified," Jesus told Bertha, whom He sustained in life solely by Himself in the Eucharist as a sign that she was indeed chosen for this mission. Through this He promised: "A renovation for my Church, a renewed strength for Christianity which is too often wavering."

It is perhaps surprising to note that MOST of such missions in the past hundred years (like those to Alexandrina, Bertha, Martha) have been to lay persons, including that of *Our Lady of All Nations* calling for the dogma of Mary's Mediation of Grace... which may be as important to the "era of peace" as the collegial consecration was for the changes in Russia. (See *Voice of the Sacred Hearts*, Vol 1, No. 6.)

Note: Information on Alexandrina, Bertha, or any of the saints or persons mentioned in this book may be obtained from LAF. See pg. 212.

Below: Alexandrina at the end of the passion.



## Chapter Fifteen

### HOW HIGH IS HIGH?

If we examine our own hearts, even now will we find that it is still *the same old story*? Do we perhaps feel: Yes, they are in Heaven, but those who made the *real* commitment...like St. Anthony, St. Francis, St. Therese...they are the *real* saints! They are the *highest* in Heaven.

How high is high? Since we usually judge the greatness of saints by the miracles they perform or by the mystical favors they enjoyed, how high would we rate those lay persons who have, even in our own day, lived solely on the Eucharist? This wonder of living solely on the Blessed Sacrament is so great a miracle that even with clinical proof we tend to think it could never have happened!

As we mentioned above, in the case of Alexandrina there was a scientific, highly controlled study because of her message to Rome about the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Rome had requested it. The results are incontrovertible.

Like Martha Robin, Theresa Neumann, Bertha Petit, and Rose Ferron, Alexandrina was a victim soul. Jesus called her *His lightning rod for the world*. Perhaps no saint in history ever heard greater words of endearment from Jesus than did this humble, bedridden victim.

And her mission continues. *Other victim souls today imitate her in being lightning rods for the world.*

We cannot go on giving details of one heroic person after the other. As we have said, the few and scantily detailed examples in this book are intended merely to illustrate the call to the lay vocation. But to answer "How high?," consider again the charisms of Blessed Anne Marie Taigi who, if we judge by mystical favors, was as high as St. Anthony, St. Francis, or almost any saint one can mention. Indeed, she was higher than most. She had

a gift perhaps unique in the annals of sanctity. An angel of light accompanied her. The angel held a crown of thorns, two of which stretched out to form a circle. (This has been chosen as the symbol of LAF.) *In the circle there shone a light, like a television screen, in which Anne Marie saw actual events from near and far.*

Because of this extraordinary gift, the secretary of the Pope arranged to receive daily reports from Anne Marie through a priest assigned to this task.

### **Just a Housewife**

To most of the world she seemed no more than a humble, devout, devoted wife and mother. Her heroic virtue was not known even by her husband until after her death. Consider just the heroism necessary for restraint in looking into this wonderful screen of world events. Although it was always there, she looked only when she knew the angel, by an interior voice, told her to do so.

We of the television age could well ask, if we had right next to us *live images of actual historical events*, such as a meeting of world leaders, or of the connivance of the highest level of Freemasonry, or of the plotting of the explosion of a bomb somewhere, would *never look* unless an inner voice commanded it!

As it is truly said that knowledge is power, consider how great a saint would not use such power except: 1) to help others; 2) only through a specially designated priest; 3) only out of obedience and never once out of curiosity?

Most of us who are "saints", at least at the level of being in the state of Grace, cannot be trusted with even minor supernatural gifts. Granted the gift of tongues, or even one vision, we think we are special.

To the question of "How high can lay saints be on the ladder of sanctity?" the answer is "How far down can they be on the ladder of humility?" In the case of Anne Marie Taigi the answer would be: As low as a person could go.

Her humility was nothing less than amazing. A Princess whom Anne Marie had cured of an illness got Anne Marie to her home on a pretext, having previously arranged that the Pope would be there. To the amaze-

ment of all, even though this woman was receiving daily messages conveyed to the Holy Father, and even though she had a lifelong devotion to the Papacy, she was too humble even to raise her eyes to LOOK at the Holy Father.

When miracles were wrought after her death and Church authorities came to question her husband for the cause of canonization, he was amazed. "I knew I was not worthy to have such a wife," he said. "She never refused my rights and never insisted on her own."

What a revelation in those simple words! *Can marital rights be HOLY... as holy as high is high?*

Blessed Anne Marie



**Chapter Sixteen****MARRIED SAINTS**

In most recent days when children who had apparitions chose marriage (instead of a seminary or convent) it was not unusual to hear: "Those apparitions could not have been authentic or they would never have married!"

The same old story!

But in the case of Anne Marie Taigi, *Our Lord Himself made the choice.* He told her to be a model for young women, wives and mothers.

**Began With Devotion to the Pope**

She was thirteen when she made her first spiritually heroic act. The Pope was going on a journey and she offered herself for the Pope's safety.

There were scandals in the Church then as now. But this simple girl had the Catholic *instinct of reverence* for the Holy Father as the Vicar of Christ. So when prayers were asked in her parish for the safe journey of the Pope, she not only prayed, she asked Our Lord that if the Pope's life were in danger *He would take her life instead.*

Should not such an heroic, pure soul have become a nun? When she was nineteen, *Our Lord Himself told her that she was to marry.* She was to be an example. When she was beatified in 1920 the Church affirmed this, proclaiming her a model for young women and mothers: **special "Patroness" of laywomen.**

What no one could help notice about her was her beauty and simplicity. But otherwise she was so "average" in her actions that, as we mentioned above, *her own husband did not know of many of the wonders which developed in her life.* He was amazed at the miracles after her death.

*She was first and foremost a dutiful wife and mother.* Yet you can think of all the saints of whom you have

heard, all the ones represented in your churches, *and none of them had greater charisms than this humble wife and mother.*

We have already spoken of the angel of light who was always with her and that, because of this light, through St. John Strambi (who was the secretary of the Pope) she became *counselor to the Pope, whom she felt too humble to see in person.* Was this extraordinary mission because of the heroic act she had made at the age of thirteen?

It was because of St. John Strambi, who knew everything about Anne Marie, that the cause for her beatification was begun. But as usual, after the initial cause, those who had actually known her were gone and the cause lagged.

But a wonder remained: Although she was buried in a damp place, her body remained supple and incorrupt, in an almost "alive" state... until finally in 1920 Pope Benedict XV beatified her. Then, like the Little Flower who wanted "like everyone else" to return to dust, over night the body of Blessed Anne Marie... without any sign of corruption, was dust.

*God did all this to show the degree of holiness attainable in the married state... and how He can give a lay person even so great a mission as daily messages for the Pope.*

Space restricts us, but let us add just two little examples of Anne Marie, the "lay apostle."

She could not bear to hear of a family splitting up because of a marital dispute. Not only did she pray and fast whenever such a circumstance came to her attention but she did her best to intervene. On one occasion she told the priest, who visited her every day and carried messages to St. John Strambi, that he should speak to a husband who was separating from his wife. She told him the man would be very angry and would seize a knife as though to kill, but that the priest should be steadfast. At the very moment the poor priest thought the angry husband was about to stab him, the man began to tremble, dropped the knife and fell to his knees. The wicked spell was broken, together with all the devil's work to destroy a marriage.

Every Friday Anne Marie, who was illiterate, took one or more of her seven children (yes, seven) on a foot pilgrimage to the seven major basilicas of Rome to teach them their faith. They learned 'first hand' of the great martyrs like St. Sebastian and St. Lawrence. They came to *know* the founders of the Church, Peter and Paul, by praying at their tombs. They *saw* the great relic of the Cross on which Our Lord died, and so on.

One day, in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St. Paul's, Our Lord told Anne Marie that because of sins committed in that Basilica, at that time the second greatest in the world, He was going to destroy it. (The very big church, with many enormous pillars and dark corners, was outside the walls of Rome and apparently insufficiently supervised.)

The pope at that time was very ill. He had a special devotion to St. Paul's and Anne Marie said to Our Lord: "If it must be, please, *not while the Holy Father lives.*"

It is a testimony to the power this simple mother had over the Heart of Jesus that He waited until *the very day the Pope died*, then the immense Basilica built over the tomb of St. Paul burned to the ground. Hardly anything remained. (It took over half a century to rebuild it.)

### **Devotion to the Holy Father**

Blessed Anne Marie is a model in so many ways! Her devotion to the Holy Father is *so often found in holy lay persons* who are shocked and wounded when they encounter a dissimilar attitude on the part of some who even have special vows of obedience to the Pope.

At this very time on the way to sainthood are two new lay models: Francisco and Jacinta Marto, to whom Our Lady appeared at Fatima. If canonized, they will be the first children so young (except martyrs) ever to be declared saints.

"Oh, we must pray for the poor Holy Father!" Jacinta used to exclaim. And how many sacrifices the children of Fatima offered for the Vicar of Christ!

Certainly many of us have felt this reverence for the Pope so strongly that it could be described, as mentioned above, as a sort of lay-Catholic "instinct." It is typical of lay apostles. No matter what the scandals, no matter how

great the sins in the Basilica, the truth of the Vicar of Christ... truly His Vicar on earth... shines over all.

The canonization of Anne Marie might have taken place during the U.N. "Year of the Woman". But Elizabeth Anne Seton, who was a model not only for married women but also for religious and teachers, was chosen.

At least she is beatified... so if you like, you can have a statue in your church or home to remind you that persons living in the world become saints. And some of them have missions as great as giving messages from Jesus to His living Vicar on earth.

### **Elizabeth Szanto Kindelmann**

All the examples of married saints in this chapter are already recognized by the Church but we would like to insert here the story of Elizabeth, mother of six children and a widow at age 33, because she seems to have much in common with Blessed Anne Marie and further highlights the assertion of missions given by God in recent times to lay persons, missions sometimes of very great importance to the triumph of the Church.

I have treated of this at length in my book *Her Glorious Title\** so let us speak here primarily of her mission.

She had to work in a steel mill as she struggled from day to day to clothe and feed her six children. She had to do with just a few hours of sleep at night. But she arranged her incredibly busy life so she could go and worship the Blessed Sacrament every day.

During one of these visits Jesus said: "Are there only the two of us here?" And she heard His sad voice in the depths of her soul: "Be it your goal that we increase in numbers." He taught her think of His five Wounds, and to pray if she woke up at night.

As she grew in holiness, she grew in intimacy with the Sacred Hearts. On Good Friday of 1962 Our Lady appeared to her in tears.

"My Carmelite daughter (Elizabeth was a member of the 3rd Order), there are so many sins in the world! Help me, all of you, to save souls! *I will place a torch in your hand. It is the Flame of My Heart's Love. I am your kind*

*and loving Mother. If you put your trust in me I shall save you."* "Oh, Heavenly Mother," Elizabeth cried out, "why do you not perform miracles so that people believe in you as you did at Fatima?"

*"My daughter, even if I were to perform great miracles people would not believe. I asked for the First Saturdays and who paid any attention to My request?"*

And then Our Lady gave Elizabeth the mission of *The Flame of My Heart's Love*: "*I wish to warm homes,*" Our Lady told her, "*and keep families together with my Heart's Flame of Love to blind Satan and change the world.*"

One is reluctant to select only parts of this very important and beautiful message but it seems so appropriate to all we are saying in this book to add the following words of Our Lord to Elizabeth:

*"In each parish a reparation group should be urgently organized... Mankind needs prayerful souls the most... you are responsible for one another...for your family, your country and the whole human family... Trust My Mother! She will sweep away all doubts and fears with Her Motherly love... The future world which is in the making will be illuminated by My Mother's smile!"*

Note: Elizabeth was 48 when her mission began and 73 when she died. Her diary *The Flame of Love* is published by Two Hearts Books, P.O. Box 844, Mt. View, CA 94042. The original Hungarian edition was published with Imprimatur of Elizabeth's Diocese of Szekesfehervar in Hungary. It has gone into many translations and already spread widely throughout the world. The author's own book treating of this, *Her Glorious Title*, can be obtained from the IOI Foundation or LAF.

### BLESSED ELIZABETH MORA

A contemporary of Anne Marie was Elizabeth Mora. It would have seemed that she had everything a woman could desire when suddenly her whole world fell apart. Her husband, a well to do lawyer, left her for another woman. The money was gone. She had to resort to manual work to support herself and the children. Divorce? Separation? Suit for child support? Denunciation? Or resignation, forgiveness, offering all to God for the

At right: Joan Molla on skiing trip. She had a radiant joy in living.

Below: Joan's family at the beatification. Center is the child for whom she gave her life. Standing behind (dark glasses) is the author. Elizabeth Mora and Isidore Bakanja were other laypersons canonized the same day. "This is an event of great importance to the Church" said Pope John Paul II.





Above, Blessed Joan Molla with two of her four children the last of whom was born safe and sound a month before her death which might have been avoided by an abortion.

Right: Bl. Elizabeth Mora with two children she raised after having been abandoned by her husband. She prayed for him and predicted he would be converted when she died. She is a model of fidelity in marriage.



conversion of the man who abandoned her and their children? Always having wanted to live a total commitment to God, she had the grace to choose the latter and she literally flew along the path of holiness!

Despite her own need, she reached out to other families in need. Despite her own shattered family, she reached out to help other shattered families.

As we said, she was a contemporary and friend of Blessed Anne Marie Taigi and she and Anne Marie often prayed and sacrificed together for unity in families. *Neither of these saints could hear of a couple on the verge of separation without offering sacrifices and prayers and then trying to do something to prevent it.*

A mysterious illness (not unlike that which struck St. Therese in her childhood) struck Elizabeth. Mystical experiences followed. She predicted that when she died her husband would be converted. After her death he not only converted. He became a Franciscan and a priest. The vocation of mother and wife can take many turns to sainthood!

#### **BLESSED JOAN MOLLA**

In addition to her beauty and learning (she was a medical doctor) Joan Beretta Molla had a joy in living which manifested itself in skiing, mountain climbing, and a generous, outgoing spirit. The official biography of the beatification calls it *joie de vivre*.

Before her marriage she obtained degrees in medicine and surgery from the University of Padua and then opened a medical clinic. She became a specialist in pediatrics at the University of Milan in 1952. Three years later she married Peter Molla.

Their first child, a boy, was born in 1956 when Blessed Joan was 34 years old. The second was born a year later: Mariolina. A third came two years later and was named Laura. The official biography says: "With simplicity and equilibrium she harmonized the demands of mother, wife, doctor, and her passion for life."

It was towards the end of the second month of her pregnancy with her fourth child that a tumor was found in her womb. The surest way to save her life from the dreaded cancer, as she herself knew only too well, was to

remove the womb. But *there was another life in that womb*. To some it was just an eight week fetus. But Joan knew it was an eight week old child.

### Save the Child!

"If you must choose between me and the child," she said, "do not hesitate, choose the child. I insist on it. *Save the child.*" A beautiful, healthy girl was born on April 21, 1962, and one week later, amid unspeakable pain, Dr. Joan Beretta Molla died. Her last words were: "Jesus, I love You! Jesus, I love You!" She was 39 years old.

At the beatification in 1994 the Pope embraced a beautiful young woman: Joan Emmanuela Molla, born a week before her mother's death. I was seated immediately behind the Molla family during the ceremony. Tears sprang to many eyes when husband and children went forward to greet the Pope who impulsively reached out and gathered Joan Emmanuela in his arms.

"This is an event of great importance to the Church," the Pope said. It is an event which fairly shouts of true holiness in the world. To many the death of 39 year old Dr. Joan Beretta Molla would have seemed a tragedy. But to the tens of thousands in St. Peter's Square, gazing at the rows of Bishops and Cardinals and the image of Blessed Joan flying from the facade of the world's greatest church, it was seen as one of the greatest of all triumphs.

Below: Banner of Blessed Joan on the balcony of St. Peter's at beatification.



## Chapter Seventeen

### THE NEED TO KNOW

From the second to the sixth decades of the twentieth century there was an amazing Catholic revival. It was just about at its peak at the time of the Council. Chesterton called Frank and Maisie Sheed the "roar" of this revival. Their son Wilfrid wittingly added: "Also the megaphone."

These two lay persons became not only a more powerful Catholic voice than had been heard before in our time, but they made that voice heard around the world. No one can read Frank's book *The Church and I* without being amazed by the simplicity and also the heroic sacrifice which enabled this married couple to make so great an impact upon the twentieth century Church.

It lasted only a generation. Everything seemed to change with Vatican II. Frank says it would be difficult to imagine that such changes could take place so swiftly. He says if there is one major reason it is that *the Catholic laity were not sufficiently educated and not sufficiently involved*. They had been on the inside of the ark looking out.

Can there be another Catholic revival like that which roared and astounded the world from the twenties to the sixties of the 20th century? Could there be an even greater roar in the twenty-first? If it is to happen, Frank and Maisie would say that the way to make it happen is to KNOW YOUR FAITH, and not keep it to yourself!

#### Their Story

They learned their faith the hard way. Frank's father was an atheist. Maisie was a product of the Oxford Movement. When they knew a good deal more than their catechism they felt the need to share the faith with the atheists and the badly informed (and therefore confused) persons of faith. The questions thrust at them in Hyde

Park, on what was known as "the Speaker's Corner" in London, or at any of the many street corners where they rose to proclaim the faith, sent them ever deeper into the study of the Church and of God.

Frank finally became a Doctor of Theology and wrote a synopsis of the entire works of Thomas Aquinas in popular form called *Map of Life*. His translation of the Confessions of St. Augustine is considered the best in the English language. His challenge to every layman was: "If you know less theology than I, it is not enough."

But where does one learn theology? It can come easily from reading the New Testament if done in a spirit of prayer. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*: In prayer we learn to believe and we learn WHAT to believe. There is no greater school of theology than daily Communion in which Jesus, Who reveals God to us, gives Himself. But we also need books and study groups. We can TALK and learn from each other. Fortunately in some areas Catholic broadcasts and telecasts are available.

### **Discipline of Street Preaching**

When Frank came to London from the background of a vocal atheist father and an Irish Catholic mother he had had no Catholic schooling and a minimum of doctrine. When he heard the street corner lay speakers of the *Catholic Evidence Guild*, he said that he had never heard the Catholic Faith proclaimed so openly and enthusiastically. He was enthralled by their vitality. He joined. He said: "Under the crowd's compulsion (hecklers and questioners) we grew ever more clear-eyed about the distressingly human side of the Church, while remaining wholly determined to teach what the Church taught. You might think that this would be an impossible balance to maintain.

"In fact it was not. It was one of those dilemmas which solved itself in the doing. We talked theology with one another all the time... at the meal we ate together before the class, on our way to and from the outdoor meetings (some of us spoke at four or five meetings a week). A powerful theological influence was one of the speakers who earned her daily bread scrubbing floors. Louisa Cozens had as gifted a theological mind as I have met.

# FRANK & MAISIE

A  
MEMOIR  
WITH  
PARENTS



Jacket of book by their son Wilfrid who, commenting on the remark of Chesterton that Frank and Maisie "were the roar of the revival", added: "**And also the megaphone!**"

She had only a primary school education but had read and thought and lived theology.

"From her I first heard Boethius's definition of 'person' (although we presume she had never read Boethius): 'a complete individual substance of a rational nature.' *Her main school was daily at the altar rail.*"

#### **Today's Need**

According to Frank Sheed, the great need in the Church today (far more than in the past) is *for the laity to have reasons for the faith that is in them... plus the enthusiasm and ability to share those reasons with the world.* And it seems that this, above all, is what the Council is saying both in *Lumen Gentium* and in the *Decree on the Laity*. Frank's book *The Church and I* is full of instruction and wisdom in this regard.

On the question of ecclesiastical permission he got a lead from Cardinal Bourne who said: "Don't ask my advice. Just tell me what you're doing. I'll stop you if I think it necessary." (Good advice to keep in mind!)

From the twenties on into the sixties, euphoria reigned among Catholics. He writes: "We were happy in the Church and confident in its future. Converts were pouring in, up to thirteen thousand in one notable year in England, over thirty thousand a year in the United States. And they were not only a nameless mass." (Frank ended up being a voice for many of them: Ronald Knox, Chesterton, Belloc, etc.)

"It is true there were Catholic priests leaving the Church but we were convinced that they were few and reminded ourselves of Cardinal Manning's dictum that if a priest left, the reason was either Punch or Judy" (alcohol or women).

"At that time we were building churches all over the place and filling them as fast as we built them. He laughs longest who laughs last, of course, I don't know when the last laugh will be. Certainly it is a long time since we Catholics had much to laugh over" (written 1974).

If he had to look back Frank Sheed would say that the Revival "depended too much on the Intellectual... leaving the main body of Catholics very much as they were"...

*ignorant.* He gives one true example after another of ignorance even in Catholic schools. Catechism answers had taken the place of *understanding the faith*. And it would take Frank Sheed to say it: "I have heard good sermons. But from too many *I came away wondering that a teaching Church should give so little thought to teaching its teachers to teach.*"

Once on Television I myself heard a former priest who had gone up high in the Church (a Monsignor and diocesan chancellor) but had finally opted to seek dispensation and marry. He said: "Until I laicized I never knew how little is taught in Sunday sermons. The priests I heard would never make it as salesmen."

*Certainly the Sunday sermon is never enough.* And that is why the laity MUST take upon themselves... especially as parents responsible for the education of their children, to read and to participate in study or discussion groups (such as is intended with the Blue Army cells and many types of prayer groups and Third Orders).

#### **Suggestion for Every Parish**

But books are expensive. And where are Catholic libraries? Some thoughtful parishioners placed a shelf of books in the back of their church. A notice said the books could be borrowed freely... just fill out the card and return the book when finished. And another notice explained how the books got there: "If you have a good book with which you are finished, would you make it available for others?" Over a period of a couple of years the little lending library grew as more and more thoughtful parishioners added to it. A variety of weekly Catholic newspapers was added.

Is it not possible to have this in EVERY parish church? Just *ONE lay "apostle"* can make such a very important project a reality. And how about a pamphlet rack, including Scapulars and Rosaries?

Frank Sheed, even from his exalted viewpoint as confidant of Bishops and head of a Catholic Publishing House with offices in New York and London, did not foresee the explosion that was coming after the Council. But he saw the dangers. "We had long been saying that the bearing of doctrine on life, and the interaction of life

and doctrine, were *all but totally neglected*" (p. 255). The Council has said: "The whole human family has reached *an hour of supreme crisis* in its advance towards maturity" (*Church in the Modern World*, p. 77). It is a crisis of ignorance.

### **Instruction Paramount**

Bishop Jerome Hastrich, who not only read the first manuscript of this book but sent several pages of detailed comment, saw this question of education of the laity as paramount. Since Catholic schooling is often inadequate, and to the majority not even available, *it is up to the apostolates to fill the void*. It is up to the laity, in their own families, their own neighborhoods, their own parishes, *to see the responsibility and to accept it*.

In saying what must be said, there is no intention whatever to criticize the clergy. Frank Sheed quotes a Cardinal who said, "*You cannot have an apostolic laity without an apostolic clergy*," but His Eminence "seemed to have *no illusions about the immediate likelihood* of the latter" (p. 172).

### **It Works Both Ways!**

It can also work the other way! Indeed the Council seems to be challenging the laity to take an *apostolic initiative*. Experience of nearly half a century has convinced this writer that *an apostolic laity CAN make an apostolic clergy*. I recall in particular a priest in California who was a great golfer and a wonderful chap and, by the way, performed his priestly functions. And when his local Blue Army began by asking if they could have the Rosary before Mass he at first refused. But they kept asking.

He finally was worn down and said yes. Some time later they asked for the First Saturday Devotion. Again he was worn down and said yes. But this time it had not taken much asking. He says: "I was impressed by increased religious feeling in the Parish." (And not surprisingly it showed up in the Sunday collections.)

The next request was for All-Night Vigils from First Friday to First Saturday in honor of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Since the other devotions had proved so beneficial he hardly hesitated to give permission. Finally came PERPETUAL ADORATION... which has now *continued in that parish day and night for years while in*

*neighboring parishes most of the time the church doors are locked.*

Emily Tamisier was grieved to see Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament neglected and what she did about it has affected the entire Church to an amazing degree.

### **Emily Tamisier**

As with most other great lay apostles, it was the same old story. 'But her vocation to the world, during that time when lay vocations were hardly considered, was remarkably clearcut. She never really felt called to religious life, but she tried to enter three times primarily because of her great devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. She called a day without Holy Communion a veritable Good Friday. She last applied at St. Eymard's convent of perpetual adoration. But finally, through a good confessor, she found her true vocation: Spreading devotion to the Eucharist.

She began by organizing pilgrimages to places of Eucharistic miracles. This led ultimately to her great achievement: Eucharistic Congresses.

She received little credit in her lifetime, but at a subsequent Eucharistic Congress held in Lourdes she was called the "Joan of Arc of the Blessed Sacrament."

With reverence for the Eucharist came reverence for the priesthood. This almost forgotten lay-saint, who gave the Church its greatest universal manifestation of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, used all her spare means (and much the world would have said she could not spare) for the education of poor aspirants to the priesthood.

For the launching of the very first Eucharistic Congress in the city of Lille she had the help of another great lay apostle, Philibert Vrau.

### **"I Want to Make My City Catholic"**

Philibert was known as the "holyman of Lille". He first wanted to enter religious life but the failure of a banking scheme plunged the family into debt. It was again the same old story. One biographer, with what seems an air of "taking second best", said: "None but the lay apostolate was open to him" (Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol XV, pg. 515). It became his ambition to make his city of Lille truly

Catholic. He began by introducing nocturnal adoration. Then he undertook to make general Catholic education available from primary school to University! Not content with this he also promoted the efficiency of the St.Vincent de Paul Society and, with his brother-in-law, Dr. Feron-Vrau, he founded the *Society of St. Luke* to Catholicize the medical profession!

Even all this was not enough.

How could the city become truly Catholic if he did not influence the media? So he persuaded his nephew to establish the *Apostolate of The Good Press*.

The title of one book about Philibert Vrau seems to say it all: *A Modern Saint in the Catholic World*.

### **Need They Be Forgotten?**

But still he might almost have been forgotten were it not for the Eucharistic Congresses of which he is considered a founder since he helped to organize the first Congress in the city which he had labored to make truly Catholic.

Even without the research for writing this book I should have known of Mr.Vrau because of a personal, ardent interest in Eucharistic Congresses. I had led pilgrimages to almost every Eucharistic Congress held in my lifetime, including the very largest from the U.S. to two of them (Lourdes and Melbourne) and the largest from any country outside India at the Congress held there (attended by Pope Paul VI). Because of the Congresses I remembered Emily Tamisier, and she led me to the truly forgotten "holy man of Lille".

It is sad because we NEED these exemplars of lay involvement in the life of the church, "saints in the world". (See **Epilogue Three** at the very end of this book.)

### **The Sheep Were Not Fed**

Many of my age (in my eightieth year at the time of this book) can look back over the pre and postconciliar years with some objectivity. We can realize not only how different the Church is now from the way it was then. We can also realize why the Holy Spirit, through the Council, has so greatly emphasized the absolute need for lay involvement in the life of the church in today's world.

Frank Sheed expresses the opinion certainly of many of us who have experienced the change: "*We had become more and more conscious of the gap* between the mass of Catholics and the intellectuals: '*the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed*' because the shepherds were talking to one another."

The gap has to be filled, and the Council is saying that the laity **SHARE** in that responsibility. They must see their relationship to the clergy not as one of sheep waiting to be fed, but of persons of intellect and good will who **share**, as the Council says, "in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, par. 31).

"All of us, priests **and** laity, are born again," wrote Frank Sheed in his important look at the reality of the matter in *The Church and I*: "Christ's life is in us, the Holy Spirit is indwelling in us as in Christ, we are nourished by Christ Himself Eucharistically." He adds in another place: "That is the essence of it, the life is not something Christ gives us, *it is Christ living in us*. He is the life. 'To live is Christ,' says Paul. And again, 'I live now not I but Christ lives in me.' Mysterious. Unspeakably. But for our own well-being we must try to speak it, at least to ourselves" (pp. 268 and 332).

### **Ultimately: Person to Person!**

Talking about it can only contribute to the answer. The final answer must come from down-to-earth apostles like the holy man of Lille. And "holy" is the key word.

The First Saturday devotion is a great start because it includes confession, fifteen minutes of meditation, and the Rosary, all keyed to a good Communion of reparation. There is power in the slogan: Make First Saturday Parish Day. So much can follow from such a beginning! Perhaps that is why Jesus said that He now **INSISTED** on this devotion.\*

A sort of smoke screen seemed to rise during the Council. Pope Paul VI spoke of it as "permeating even into the Vatican." Now that the smoke is clearing we see emerging the glittering beauty of the Council documents leading the Church into a new era of lay involvement. On December 30, 1988, with the amazing changes taking place in Eastern Europe, Pope John Paul II wrote:

"In recent years we have witnessed in the Church a remarkable vitality in the growth and spread of new forms of associations for the lay faithful. Frequently these groups are very different from each other. However they have a common purpose... to bear witness to the Gospel of Christ as a source of renewal for society and of hope for humanity" (*Christifideles Laici*, 29).

His Holiness called for five priorities in the lay apostolate: 1) *Holiness*; 2) Acceptance of *responsibility* "to profess, proclaim and teach the Catholic faith"; 3) To be *one with the Pope* represented in the local Bishop; 4) To *share in evangelization and sanctification* of humanity; 5) *Commitment* to serve the total dignity of the human person.

The big question is how soon and how effectively this call of the Church, through the Council and through the voice of the Vicar of Christ, will be answered.

Note: *Christifideles Laici* has been published as a small book (181 pages) by the Daughters of St. Paul under the title, *The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People*.

\* See the book *To Prevent This* published by 101 Foundation.

Below: Fr. Redemptus Valabek, O.Carm., presents guests to the Pope at beatification, April 24th, 1994.



## Chapter Eighteen

### SCARY EXAMPLE

If this book is to have practical value it will be because, without going into lengthy biographies, we have tried to give examples from real life. We would dearly like to avoid personal examples, but sometimes there are no others for the particular point to be made.

My Bishop of thirty years gave me a mandate to write the history of our Fatima apostolate (the Blue Army). I fastened his letter to the wall over my desk with the sincere resolve "one day" to write it. Two years flew by and I apologized to the Bishop saying that I was sure he knew I would get around to it but that I had been very busy. He said I should not put it off any longer. I then said that I had difficulty remembering. His Excellency would take no excuse. "You will remember one thing," he said, "and that will remind you of another. It is important that you write this book. The Blue Army is important in the Church."

He has gone to his eternal reward but I do not think I am presuming on his episcopal mandate for what I am about to say. But I have had to overcome a tremendous reluctance to write about matters which could be misunderstood or could hurt the feelings of others.

The big problem may not be so much about differences between clergy and laity. The bigger problem, linked to ignorance, might be one of discernment. We are being told now that there are, and there will be, special charisms in the laity which are to be recognized by the Church. And if lay persons develop these charisms successfully they must be discerned (i.e., recognized), and not only *encouraged* but also *supported*. (We have chosen to use the actual words of the conciliar decrees.)

Normally these charisms are determined after the fact. A person joins the Legion of Mary and either does or does

not build up a record of success in parish visits, does or does not persevere. A person joins the Blue Army and does or does not become involved in the weekly cell meetings and in seeing that they divide and increase.

The big problem is discernment where there is insufficient track record. I think I have been saying all this to postpone getting down to a painful real-life example.

When the Blue Army International Center was begun at Fatima we wanted a representative group from the U. S. to be present for the laying of the cornerstone so we organized an "at cost" pilgrimage. It was followed by other pilgrimages which proved to have an enormous impact on the apostolate as a whole. Those who went to Fatima were struck by its reality... were convinced that Our Lady had come to save the world. And these were the persons who became our greatest apostles, so we developed what I called our "pilgrimage apostolate." In our last *two years alone* we took over *20,000 pilgrims to Fatima*.

That apostolate operated for thirty-four years. The good it did could never be measured. In a little book I wrote titled *Go, Your Mother is Calling* I said: "If I were asked if there were ONE, single device or practice which might best serve to instruct and inspire apostles of the future it would be pilgrimages."

A good pilgrimage can have more impact than a retreat. And one can learn more from visiting the holy places than from reading dozens of books about them. Blessed Anne Marie followed this principle in raising her children. St. Benedict Joseph Labre's whole life is a lesson in the sanctifying power of pilgrimages.

Yet in just two years that largest pilgrimage apostolate in America (if not in the world) *ceased to exist (like the Queen's Work)*.

This is scary. To use a colloquialism, it really shook me up.

Those responsible for the major decisions could have been better informed. Various factors were involved. But the main reason for the sudden failure of the pilgrimage apostolate was the lack of a trained *core group*.

We will speak later of how Blessed Jose Maria Escriva worried about this and ultimately found a solution.

In our apostolate of Fatima (the Blue Army) we had hoped to deal with the problem of cointinuity by means of a constitution which was drawn up shortly before the Council. It was given verbal approval by the Cardinal Prefect of the congregation which then dealt in such matters. But following the Vatican Council such authority was transferred to the newly formed Council of the laity. The official in charge of our case was a Monsignor Danos, as I have mentioned previously.

Msgr. Danos was one of the experts who shaped the Council Decrees regarding the lay apostolate. One criticism he had of our Constitution was that it called for a priest to be President and he said that only a lay person should be President. It was a change we never implemented.

Foreseeing all such difficulties, Blessed Jose Maria, Founder of Opus Dei, solved them by forming a permanent core group.

Below, left to right: Founders of the Blue Army, John Haffert and Monsignor Harold Colgan, with Lawrence Harvey (author of one of earliest books on Fatima) leading a pilgrimage to Fatima in 1955. Pilgrimages became important part of the apostolate.



## **Chapter Nineteen**

### **THE CORE GROUP**

The core groups of apostolates of holiness in the world, by which we mean organized, programmed efforts to lead the laity to higher levels of spiritual life, has for the past 800 years been primarily the Third Orders of religious communities.

This continues today, often with increased diversity and vigor. By the end of the thirteenth century there were flourishing Dominican, Franciscan, as well as Carmelite lay affiliations.

Each reflected the spirituality of its particular community. Devotions like the Rosary (Dominican) and the Scapular (Carmelite and other) became widespread. By modern times it was almost the norm for every religious community to have some form of lay affiliation or lay support group.

This seemed to conform to the perception that advanced holiness is to be attained by distancing oneself, at least in spirit, from the world.

#### **A New Concept**

Blessed Escriva was perhaps the first to state so clearly and boldly the lay vocation *in and of the world*. His program of holiness, based on centuries of ascetical theological development, is in effect the same basic program of holiness practiced in Third Orders but is purely secular (using that word in its good sense). It asserts the holiness of the lay vocation *in itself*.

Perhaps Opus Dei is one of the best things to happen to the Church in a thousand years. The "Morning Offering Apostolate" (which could be another name for the Blue Army) is certainly another. We will look at this later. But first let us see how Blessed Escriva faced the problem of continuity by establishing a core group.

In Opus Dei there are the ordinary members, numeraries, and supernumeraries. The numeraries form the core group. They live apostolic celibacy and normally live in centers which deal with the formation of other members. From these come priests of Opus Dei whose superior is a Bishop consecrated for this work. (Opus Dei is a Prelature, a sort of "super diocese" spread all over the world with its own Bishop. The members are subject in most ways to the Bishop in whatever diocese they serve, but in internal matters of Opus Dei they have their own Bishop.) This prelature is the inner core.

Blessed Escriva was a civil as well as a canon lawyer and he prayed and worked diligently for a juridical solution to the problems of government and continuity.

Both are solved by this twin "core group."

Members of Opus Dei may come and go all over the world. This or that one may be elected to this or that post. But the integrity of the apostolate's constitution is safeguarded by this holy, specifically educated, PERMANENT core group.

Almost from the beginning the founders of the World Apostolate of Fatima saw the need of a similar core group specifically educated and permanent: The cells. And God sent them, at the time of their very first national meeting, an Ursuline nun to form their inner core.

Mother Stanislaus had already felt inspired to form a community of Handmaids to serve the Apostolate of Fatima when she heard of the Blue Army. She felt immediately that this was the apostolate she was to serve. When she presented herself to the founders of the apostolate they felt at once that she was sent by God.

With permission of her Provincial, Mother Stanislaus left the semi-cloister to found the Handmaids of Mary Immaculate. She brought the ascetical regimen of the cloister to the special vocation of being Handmaids of the Handmaid of the Lord to see that Her message of Fatima be made known to the world.

A brief comparison between Opus Dei and the Blue Army will show that what they have in common is their purpose: Holiness in the Church. Their founders had in common an awareness that not only for continuity but

also for success there had to be a double core of real holiness. It is interesting that as the Blue Army spread in the world, communities like the Handmaids, almost identical in purpose and spirit, were introduced by God as the inner core of the apostolate in Asia and in Europe.

In Korea the apostolate has a national center modeled on that in the United States. At the time of this writing its religious community had over 30 members. In Italy there were about twenty. In Pontevedra, Spain, the newest of the four foundations, was canonically established by the Archbishop of Santiago in 1992.

It is our hope that members from each community in the U.S., Korea, Italy, Spain, and areas of future foundations, may send members to serve at the International Center of the Apostolate (*Domus Pacis*) in Fatima to help with *retreats and apostolic formation* and with international correspondence. Pope John Paul II acted in similar fashion in establishing a cloister in the Vatican in 1994, drawing members on a rotating basis from various cloistered communities from different parts of the world.

#### **Examples of Council Decrees in Practice**

Since this book is intended for the the lay apostolate in general it may seem preferential to give so much emphasis to Opus Dei, Third Orders, and the Blue army as examples of the kinds of apostolates spoken of in the Council. And the reader would have reason to suspect this because of this writer's involvement with the Blue Army (although his knowledge of Opus Dei is primarily through research). For that reason the explanation of the Blue Army given by the Bishop of Fatima (in which His Excellency says "It should be accepted by all Marian movements") is appended to this book. (The Bishop's declaration was first published in 1964 in the official periodical of the Sanctuary of Fatima. See pg. 212.)

We have already mentioned that the Blue Army translates the formula of holiness given by Our Lady of Fatima into a specific threefold commitment.

The first and most basic commitment is the MORNING OFFERING which has two parts. The first part consists of: 1) Placing ourselves in the presence of God in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary; 2) Offering Him



Above, left to right: Sister Mary Joseph, A.M.I., Msgr. John Engler, and Sister Mary Celeste, A.M.I. in front of the convent of the Handmaids of Mary Immaculate, a community founded to serve the Blue Army. Msgr. Engler was for many years the national chaplain of the Blue Army in the United States.

everything that we will do, or that will happen to us, this day; 3) Offering all in union with the Precious Blood of Jesus from every altar throughout the world.

In the second part we say to Jesus: 1) We desire to gain every indulgence and merit we can during this day; 2) We offer them, together with ourselves, to His Mother (whom He has appointed Dispensatrix of all Grace) that She may use them to the best interests of His Sacred Heart; 3) as we say this we kiss the Scapular as a sign of offering ourselves to His Sacred Heart through Her Heart Immaculate. We close by calling upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus and His Precious Blood for mercy, and upon the Immaculate Heart for Her intercession.

*This offering is the heart of the apostolate.* It is the basis of all else. The other two commitments are intended to make this offering a reality at every moment of our lives. They are:

- 1) Wearing the Scapular as a sign of this offering;
- 2) Saying the Rosary with attention to the mysteries.

We liken this threefold pledge to a tricycle with the *Morning Offering as the big wheel* and the Scapular and Rosary devotions as the two back wheels which support us and, in a sense, enable us to sit on the high seat and turn the big wheel in moments of temptation by RENEWING our offering with the prayer taught at Fatima: "*O My Jesus, it is for love of You, in reparation for the offenses against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and for the conversion of poor sinners*".

And where is this tricycle taking us?

**This three wheeled vehicle is carrying us deep into Eucharistic life!** One need but climb aboard to experience this as 50 years of experience has proved.

### **The Extra Requests**

Those on the tricycle are urged to make a further commitment to the First Saturday Devotion which requires confession and communion once a month, the Rosary, fifteen minutes of meditation on the Rosary, all four offered in reparation for the offenses committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And in addition the members are encouraged to form or join a parish cell, a group which meets once a week for reading, Rosary, and

a questioning of what one has done this week to increase holiness in themselves and in the community.

This proves to be a remarkably effective ascetical program. Many who follow it *become daily communicants*. It is the program given by Our Lady of Fatima who said that if enough persons follow it Her Immaculate Heart will triumph. Could the Church hope for more?

### **Opus Dei**

The basic spiritual commitment in Opus Dei, as also in some Third Orders, consists of: 1) Daily Mass and Holy Communion; 2) Weekly confession; 3) Daily reading of the New Testament and some spiritual book; 4) The Rosary; 5) Daily examination of conscience; 6) Monthly day of recollection; 7) A retreat once a year. (Anyone, *including children*, can join the Blue Army. But a person must be 18 to join Opus Dei.)

We could consider that ALL might be called to be Blue Army members and that Opus Dei is a special vocation in which the formative program is given great importance.

Apostolates like these are struggling in the postconciliar world, plagued by the old mindsets, often assailed by false rumors. But what a ray of hope they cast upon the dawn of the third millennium!

### **Fruit of Centuries of Spiritual Experience**

The book by Blessed Escriva, *The Way*, which was burned in a convent school in Barcelona, has seen nearly 250 printings, in 39 languages, with a total of almost four MILLION copies. His book on the Rosary, in 18 languages, has printings just to 1992 of more than half a million copies (a meditation on EACH of the fifteen mysteries applied to daily life). *The Way* seemed new, but in reality it was merely a new perspective.

The spirituality of Msgr. Escriva was the simple fruit of centuries of religious experience beginning right with the Holy Family (which he called the "trinity on earth"): "St. Joseph takes us to Mary; Mary leads us to Jesus, Who in turn enables us to rise up to the Father and the Holy Spirit" (*Opus Dei*, by D. le Tourneau, p. 110).

Perhaps central to the Blessed Founder was his devotion to Mary. Like St. Joseph, he seemed to find his union with the Heart of Christ in the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

This is the message of Fatima. This is the message from the Holy Spirit to lift up the People of God and to prepare them for that glorious era She has promised: The era of the triumph of Her Immaculate Heart, an era of “peace for mankind.”

### **Other Apostolates**

Some wit remarked that every religious order should be suppressed every hundred years to make room for the first-fervor vitality of new ones. Frank Duff says he heard the same about lay apostolates, only the time frame for lay apostolates was fifty years!

Although this is an overstatement, the Church is indeed enriched not only by the continuity of the great existing communities but by the sometimes primitive zeal of new ones. The greatest innovations, like Opus Dei, seem to be coming from and in the laity. In *Christifideles Laici* John Paul II speaks of the many new movements developing among the laity, and sometimes they have received direct encouragement from the Pope.

We can understand that Anatol Kaszczuk, who founded the Perpetual Rosary in Poland, was invited to Rome to attend Mass in the Pope's private chapel and to meet with the Pontiff because Poland is Poland and the Pope was Polish. It is wonderful that the Pope encouraged him as His Holiness read the report of the spread of the movement in Poland by exclaiming three times: “The army is attacking!”

It is a little more surprising that a married couple from St. Petersburg, Florida, received a similar invitation and the Pope sat down with them for an hour to discuss the Order of Mary which they founded for married couples, an Order much like the old Third Orders but with new visions, new awareness of lay responsibility.

Often these new apostolates are inspired by the recent messages to the world from the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Daily consecration to the Two Hearts, for example, is one of the conditions for membership in the Order of Mary. Other devotions include the 15 decades of the Rosary, the Scapular and Miraculous Medal, frequent Mass and Communion, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Chaplet of Mercy... a combination of the ever old, ever new, ever

vital devotions of the Church to make us saints.

Many of these new movements are illumined through persons (almost invariably among the laity) who actually see Our Lord and Our Lady or who hear messages from Them. But the authority of the movements does not come through such messages. It comes through Church authority which evaluates the movements in themselves quite independently.



Above: Anatol Kaszczuk, founder of the Blue Army in Poland, presents the Holy Father with statistics of the Perpetual Rosary apostolate there. Reading it the Holy Father said: "This army is attacking." Reading further the Pope repeated: "This army is attacking." Finally, a third time, the Pope looked up from the report and exclaimed: "This army is attacking!" And Anatol quietly answered: "Yes, Your Holiness, and winning."



Above: Pope John Paul II at Fatima, site of a divine intervention without parallel in Christian history. "It compels the Church," said the Vicar of Christ, calling ALL to involvement in the life of the Church *from early childhood to old age*. (See statement of Bishop of Fatima, pg. 213)

Below: The Pope at youth rally in Denver. He said: "The Pope will never tire of urging the involvement of youth." Citing the Council His Holiness called young people "The hope of the Church." **Osservatore Romano**, Sept. 7, 1994. Also see **VOICE of the Sacred Hearts**, Jan., 1995.



## Chapter Twenty

### TWO PATHS

**A**t Fatima, *in the light from Her Immaculate Heart* Our Lady transformed three children virtually overnight into saints. And that light conveys a sense of "mission". The Council said the laity shared in the priesthood of Jesus. For the children it was sacrifice for souls.

We went into some detail about the Blue Army and Opus Dei in the last chapter because they exemplify the putting of this message of holiness from Our Lady into the lives of every day people.

#### The First Question

The first question put to the children of Fatima was: "Will you be WILLING to offer up whatever God will send you as a sacrifice...?" Lucia said that this was the basic message of Fatima: "To make holy everything we do during the day." (The meaning of "sacrifice" is "to make holy.")

What makes this a path powerful for beginners, even as small as little Jacinta, is that our loving Mother, to brighten the way to the sanctification of daily duty, offered Her Own Immaculate Heart, to which we become "consecrated" through the devotion of the Scapular. She offered the Rosary, the mysteries of which inspire us while our consecration and prayer strengthen us. That is new bright path revealed at Fatima in the light shining from the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It can be called the *path of the extended morning offering*. Twenty-five million around the world pledged to follow it and Russia was converted.

But beyond this path which can be followed even by little children there is another bright path: the *extended apostolate of Holy Mass*. It leads to much greater heights.

A priest is one consecrated to God to make sacrifice. Jesus was the High Priest offering Himself in sacrifice.

There are priests who renew this supreme Sacrifice in the Mass, and there is the "common priesthood" which includes all others consecrated in baptism *to participate in that Sacrifice*. Blessed Jose Maria Escriva says that they should extend that Sacrifice of the Mass *through the 24 hours of their day*.

### **Opus Dei Linked to Fatima**

It is not merely a question of asserting the dignity of the lay state. It is affirmation of the LAY VOCATION to the greatest possible holiness. The path pointed out by Blessed Jose Maria is like an extension of the path showed to the children of Fatima. It is an extension of the same message.

Indeed in the early days of Opus Dei, when Blessed Jose Maria went to Santiago to discuss The Work with the Cardinal, His Eminence arranged to have him meet Sister Lucia (visionary of Fatima) in the nearby Dorothean convent in Tuy. *Lucia asked Blessed Jose Maria to go to Portugal to establish Opus Dei there.* As he did not have a visa, Lucia herself (probably through the Bishop of Fatima) arranged it. (See *At God's Pace* by François Gondrand, published by Scepter, p. 197.)

This was probably the first internationalization of The Work.

### **Never So Well Defined**

Some may say that these are not "new" paths... *but they have never before been so well defined.* Consider the difference between Opus Dei and a religious Third Order.

A man who felt he had a vocation entered one of the old religious orders. After some years he realized that it was not his vocation. On advice of superiors he returned to the world. There he joined the Third Order with its special program of holiness which included daily Mass, spiritual reading and meditation, the Scapular and the Rosary, frequent confession, days of recollection and retreats.

One would say that was a good program of holiness. The Third Orders all offer programs of holiness in the world. Anne Marie Taigi and Elizabeth Mora were Trinitarian tertiaries. Pier Frassati was a Dominican tertiary. We have cited several others. Father Redemptus Valabek, O.Carm., International Director of the Carmelite

Third Order of the ancient observance has said that the veritable explosion of Third Order programs of holiness has caused him to *see them as "the future of the Order."*

But even as a member of the Third Order, the pious person to whom we referred above felt for many years like a fish out of water. God had called him into the world, but there remained a feeling that "the world" was somehow a bad place to be, and work in the world was rather a distraction from, than a part of, holiness. And there was something else.

In religious life he had the joy of knowing always that he was doing the will of God because of obedience. Everything during the day was covered either by the rule or by the direction of a religious superior. He could both feel and KNOW that every single act was holy, that is, in accordance with God's Holy Will.

When God drew him to work in the world he now so often had to make up his mind about what he should or should not do, *hoping it was God's Will...but never quite sure.* But from the Council Documents and sources like Opus Dei he learned that the WORLD is also a place of God's calling. He began to understand what the Council was saying about the *priesthood of the laity.* The Third Order was not just a clinging to cloistered religious life. *It was religious life in the world.*

Opus Dei offered no new or different program than his Third Order, but it offered a wholly new view. It showed him the importance of his participation in the Mass, and of joining with the Mass all that he did in the day. Suddenly this was something more profound than renewing the morning offering *occasionally through the day.* There was now a new and deeper meaning to the words taught by Our Lady: "O My Jesus, it is for love of You, in reparation for the offenses committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and for the conversion of poor sinners." This was an extension of the Sacrifice of the Mass *through the day's schedule.*

Lucifer disobeyed. Adam and Eve disobeyed. And Jesus, to repair that disobedience, obeyed even to the death of the cross. That was the first Sacrifice of the Mass. With a schedule we can extend the Sacrifice of the

Mass, the Sacrifice of Calvary to every act, every moment.

Most lay persons have a schedule of work, whether in the home or some other workplace. This schedule can be a program of holiness, a program one "obeys" for love of God and of those one serves. With love and fidelity this program can become an extension of the obedience of Jesus on Calvary which is renewed in every Mass.

### **Suggested Schedule**

For a doctor, one self-employed, one who is retired, it is not so easy. But we can all unite EVERY act with the supreme act of obedience of Our Lord renewed in every Mass. We can all create our own schedule, some elements of which seem obvious and are probably already a part of our daily practice: To begin the day with prayer, such as the Morning Offering and the Rosary. We can set time for other devotions, *central to which* (if at all possible) is *Holy Mass and Communion*. There must be a time for spiritual reading and thought and, with evening prayer, an examination of conscience.

Night time is precious, especially if we wake up during the night. Indeed our angel may have a hand in waking us! We should resolve not to seek diversion (such as TV) but to spend this precious time in spiritual reading and prayer until sleep returns.

Whatever our final "schedule," it should be worked out with a spiritual director. Pervading it all should be the JOY of doing the Will of God, coming ever more deeply into the Flame of Love of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

### **The Pope's Rosary Schedule**

In another book\*\* we gave this example:

Few of us can have more demands on our time than the Pope. During the time of the Vatican Council, those demands were enormously increased. In addition to the NORMAL demands were those of over 2,000 bishops in Rome at the same time and the demands of the Council itself.

I was in Rome at that time. A group had arrived hoping to see the Pope, so I went on their behalf to see my friend, Cardinal Tisserant, who was Dean of the Sacred College. He was considered the most influential Cardinal in the

Church at the time. A call to the Maestro di Camara revealed that no time at all was available in the foreseeable future!

Seeing my disappointment Cardinal Tisserant said: "I have a half hour scheduled with the Holy Father at noon. I can give you half of my time." He made available his car and chauffeur to find the group which had gone on a sightseeing tour of Rome with no thought that the audience could have been arranged on such short notice.

When the group got to the Vatican it was just a little beyond the time. We asked the Maestro di Camara if it might not be possible just to get a glimpse of the Holy Father to receive his blessing. "*Noteven Cardinal Tisserant could be received by the Holy Father now,*" the Archbishop answered. We later learned that the Pope had three times set aside in the day for the Rosary: Five decades in the morning, five at noon, and five in the evening. *And he never let anything prevent him from keeping that schedule.*

### **Wonderful Example**

We can be faithful to prayer if we set a schedule and follow it obediently. It will be a time when we unite our minds and hearts to the Flame of Love of the Sacred Hearts. Although he was the busiest of men, John XXIII never missed all fifteen decades of the Rosary because he was faithful to a schedule. As this holy Pope (who most probably will one day be canonized) created a SCHEDULE for prayer, so can we. Obeying it we obey the rule of holiness we have set down (with advice and consent of our spiritual director) as God's Will for us.

As we said in the beginning of this book, the documents of the Pope and of the Council state that the first requisite of the lay apostolate is Holiness. And Our Lady Herself *gave a program of holiness at Fatima suitable even for children.* She revealed it in the light of Her Immaculate Heart. In that same light Blessed Jose Maria Escriva applied the Council documents in Opus Dei, extending that path in an invitation to the depths of Divine Love for persons in every conceivable walk of life.

From those depths can come forth great lay apostles to vitalize the Church and change the face of the world.

\* *From a Morning Prayer*, 1942, republished as *The Brother and I*, 1972.

\*\* **SEX AND THE MYSTERIES**, AMI Press, 274 pp.

Below: Because of the Council Pope John XXIII became so busy that it was only two weeks before it began that he was able to keep his promise to travel across Italy to pray to Our Lady for its success in the Holy House, seen below. Even in the busiest days of the Council the Pope kept the schedule of another promise: to say all fifteen decades of the Rosary every day.

The Holy House was a magnet for many saints and especially for St. Benedict Joseph Labre. And it was here that Bertha Petit heard Our Lord say: "I will be your only nourishment."



## Chapter Twenty One

### HOW FAR?

When I wrote books in my twenties and thirties (and perhaps even beyond) I felt confident not only in my own facts and judgments but in those whose advice and criticism I sought. I gave little thought to *all I did not know*, or that my advisors did not know. Now I tremble to single out the Blue Army as an ideal for putting souls on the ascent of Carmel, and Opus Dei as an ideal for climbing, since I have so little knowledge of what the Holy Spirit is doing at this very moment in any one of thousands of corners of the world. How many other examples are there?

I can only say that, within the very small limits of my personal knowledge and experience, the formula of Fatima will make anyone who practices it holy, and the formula of Blessed Josemaria Escriva will develop that holiness. But so will the Legion of Mary. So will any number of apostolates springing up out of the holiness of Franciscan, Carmelite, Dominican, Trinitarian, Passionist, and so many religious communities, in their lay affiliates.

We have an extraordinary example in St. Paul of the Cross. As a young man St. Paul was inspired to make a forty day retreat. His "conversion" was perhaps as great as that of St. Ignatius Loyola. He wanted to make known the love of Jesus manifest in His Passion and the love of Mary manifest in Her sharing of the Passion. He spoke of the Sacred Hearts and even, like St. John Eudes, of THE Sacred Heart (singular) of Jesus and Mary. He seems in so many respects a "saint ahead of his time".

Although in his day a person who felt a "vocation" thought of the priesthood, apparently he felt it was not necessary to become a priest to fulfill his vocation. But

he and his little group of followers in a remote hermitage could get to Mass only once a week. After several years he applied for ordination. And it is fortunate for the purposes of this book that he did become a priest. Otherwise...by the law of averages...we might never have heard of him.

### **Began As A Lay Vocation**

Over two thousand of his personal letters have been saved. Many tell of Paul's extraordinary religious activities as a lay person and lay apostle.

"It is hard for us today," said his biographer, Rev. Bennet Kelley, C.P., "to imagine a situation like this. Here it was the year 1721, over 250 years ago, and Paul was a layman. Yet the bishop, for all his caution in some directions, had the insight and the courage to allow Paul to preach. He recognized in Paul what we would call today the charism, or gift, of preaching. Doubtless the parish priest did not have it, at least to the same extent. All priests do not have every gift, and certainly not all priests have the gift of preaching."

Indeed is this not difficult to imagine in the light of all we have said in the early chapters of this book and in the light of current experience?

Father Bennet Kelley continues: "What is unfortunate is that even today it is rare that those laymen who do have the gift of preaching are encouraged to use it. It is significant that Paul was called to both the contemplative and the apostolic life as a layman, long before he was called to the priesthood. Only six years later, and almost as if by accident, would he be ordained a priest."

That "accident" was Providential to meet the need of forming his followers into a community. He finally applied for ordination only because Cardinal Corrandini asked him to do so. He was ordained by Pope Benedict XIII on June 7th 1727. Not long afterwards he left Rome (where he and his brother had been working in a hospital) for a hermitage on Mount Argentario, birthplace of his community "*The Poor of Jesus*." (Afterwards known as the "*Passionists*" because of the saint's great emphasis on the Passion of Our Lord and the Sorrows of Mary.)

It was no accident that holy men wished to follow him

and it was no accident that, through the Passionist community, he would make a mighty impact on the universal Church.

At a time when Communion by lay people was a rare thing, Paul organized services with enough priests for confessions and persuaded many people to join in going to Communion. He preached the Passion of Jesus in which he saw love, love, love. *He was convinced that lay persons were called to be contemplatives.*

### **Lay Spiritual Director**

On one occasion thirty priests were in his audience. They had come to hear this man who was encouraging apparently ordinary people to be saints. *Some of these priests later sought him out for spiritual advice.* Father Bennet, writing in 1985, comments: "Today we are again discovering that spiritual direction can be given by trained lay people with the gift (for spiritual direction) and that it is not the private preserve of priests, but in Paul's time such a situation was most rare" (p. 56).

Although such charisms in a lay apostle were indeed rare in his day, and still rather rare as we enter the 21st century, the spirit and example of St. Paul of the Cross affirms *Christifideles Laici* and the teaching of the Council.

Does it not seem logical that lay persons seeking holiness, often without access to a holy priest, should seek counsel from someone they know who has long been a daily communicant? Does it not seem logical, and even most advisable, for daily communicants on the ascent of Mount Carmel to seek counsel and advice from each other? And should they not seek to better themselves spiritually by asking honest opinions of holy companions?

### **"Airtight Division"**

We have spoken of "a chasm" between clergy and laity. St. Paul's biographer calls it "*an airtight division*" between clergy and laity "which was something taken for granted in Paul's time as it still is in large measure today." He comments: "In this matter St. Paul was centuries ahead of his time. He did not accept the presumption that has been common for many centuries in the Church that practically all gifts and ministries were the role of priests and that lay people were only the passive recipients of

these gifts." And that is the "bottom line" of this entire book, confirmed in the life and experience of St. Paul of the Cross.

There seems to be a special meaning to the fact that, in all the visions and lights he had from the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, "there never seemed to be mention or suggestion that he should become a priest." In saying this, certainly the biographer of St. Paul, emphasizing the saint's years of lay apostolate, had no intention of diminishing in any way the priestly vocation, which is the highest of all. It is merely to emphasize *once again* that there are also OTHER vocations.

It is reasonable to conclude that God willed that this saint, who gave the Church the great order of Passionists, should first have affirmed the lay vocation to holiness. *Other lay persons whom he directed, and who remained in the world, reached high levels of contemplative prayer* as he exercised charisms rarely even recognized in lay persons. Some of us could not even have imagined *a lay person as spiritual advisor to priests* let alone to fellow laymen.

As we gaze, perhaps in some amazement, at the example of this saint we may ask: How far can, or should, the charisms of holy lay persons be exercised? The Council documents imply that they should go as far as St. Paul of the Cross exercised them, and perhaps even beyond.

### **God's Call**

We said in the beginning: With so many seminaries empty, and with an even greater scarcity of priests, God may be stressing that He desires that the common priesthood, as explained by the Council, be recognized and carried to the heights. How often we have seen amazing results in all-night vigils where lay persons gave witness and where even the expression of their prayer intentions inspired flaming devotion. And how often this happened only because there was no priest available.

Certainly it is God's Will, as seen in all that has been said in these pages, that the vocation of lay persons to holiness be recognized and their charisms utilized in order to help bring about the triumph of the Immaculate

Heart of Mary promised at Fatima, a triumph of holiness seen in the three children to whom She appeared, a triumph of the Sacred Heart of Her Divine Son, a triumph of Love.

How amazing that a layman named Paul Daneo, now known as St. Paul of the Cross, gave witness to this over 250 years ago!

NOTE: Quotations in this chapter are from the book *Listen To His Love*, a life of St. Paul of the Cross by Rev. Bennet Kelley, C.P., the Sign Press, Union City, N.J., 1985, 238 pp.

Below: Statue of St. Joseph atop the Blue Army International Center in Fatima. St. Joseph appeared in the sky with the Holy Child, blessing the world, during the great Fatima miracle.



**Chapter Twenty Two****THE PERFECT MODEL**

It has not been our intention in this book to give a course in ascetical theology. We are limited to little more than affirmation, with John Paul II and the Council, that *holiness is the first and most important element of the lay vocation.*

The ultimate model of the lay vocation, the greatest lay saint of all, is St. Joseph.

On March 19, 1963, Blessed Jose Maria expressed his great joy when Pope John XXIII, at the close of the first session of Vatican Council II, placed the name of St. Joseph in the canon of the Mass.

The holy founder of Opus Dei was thrilled that "in that conciliar gathering, which represented the whole Church brought together in the Holy Spirit, there was proclaimed the great supernatural value of St. Joseph's life, the value of an ordinary life of work done in God's presence in total fulfillment of His Will." He added:

"In describing the spirit of the association to which I have devoted my life, Opus Dei, I have said that it hinges upon ordinary work, *professional* work carried out in the midst of the world. *God's calling gives us a mission: it invites us to share in the unique task of the Church, to bear witness to Christ before our fellow men and so draw all things toward God.*"

The whole meaning of our existence is to be "just" like St. Joseph. It is to see the task at hand as God's Will for us. It is to see beyond *to special missions of apostolate*. For St. Joseph, whose work was his primary means of sanctification, the mission was one of the most sublime: To be a protecting and loving husband to the Mother of the Incarnate Word, and a father to Jesus.

The first miracle Jesus performed was at Cana. So we presume that Joseph did not see miracles but rather lived like every one of us, by faith. Blessed Jose Maria says:

"Convinced through faith of the reason for our life on earth, our life (present, past and future) acquires a new dimension, a depth we did not perceive before. All happenings and events now fall within their true perspective... God draws us from the shadows of our ignorance, our groping through history, and no matter what our occupation in the world *He calls us with a strong Voice as He once called Peter and Andrew: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men"* (Mt. 4: 19).

### **Make No Mistake, You TOO Are Called**

Make no mistake about it. Do not belittle the message. You, TOO, are called into the vineyard perhaps in a way you have ignored or perhaps even deliberately avoided. All of us are called no matter what our station in life.

St. Joseph's life was "simple, ordinary and normal, made up of years of the same work, of days... just one day after another... which were monotonous from the human point of view," says Blessed Jose Maria, adding: "I have often thought about this, meditating on St. Joseph's life."

As a layman, St. Joseph played an important role at the dawn of the Church. Laymen are called to play very important roles as we come to the "end times." We know this *not by speculation* but because *God is telling us* through the Magisterium. We can read for ourselves the statements and dictates of the Council (and documents like *Christifideles Laici*).

Those who speak of work as a penalty or a curse or a punishment, says Blessed Jose Maria, "have not understood sacred Scripture properly... Work, all work, bears witness to the dignity of man... It is a means and path of holiness. It is something to be sanctified and something which sanctifies." And beyond the work by which we gain our living *we are all called, to a greater or lesser degree, to serve in the vineyard of the Lord.* "Your human vocation is part, and an important part, of your divine vocation."

Blessed Jose Maria goes even further. He says that we are not to limit ourselves to material production. Each of

us has a much higher mission. Some are called to make the higher mission the very center of their lives, trusting in Divine Providence as St. Joseph did when he left his workshop in Nazareth and all his clientele without looking back, and without knowing that after Bethlehem would be exile in Egypt.

"Men need earthly bread to sustain them in their lives on earth," says Blessed Jose Maria in his commentary on the example of St. Joseph. "They also need bread from Heaven to enlighten their minds and inflame their hearts. With your work, taking advantage of the opportunities it offers, in your conversations and your dealings with others, you can and SHOULD carry out this apostolic precept."

We have quoted at length in this short chapter from the blessed founder of Opus Dei because the message of his work and of his life is essentially the message we set out to convey several years ago when this book was conceived. And we can think of no better way to conclude than by a final quotation from the holy founder:

*"A master of interior life, a worker deeply involved in his job, God's servant in continual contact with Jesus: that is Joseph. Go to Joseph! With him the Christian learns what it means to belong to God and fully to assume one's place among men, sanctifying the world. Get to know Joseph and you will find Jesus. Talk to Joseph and you will find Mary, who always sheds peace about Her in that attractive workshop in Nazareth."*

### **Special Mother to Lay Apostles**

If St. Joseph is the ideal of all lay apostles, Our Lady is in a most special way their Mother and guide. "I choose YOU," She said to Juan Diego. "As YOU ARE you can publish My glory," She said to Estelle Faguette. On St. Benedict Joseph's body was found a rosary around his neck and another in his hand; on Blessed Isidore, the scapular and the Rosary; for Bartolo Longo, the power of the Rosary overcame a consecration to Satan. And so on, and on, and on!

Do you feel the call? Look to Mary! And it is not surprising that the Council decrees say the same. Would you like to be the "roar" of the twenty first century as Frank

and Maisie were in the twentieth? Would you like to turn your entire city into a Catholic city, as did Philibert Vrau? Would you like to give to the Church lasting institutions like Eucharistic Congresses, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Perpetual Rosary, the All-Night Vigils (begun in England by Henrietta Bowers, one of the great lay apostles we have hardly mentioned!), the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Legion of Mary?

How can we help the Church to raise more lay exemplars like St. Joseph to our altars? How can we prevent that persons like Frank Duff and Frank and Maisie and Philibert Vrau be forgotten? How can be help to "canonize" holiness in the world?

Many times, in many places, images of Our Lady today weep human tears. "The cause of my sorrow," Our Lady said at Akita, "is the loss of so many souls." In apparitions and messages at Akita, which have been approved by the Church, She reaffirmed Her message of Fatima and spoke again of annihilation of entire nations, of a chastisement "worse than the deluge." Many lay Catholics have begun to respond. Many more are needed.



**Chapter Twenty Three****SAINTS TODAY**

One day in Rome I met the Felician nun who had been working FULL TIME promoting the cause of the Foundress of her Community. *"It is very difficult,"* she said.

There are about 5,000 Felician sisters in the world. For almost a hundred years DAILY prayers were said for the canonization of their foundress, Mother Angela. In addition to all those prayers (counted in the millions), many of the sisters promoted the cause by disseminating leaflets, promoting novenas for cures through her intercession, talking about her.

Why is it so difficult? And why would this great religious community commit itself to such a gigantic effort? The answer to the second question is simple. Daughters love their mother. And in addition to loving their Foundress the community wanted her glorified for the sake of the community. To canonize a foundress is to canonize the rule of the Order. It is an affirmation that THIS rule, given by this particular founder or foundress, makes saints.

**Why It Is Difficult**

It usually takes so long and is so difficult because it depends on three factors: 1) The opening of the cause (which requires Rome's decision that it is worthy of being pursued); 2) Cult; 3) Miracles. The first depends on a local bishop and Rome. The second depends on those who promote the cause. The third depends on God. Despite all these difficulties, *in just the first fifteen years* of his pontificate Pope John Paul proclaimed 267 saints and beatified 596 others... 863 in all! Many are now from the laity. To the great joy of all the Felicians all over the world, among the 596 beatified was their beloved foundress, Mother Angela. Another was a young woman by the name of Narcissa Moran who died in Lima, Peru,

on Dec. 8, 1869. When the local bishop came to know of her holiness he invited her to enter the convent. She declined saying *she did not feel she had a vocation to the religious life*. Like Estelle and others we have mentioned, she knew that there are *other* vocations. She had heard an unmistakable call: "You, too, go into My vineyard." "*As you are*" you can accomplish God's mission in the world.

Since the second Vatican Council, as has already been noted, the Church has beatified many, like Juan Diego, Bartolo Longo, Kateri Tekawitha (an American Indian), Contardo Ferrini (a professor of law). In 1988 one was canonized: Doctor John Moscati.

As was said above, the first step (often the longest!) depends on the local bishop and Rome. In the case of Contardo Ferrini and John Moscati there was a Cardinal in Rome who knew them and actively promoted their causes. He was Cardinal Salotti, the same Cardinal primarily responsible for the beatification of Anne Marie Taigi. With vision this holy man had recognized the vacuum, one might even say the neglect, of canonizing holiness in the world.

### **Lay Sanctity Has Been Canonized**

But again it must be stressed that while we speak of OTHER vocations we must not minimize the *importance of the priestly and religious vocation* (even if the reader may tire of the repetition!).

There are vocations OTHER than the religious life although vocations to the religious life are to be greatly esteemed, with the contemplative vocation perhaps the most special calling after that of the priesthood.

It is also worthy to consider that *the lay vocation can often be more difficult*. But will not God grant His Graces according to the difficulty of each calling? Many lay persons have given their lives for the faith. Some have been canonized for becoming martyrs of purity, like St. Maria Goretti.

Martyrdom is the easiest way to canonization. Of the almost 600 proclaimed 'Blessed' by Pope John Paul II, 451 were martyrs. Of his 267 saints (the number before 1994), 240 were martyrs.

In addition to many lay martyrs some lay persons have been canonized because their bodies were found incorrupt even though we know almost nothing about them. Among the most notable is St. Isidore, patron of Madrid, whose body is amazingly lifelike after 800 years! We know hardly more than that he was a farmer.

Three other thirteenth century persons whose bodies remained incorrupt and caused them to be canonized are: St. Margaret of Cortona, a penitent who died in 1297; St. Zita, a servant who died in 1278; St. Rose of Viterbo, a 17 year old who died in 1252.

The printing press was not invented until more than a century after these persons lived. We lack the example of their lives knowing only that God chose to work the miracles of keeping their bodies incorrupt *to remind us that servants and penitents and others in the world become saints.*

We know at least a little more about St. Germaine Cousin, a mistreated servant who died at the age of 22 in the year 1601. But we have no words she spoke and know very little... except that the miracle of her incorrupt body cries out to the world that bearing one's cross "where we are" can make great saints of us all.

### A Special 13th Century Saint

Before the invention of the printing press we know little more than basic essentials, as we previously mentioned, about saints even as important as St. Dominic and St. Simon Stock. Concerning the latter we know at least where he died and was buried, but we do not know even that about St. Thomas Aquinas. So one can imagine how little is known of those lay persons finally canonized because their incorrupt bodies kept them in mind.

By Providential coincidence we have some details of Margaret Castello who was born in 1287. Her cult continued until finally *after 300 years* she was beatified. Even now her cause remains "alive" because she was so unusual. Her cult was kept alive primarily by the Dominicans. Like St. Rose of Lima and St. Catherine of Siena, Margaret finally became a Third Order Dominican. Like St. Rose and St. Catherine, she lived most of her life in the world even though wearing a religious habit.

Today the Third Order is quite different. In Margaret's time it was restricted to widows who often could not enter the convent because of family. They wore the religious habit always, whether at home or elsewhere. Young women, whether married or not, were never admitted. Margaret Castello was an exception.

She was born blind and deformed. One leg was shorter than the other. She was hunchbacked and ugly. Her wealthy and powerful father kept this "little monstrosity" hidden from the world. Her appearance worsened with age. In addition to the hunched back and the limp and the fact that she was blind, she turned out to be a midget. Eventually she was abandoned... left in a church in Citta di Castello, a town southeast of Florence.

Rather than denounce the parents who had abandoned her she did not tell anyone. She simply mingled with the beggars of the town. Her story might never have been known were it not that, as in the case of St. Benedict Joseph Labre, wonders occurred at her death.

#### **Voice of the People**

When the body was about to be carried from the church to the cemetery the parents of another cripple brought their deformed daughter to the church. The child was speechless as well as deformed.

To the amazement of the onlookers, as the living cripple was placed beside the corpse of Margaret the arm of the corpse moved and the cripple was instantly and completely cured. The crowd cried out: "She is a saint! She is a saint! She must be buried here in the church!" And by force the crowd prevailed. Little rejected Margaret was "canonized" by the people.

And so her story came out. It seemed so incredible that a canon of the Cathedral, intending to prove that someone had made up so fantastic a story, researched the details. His manuscript survived and was later printed. From that original book Father William Bonniwell brought out a stylized version in English in 1979.

Relative to what we have been saying about recognition of lay saints Father Bonniwell reports that the unusual decision to have Margaret buried in the Church was because a celebrated professor of law of the University of

Bologna happened to be present. When the Prior of the Church insisted above the protest of the crowd that Margaret be buried in the cemetery "until the Church decides," Professor Orlando said:

*"Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, Margaret of Hungary, all of them saints if ever there were any, have been dead half a century and Rome is still 'investigating'! We shall all be dead and buried before Rome gets around to Margaret. Stop this foolishness and bury her here in the church."*

He did not mean, of course, that the canonization process is foolish. By no means! He meant that *it is foolish to wait until canonization to honor a holy person* the way St. Benedict Joseph and Bl. Margaret were honored by those who KNEW of their holiness and witnessed the miracles.

This rejected cripple had accepted all the tragedy of her life as a blessing from God.

He made her blind to see only things Divine. He shut her away from the world to be close to Him, and then placed her among the poor so she could share their poverty and come still closer to Him in the poor whom He loved.

And there were two, rather than just one, major rejections in Margaret's life. The people of Citta di Castello came to admire Margaret who spent so much time before the Blessed Sacrament. They felt she should enter the convent where she would have care and be able to pray always.

### **Double Rejection**

The community Margaret entered was not strictly observing the rule. Margaret, being blind, did not see all that was going on but her only thought was to live the rule perfectly. Thus she became a living reproach to the lax community and they put her out saying she was unfit for religious life.

Even as she had never divulged the names of her parents, Margaret accepted this humiliation without a word. People were saying: "There must be something wrong with her. After all, the convent rejected her." But God willed that the truth ultimately be known.

It is probable that many holy souls in the world in our own time have experienced similar rejection and humiliation. So even after seven hundred years there is much in the life of little Margaret to inspire us today when we have widespread abortion and euthanasia... the ultimate rejection by parents and by the world.

### **Saint Catherine of Genoa**

Like St. Margaret Castello, St. Catherine of Genoa, who died in 1510, had a biographer who saved for us many details of her exemplary life to which Heaven calls our attention to this day. Her body is marvelously incorrupt. She is well worth knowing.

There are also several lay saints of noble lineage, like St. Louis of France, Queen Elizabeth of Hungary and Queen Elizabeth of Portugal. Another saint of those rather remote times, whose cause was also partly political but who was not a noble, is St. Nicholas of Flue who died in 1487. He was influential in Swiss history (the Edict of Stans). His life was so unusual it might rarely be imitated. He fathered ten children and when the last was only three months old he left his family, with his wife's consent, to live in a very small, cell-like cottage as a hermit. In his last years he lived solely on the Eucharist.

### **A New Age**

But must we depend on such remote examples?

We can rejoice that the second Vatican Council gave PRIMARY consideration to holiness in the lay state and to the lay vocation and that just since it ended (1964) a wonderful variety of lay saints are being raised up NOW for our imitation and veneration.

Scraping the records of lay saints back to the very beginning of Christian history, or even to so different a time as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is hardly helpful. We need detailed, current examples.

St. Lydwine of Schiedam who lived in 1433 had been a victim soul for 38 years. She lived the last 19 years solely on the Eucharist. During the last seven years she never slept. She was a great exemplar of her time.

But because this happened almost 500 years ago *it seems to us as remote as it does unreal*. But now in our

day we have current evidence, confirmed by the Church, of persons like Martha Robin who have lived *solely on the Eucharist*, and have never slept. And we have VOLUMES of details of their lives and of their communications from Jesus and Mary *of and for our time*. Their lives cry out to the laity *now*, as do the lives of many, many others although in a more ordinary way.

In all the annals of Christian history there are few stories of Christian heroism to equal that of Dr. Takashi Nagai who survived the nuclear devastation of Nagasaki. He proclaimed to the world by heroic example and by his words: "*With the discovery of atomic power the human race has now grasped the key to its future destiny*, a key to survival or destruction. I myself believe the *only way* to use the key properly is through *authentic religion*."

By that Dr. Nagai meant what he lived: A *holy life*.

Below: The crowning of the Pilgrim Virgin in Red Square in Moscow, October, 1992, at the hinge of history. (See author's book, *FINALLY RUSSIA!*, published by 101 Foundation).



## Chapter Twenty Four

### AT THE HINGE OF HISTORY

Jean Guitton, acknowledged as one of the greatest intellectuals of our time, said of the miraculous life of Martha Robin that God had raised up such a saint “at the hinge of history.” All history *before the bomb* is divided from *all the history of NOW*. God is calling for saints in the world to turn that key of “authentic religion” which Dr. Nagai rightly calls *the key to our future destiny*. Oh, how Providential was that solemn Church Council of our day which gave to the world for the first time such clear directives on the role of the laity in this critical moment in the history of the Church and of the world!

#### To Terrible to Face?

Although we knew that the atomic bomb had changed history, *the change is at once so deep and terrifying that few of us allow ourselves to face it*. The former U.S. Secretary of Defense, who spent twelve entire days and nights in the Pentagon during the Cuban crisis, said at a meeting of world leaders in Havana in January of 1992 that a nuclear holocaust *“almost happened.”* The United States did not know that among the 42,000 Russian specialists in Cuba, at the time of the showdown, had been empowered to use the nuclear warheads at their own discretion. If Kruschev had not backed down the war was scheduled to begin within 48 hours.

At the 1992 meeting Secretary of Defense McNamara said *“we must now realize that it is the question not of the death of thousands or even millions, but of NATIONS.”* We are reminded of the warning given by Our Lady at Fatima, the only one of Her prophecies not yet fulfilled: *“Several ENTIRE NATIONS will be ANNIHILATED.”*

On the actual anniversary of the miracle performed at Fatima "SO THAT EVERYONE MAY BELIEVE," October 13, 1973, Our Lady appeared in Akita and said: "If men do not repent and better themselves, the Father will inflict a terrible punishment on all humanity. It will be a punishment greater than the deluge. Fire will fall from the sky and will wipe out a great part of humanity."\*

Even a nation as small as Cuba could already have precipitated it. These world-destroying weapons are becoming accessible to more and more small nations, perhaps even to terrorists.

It was decided after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 that half the 30,000 nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Republics would be destroyed. With available equipment, just to destroy those 15,000 bombs would take ten years. That would still leave enough to destroy the world. But they have not been destroyed. *Some have disappeared, unaccounted for.* It is as though the fuse of world destruction could be lit by almost anyone, anywhere, at almost any time. And that is a fact not because of Our Lady's tearful warnings. It is a fact.

Our Lady foretold this at Fatima, in the confirming aura of a great miracle comparable to the parting of the Red Sea. Jacinta said: "God has entrusted the peace of the world to Her." She came to *prevent it.*\* At Fatima She said: "Several entire nations will be annihilated." Then She said, "*To prevent this I have come to ask...*"

Jesus said to Lucia in May of 1939: "Ask, ask INSISTENTLY for the promulgation of the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays. *The time is coming when the rigor of My justice will punish the crimes of various nations.* Some of them will be annihilated" (emphasis added). At Akita Our Lady said She has already been able to hold back the chastisement because of the generous few who have responded.

Which way is the world going to swing on its hinge? One way would be in the direction set by the Council. Another would be the direction it is going. One way would be the direction confirmed by God in the great miracle of Fatima (which Pio Sciatizzi called "the greatest, most colossal miracle in history"). Another way would be the



**TO PREVENT THIS** is the title (from the actual words of Our Lady of Fatima) of a 1993 book by Haffert (153 pp. published by 101). The picture above appears on the cover. The book says world chastisement can be avoided if enough persons respond.

direction it is going: to inevitable nuclear holocaust.

Guitton saw the hinge of history as the time before the bomb, and now. It is also the hinge between an old fact and a new fact. The old fact is: God foretold at the moment of Satan's first victory over man that he would be defeated by a Woman. The new fact is: A major defeat of Satan is promised by that Woman NOW.

Persons like Alexandrina, Martha, Theresa, who offered themselves as victims and lived miraculously on the Eucharist, offer more than an amazing supernatural testimony to the Divine Presence in the Eucharist or to holiness in the world. They offer the example of *heroic response*. At Akita Our Lady specifically mentioned such victim souls making up for the vast number who do nothing.

There are a host of other examples of heroic response of the "Christian Faithful," some of which we have already given with the prayer that more and more will hear the call of *Christifideles Laici* and respond to the tears of Our Lady.

Consider the case of Dr. Teresa Wei, a medical doctor who knew that she lived at the hinge of history and who was touched by the tears of Our Lady. She left Japan in 1966 to obtain citizenship in the United States. When she returned to Japan nine years later (1975), a brilliant career before her, she learned of the apparitions and miracles at Akita where Our Lady had appeared three years before foretelling a worldwide chastisement if we failed to make reparation.

Dr. Wei was a religious person as well as a person of science. She had completed courses in theology and obtained a catechist diploma in 1955, six years after she had abandoned Protestantism to become a Catholic. At Akita she was privileged to witness the miracle of Our Lady's tears. (The wooden statue of Our Lady of All Nations shed tears 101 times.) She was so touched by the sorrow expressed by Our Lady for the sins of the world and for the need of reparation that she founded several houses of prayer to respond to the requests of Jesus and Mary for souls to make reparation.

"As I prayed," she said, "I became aware of my own

*nonchalance.* With a companion I rented a house as a local place of prayer in which we arranged a chapel." (Catholic churches and chapels are rare in Japan.) She opened similar houses with chapels in other locations, even high in the mountains. She persuaded people to come together to pray the Rosary. She accomplished in a predominantly pagan nation what many of us fail to do in Christian ones: the work of the prayer cells. Holiness! Dr. Wei considered her career secondary to her religious response. She became totally indifferent to financial success.

Or consider the case of Father Marcel Roussel-Galle, ordained in 1934, who said:

"I found that the constant subject of my meditations was the *existence of a wall* separating the Church from the masses." He said: "*This wall must be broken down at any price* in order to give Christ back to the crowds who have lost Him." A contemporary of the Council he affirmed its message with the strong words: "We have to make saints in the world or *the world will be lost.*"

But how to make saints in a world where a wall had risen between clergy and laity? How to make saints when all the laity know about saints is portrayed in statues of priests and religious? How was he to convince anyone that holiness was possible in the world and that the world would not change without a change in the laity?

The idea came to him to ask for *virgins in the world* who would not be religious, who would give themselves to God forever, *shining out in places of work.* Father Roussel's idea was to challenge the laity to GO ALL THE WAY, even beyond what Blessed Jose Maria would ask. He was encouraged by Cardinal Suhard of Paris who said: "I need missionaries, and that is why I wanted you to come to my diocese. Young women, virgins, in bars and factories, among the workers. That is exactly what I need." Incredible?

**Chapter Twenty Five****DONUM DEI**

Father Roussel formed his first group in 1950. He called it *Donum Dei*, Gift of God. The models were Our Lady, the Little Flower (St. Therese of Lisieux), and St. Joan of Arc, lay saint and martyr. Central to Donum Dei's spirituality was the Little Flower's offering of herself to God's Love and her missionary spirit. Therefore Father Roussel found the canonical basis for continuity in the Carmelite Third Order. He called them *Carmels in the world*.

We have already referred to the important role of Third Orders in response to the call of the Church for lay involvement in the life of the Church. Another entire book could be written on the subject. But let us continue with this one example of Donum Dei.

**Living Water**

Restaurants operated by some of the members to support themselves are known as *living water* in memory of the episode of Jesus at Jacob's well. Within relatively few years they were opened in Burkina Faso, Belgium, Rome, Vietnam, New Caledonia, Argentina, Peru, and the Philippines. By 1994 there were 380 Donum Dei virgins in the world. They were making a difference. They were blazing paths where the second Vatican Council was beginning to cast its light.

As a picture is worth a thousand words, here is a "picture" of one of these generous lay persons who worked in a department store in Paris before being sent as a missionary to Africa.

**Monique**

She was told she was one of 2,600 assistants when she received her saleswoman's card and went to work in Department 97 on the ground floor of Building M of the giant store. "You are new" a colleague said as Monique

gasped at the range of hats to be sold. "I don't like it here," the colleague continued. "There is too much bitchiness. The department is well known for that. Oh well, I suppose we all have to earn our living..."

At that very moment a customer approached. Monique said she "almost had a heart attack" when she saw the price tag of the hat the customer asked Monique to show her. "What! Did she actually buy it?" asked a surprised bevy of assistants. "Where did you work before? How long have you been selling hats?"

They were amazed when Monique said it was the first time, and she was amazed to learn she had just sold the most expensive hat in the store. She was immediately a star and she had to remember the words of Father Roussel: "You are a missionary Worker. Wherever you may be, whatever you may be doing, you must believe in the grace of your state; of course you must use your wits; but you will have grace if you pray, because your mission is right here."

Monique's story of a year in that department store makes at once amazing and amusing reading. It is found in the international review *Carmel In the World*, Vol. 28, #3.\*

The more than 2,000 assistants in that store began to hear about the ever-smiling and most successful sales girl; she never gossiped, and she went out of her way to help customers! It seemed to Monique that for most of her colleagues God did not seem to exist. She remembered the words of the Founder: "It is not worth your while talking about God if you do not know how to do your work. Begin by learning, and BY BEING ACCEPTED IN YOUR OWN MILIEU. Put the word *worker* before *missionary*."

The big breakthrough came in the simplest way.

Most customers were used to taking at least a dozen or so models to try on in the changing rooms to see what suited them. But afterwards they did not put the clothes where they came from, so on busy days the pile of "tried" clothes accumulated fast. Monique found it simpler to pick them up and replace them, and she did so almost instinctively whether they had been left by her own customers or not. Soon other assistants were doing the same.

And the gossip was diminishing, there was more friendliness, there were smiles. The whole atmosphere was changing! When the year was over and Monique got her orders to go as a missionary to Zaire, what was the astonishment of her colleagues! The majority had known nothing of her private life.

"So you don't say anything, but you have been praying for us all for a year. Ah! You must write to us at least once, and put your address on the envelope; then we'll reply; it's a promise!" "Tell us, will you be paid there? So you are not married? And you live this way?"

A twenty year old to whom Monique offered a medal said: "I'll hang it on my bracelet, like that I'll have a souvenir of you. Oh! As for me, I believe in God, but that's about it. As for you, you must manage to come back to our department. We want you with us."

The young woman may not have known it, but was she not saying that she wanted God with her, the loving God Whom Monique had brought into the materialistic milieu of a great modern department store?

Another said: "Now I understand better why you are like you are," and one after the other came to speak not about hats or clothes or customers but about God!

#### **Marie Therese Cottineau**

She got a job as waitress in a bar in the most infamous section of Paris: Pigalle. Her work was varied and tiring. The proprietress trusted her. She would say: "I see you do your work well, you don't spoil the stuff we sell," or during the busiest times: "How do you manage to keep your cool?"

The experiences of Marie Therese in that environment were at once terrible and incredibly wonderful. When she began she wondered: "How are those around me in this milieu into which I have been flung going to discover the One Who is present in our midst? How are they going to learn about fidelity? For St. Paul's words are addressed equally to them: *Offer your body as a pure and holy sacrifice which pleases God.*"

One day, drinking his coffee, someone from the hospital center called her over and said: "This week we have a young 19 year old boy with AIDS. When he realized

what he had, he was in despair and said, "I want to kill myself!" He added sorrowfully: "It's so difficult to tell these young people that they've got AIDS, for many of them commit suicide."

Father Roussel's prayer often welled up in her heart: "*O Jesus, make the people who surround me recognize You, and see that You are always alive and present, active in their midst.*"

Mysteriously, marvelously, the most diverse persons found themselves confiding in the ever smiling waitress who was always ready to listen with something far deeper than mere sympathy. God's LOVE had found its way into what seemed a most unlikely milieu... where it was desperately, desperately needed.

The power of personal faith to affect and even change a milieu of evil was beautifully expressed by Michael Brown, author of two books much to be recommended: *The Final Hour* and *Prayer of the Warrior*.\*\* In the latter, in the context of his personal conversion, Brown reveals his discovery of evil and of today's spiritual warfare. He had discovered the enormous power of the Rosary and daily Communion to turn back evil. He exclaims: "How beautiful this all was to me. I saw little miracles everywhere. Slowly but surely, instead of feeling aggravated with people, which happens in New York, I realized I needed to love and have patience. Everyone was worthy of love. Even the greatest sinners, for they were often *victims of invisible realities*."

Cities like New York and Paris may seem hopeless strongholds of Satan. But holiness in the laity can drive him out. Is that not why the apostolates of holiness will finally change the world? Is that not why Our Lady of Fatima, counting on our ultimate response, could say: "My Immaculate Heart will triumph?"

\*This much to be recommended publication is published in booklet form three times a year by INSTITUTUM CARMELITANUM, 10 Via Sforza Pallavicini, 001993, Rome (Italy).

\*\*Faith Publishing, 1993, 236 pp.

**Chapter Twenty Six****HOLINESS IN AFFLUENCE**

Louis and Zelie Martin, the parents of St. Therese, were "canonized" by the Little Flower herself who said that she had parents more worthy of Heaven than of earth.

Behind the Basilica of St. Therese in Lisieux (which incidentally is the largest building in the world built in memory of any man or woman, excepting the apostles) are the tombs of these wonderful parents. When their bodies were exhumed a wonder was found on the bodies of Louis and Zelie Martin like the wonder in the tombs of St. John Bosco and St. Alphonsus Liguori. Everything corruptible in their tombs had turned to dust except their scapulars, signs of Our Lady's special love and of consecration to Her Immaculate Heart.

**Man of Courage**

Once while Louis Martin was fishing along a stream, a bull came charging down at him. He wheeled around with his fishing rod. The bull stopped momentarily, pawing the ground. Taking advantage of the halt in the bull's charge he made for the fence. But the bull charged after him. Again he turned with his unusual weapon. Again the bull stopped. Again he made for the fence. This continued until he calmly made his escape.

His daughter Celine, who later entered Carmel with St. Therese and two others of his daughters, said he was unusually calm in the face of any danger. Fighting fires in his time required manpower and often entailed great danger. *He answered every fire bell*, no matter what hour of day or night.

We would like to give as much space to this father of one of the greatest saints of all time as there are pages in this book. But we begin with just these few lines in the hope of giving a quick impression of this very normal and yet exceptional man.

Much of the town of in which the Martins lived was a "lace factory." The work rooms were in people's homes. Zelie Martin (wife of Louis) had the inspiration to organize the lace makers to create a wholesale market. Louis ultimately gave up his own trade as a clockmaker (and he owned a jewelry store) to join her. When she died he sold the lace business and moved to Lisieux. His wife's family, in Lisieux, had offered to help raise his family. Therese at the time was four and a half years old.

### **Moderate Wealth**

Louis looked on his moderate wealth as God's Providence, but also a responsibility. He invested in property and stocks. One of his biggest successes was in stock in the Suez Canal which returned his investment ten fold. One day he was to meet a man about a major investment. As he was about to leave the house he turned his ankle. He took it as a sign and called off the meeting. The investment in question turned out to be a failure. He would have lost it all.

Are we talking about a SAINT? Are *saints* concerned about stocks and properties? Do *saints* spend time fishing? Do they answer all the fire bells in the neighborhood? Are they REAL, "ordinary-like" men and women? When he is canonized (which may be soon since *his virtues have already been recognized to have been "heroic"*) we will have an important example of the sanctity of a real man of our own time.

### **The Rich Young Man**

Sometimes in the quest for total commitment we wonder about expressions like "money is the root of all evil" and the advice of Jesus to the rich young man: "If you want to be PERFECT go, sell all you have, give it to the poor, and *then* come follow Me."

The thing about saints like Pier Frassati and Louis Martin is that they did give to the poor, but they also knew that handling money was a part of living in the world. It was an inescapable part of the lay vocation. As for his wealth, since Louis Martin had nine children he certainly needed a good income!

As we have said, it was the holiness of one of his daughters which called attention to his holiness. She

was named by a Pope as the "Star of the 20th century" and, even though she had never left the cloister, she was placed beside St. Francis Xavier as "Patroness of the Missions." She said of her father and mother: "God gave me parents more worthy of Heaven than of earth."

When he died, his daughter Celine saw a globe of light rise and disappear into the Heavens. Thanks to that same gifted daughter *his light remains with us*. Under obedience, as the last daughter to leave home and enter Carmel, she wrote his biography.

When Pope Benedict XV declared St. Therese "venerable" (the first step to canonization) he spoke of "*the magnificent personality of her father*" adding: "*Examples like this are more needed now than ever before to restore Christian families and through them our decadent modern society.*"

As we said in the very first chapter, it is not the primary purpose of this book to supply "examples like this." But we have chosen a few to illustrate holiness in the world and the story of the Martins seems especially apt.

### **The Same Old Story**

They lived in the sad time of Jansenism, viewing the world as a place of total depravity. Conjugal love was seen as necessary for procreation. And anything necessary had to be good. But procreation was rarely thought to be *holy*. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why, like many who feel a desire for total commitment to God, Mr. and Mrs. Martin BOTH thought only of religious life.

In the fall of 1843 Louis applied at the Swiss monastery of Grand St. Bernard. Like St. Benedict Joseph Labre he wanted his commitment to be total. He wanted to be a Cistercian. He was turned away. The reason given was that he did not know enough Latin. But as in the case of St. Benedict Joseph, it would become evident that *he had another vocation* which at the moment, whether because of Jansenism or ignorance or misunderstanding, had not entered his thoughts.

Also like St. Benedict Joseph, Louis must have felt rejected. It must have seemed that God did not want him. But like St. Benedict Joseph, he intended to apply again. After he had returned home, his elderly parents became



Above: Entrance to the lovely house in Lisieux where St. Therese lived with her sisters and her widowed father until she became a Carmelite.

Below, in the back garden can be seen the white statuary group of Mr. Martin and Therese. On that bench at the age of fifteen Therese asked her father's permission to enter Carmel and received his heroic consent.



dependent upon him. For the moment he had to postpone monastic life.

Several years passed. He was getting old for a religious vocation. Yet much to the distress of his mother he showed no interest in marriage. Then one day, while crossing the bridge of St. Leonard in Alencon, he passed a woman whom he did not at the moment notice. Like him, she had wanted to make a total commitment to God, in her case by becoming a nun. As she passed Louis Martin on the bridge she heard an interior voice say to her: "*This is he whom I have prepared for you.*"

### **Chosen To Be Saints in the World**

Neither Louis nor Zelie had been rejected by God when they were rejected from a monastery door. He had chosen them to be saints in the world. The Venerable Zelie Martin, already like her husband declared by the Church to have practiced virtue to an heroic degree, is a beautiful model for modern women. Indeed when one considers her business accomplishments, fitted into a married life, even "women's libbers" take notice.

The Sisters of Charity had rejected her because of "poor health." But she was healthy enough to lead an extraordinarily full life and to bear nine children (she died finally of cancer). It bears repeating over and over: God had quite simply given her another calling, one of the greatest of all: Parenthood.

### **Holiness in Marriage**

Since most lay persons enter the married state, perhaps we have not spoken of this enough. Indeed, ten times as many books the size of this would not be adequate for all that might be helpful and all the examples we would like.

When Louis and Zelie married on July 13, 1858, he was thirty-five and she was twenty-eight. *For a year they lived as brother and sister.* They wanted to be saints. They had never read in the lives of saints that conjugal love was holy. They had never read of any ordinary married persons who were ever canonized! (Indeed, as we have pointed out, during hundreds of years there were none!)

Although convinced that God had called them to be joined in marriage, they decided to live in chastity because

they understood that this was the way saints lived. How would God let them know that conjugal love, like all things from the Hand of God, is intended to be *holy*?

They were ordinary persons. God let them know in the ordinary way. At the direction of a good confessor, and by the light of Grace which illumined them, they came to understand. They gave the world one of the greatest saints of all time, St. Therese whom Pius XI called "God's Messenger to the Twentieth Century", who received reason at the age of three and was able to say before her death that from that moment she had not refused *anything* to God.

It is difficult in today's world, when the mystery of sex is so contaminated, to make people understand the holiness of married love. I tried in a book titled *Sex and the Mysteries*. As I come to the end my life I pray that many may read it, and that others will be inspired to write something better.

### **Great Love Story**

The love which grew between Louis and Zelie must be one of the truly great love stories of all time. Their love for God lifted their love for each other to almost unimaginable heights. Zelie's slow death by cancer was a greater cross for Louis than the loss of four children. Before she died she begged him to leave Alencon and go to Lisieux where her brother (who eventually was even more well-to-do than the Martins) and her sister-in-law could help with the family. She knew, too, that the memories of Alencon would be just too painful.

But shortly before Therese entered Carmel Louis came back to Alencon to the Church of Our Lady (Notre Dame) where he and Zelie had married. There instead of complaining to God for the loss of his wife, he thanked Him for the years he had had, for the wonderful five children who had survived, and offered himself to God as a victim soul.

Since the startling and urgent message of Our Lady at Akita, many more are feeling this inspiration to offer themselves totally to God. Our Lady has said that it is primarily because of such souls that she has been able to hold back the "annihilation of several entire nations"

of which She spoke at Fatima, a "chastisement worse than the deluge."

Louis Martin (and his wife and a host of other holy lay persons who unfortunately are not known) have responded to Grace in the manner the Council has declared to be *the hope of the future world*. And Louis Martin was a completely *normal* man. Neither he nor his wife had any recorded "mystical" experiences except those little signs and inspirations most who are daily communicants experience... like the inner voice Zelie heard when she passed Louis on the St. Leonard bridge... or when Louis, about to be talked into a bad investment, turned his ankle and felt that God was advising him.

We have stressed that the Martin family was not poor. There is a great difference between being poor in spirit and poor in fact. Many of the poor in fact are not poor in spirit. But those poor in spirit will never want. Jesus said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all else will be added unto you," and Jesus is The Truth.

#### **Not All Roses**

When one first reads the beautiful biography of Louis Martin written by his daughter Celine one might have the impression that it was "all roses." He had sufficient wealth, a great love, beautiful and loving children, and almost universal respect.

But as in all lives of the saints, and indeed in the lives of those of us who are not saints, there are the thorns which prick our pride and remind us that this world is a place of pilgrimage.

The present writer is an old man. He has had the favor of several times visiting Alencon and Lisieux and has never been able to gaze without tears at the statue of Louis with fifteen year old Therese in the garden of Alencon when his "little Queen" asked his permission to join her two sisters behind the bars of a Carmelite cloister. Oh, what heroism! He had lost four children before they were five years of age. He had given three to God in the cloister. He had lost his wife who was dearer to him than life itself. And now his greatest treasure, his "little Queen," wanted to shut herself away behind cloister bars where he would never again touch her hand and, as

was the custom in Carmels before the Council, would speak to her only once a month through a double row of bars. And did he say that she was too young? That at fifteen she would not be accepted? Did he say "Wait?"

He stifled his feelings. He praised God. He said "Yes." And from that time *he tried to help Therese obtain the unusual permission to enter Carmel at so young an age.*

But God had an even greater cross in store. It was something like Alzheimer's disease. He was placed in a home *and he was aware of what was happening.* This was a cross we cannot imagine. This was the cross that culminated his manly, generous life. And it was a cross not for him alone but for his "little Queen" and for three other loving daughters who could not be at his side because he had given them to God.

Well, you have heard of him in these pages. The Lay Apostolate Foundation of which we spoke in the first chapter will be promoting his cause as well those of others who can show the way of holiness in the world. He is one example. His wife Zelie is another. And God has given, and will give us, others. Meanwhile we have the Voice of God in the Council calling and directing us to the role of the laity in the life of the Church.

The old photos below of Mr. and Mrs. Martin, which required an unmoving pose, do not reveal the joy of this beautiful couple.



## Chapter Twenty Seven

### MORE THAN MODELS

We usually pray to the saints we know to be listening. Many have learned to pray because Saint Anthony found things for them almost at once after a long and futile search had failed. St. Therese had said she would spend her Heaven doing good upon earth and would "let fall a shower of roses." Thousands have experienced fulfillment of her promise. The fragrance of her roses placed many on the path of her "little way" to holiness. That is one reason for miracles.

The example in our first chapter of Rose Marie Ferron shows that people who have died do not have to be canonized to be close to us. Canonization merely *affirms* that they are saints. Therese was letting fall her shower of roses long before canonization, and Rose Marie Ferron does so even though her cause has not begun.

#### **Wasted Opportunities?**

While we are waiting, and waiting, and waiting for the canonization of lay models, are we wasting great opportunities?

It seems inconceivable that persons like Frank Sheed and his wife Maisie, who spent their lives explaining the faith to anyone who would listen, are sitting up in Heaven oblivious to the present crisis in the Church. And it is unthinkable to us, who believe in the Communion of Saints, to leave them waiting at the throne of God to help us without ever giving them a thought.

If we have good reason to know that certain persons are in Heaven, and if we feel that these persons might be interested in us or in our vocation, should we not invoke their intercession? *And if we are looking for some real miracle, what better place to seek it than from a person whom God may wish to glorify?*

We are practical about many things but rarely think to be practical in spiritual matters. Miracles are REQUIRED for canonization. Is God not waiting to work them to glorify persons whom He wants to have known and imitated in the world? We saw this especially in the case of St. Benedict Joseph Labre. There was such a flood of miracles after his death that his sainthood could not be ignored even though there was no organization to pursue his cause.

Louis and Zelie Martin must be just waiting for married couples with problems to call upon them. Are there problems of finance... of loss of loved ones... of knowing God's Will in our lives? They had all those problems. Why not ask them? If their daughter spends her Heaven doing good upon earth, can they be far behind?

Are we concerned for the poor? If not, should we be... to what extent... how? Frederic Ozanam, who founded the Vincent de Paul Society, has also been declared "Venerable" and must be waiting at the throne of God to help anyone who calls to him. So are Dorothy Day and Pauline Jaricot.

### **Waiting in Heaven**

It would be presumptuous to say one was sure of going to Heaven. But St. Therese said that if she did go to Heaven she would spend her Heaven doing good upon earth. And Padre Pio said: "I will stand at the gates of Heaven until all my spiritual children have entered."

I cannot help feeling that if I get to Heaven I shall feel very close to all who labor for Our Lady's Blue Army and perhaps especially to the religious communities and prayer cells which are the core groups of holiness for the continuation of that apostolate. I cannot imagine that if I made so many sacrifices for the apostolate in life, many known only to God, I could be *indifferent* if I come finally into the Divine Light.

*The same must be true a thousand times over* for souls like Little Rose, Alexandrina, Martha Robin, Theresa Neumann. They all *suffered*, in our time, for SOULS. And if they suffered so much in life for souls will they not be *waiting for us to call for their prayers* now that they are in a position to do so much more than while on earth?

In the first chapter I mentioned a conversation with a friend about the Communion of Saints and of a quotation from the *Poem of the Man God*. That led to the remark about Little Rose and the story of the yellow rose. There is an interesting, perhaps one might even say "amazing" story behind this.

I had met many holy persons in my life. One of the holiest was John Venancio, the second bishop of Fatima. Over the years a bond developed between us. At first it was based on our mutual desire to see the message of Our Lady heard throughout the world, but as the years passed it went far beyond. He was so pure and good. I loved him as a living saint.

#### **A 'Saint' I Personally Knew**

I was in Paris to see the final version of the major film *State of Emergency* of which I had been executive producer when I received the telegram. It said: "Bishop Venancio died this morning."

I immediately called for plane reservations to Lisbon. No seats were available for the next three days! The following day I could get a seat to Madrid, with a connection from there. But it would be too late. The bishop would have been already buried. (In Portugal burial normally took place within 48 hours.) But I had to go.

Meanwhile I walked from one place in Paris to another where we had prayed together on different occasions: The chapel of apparitions on the Rue du Bac, St. Sulpice, Sacre Coeur, the church with the body of St. Vincent de Paul, on and on, hour after hour thinking of him and praying for his intentions.

There was grief. But even more there was closeness. I would no longer hear his voice but our hearts would be closer than ever. I reminded myself that that is what the communion of saints is all about. Finally I was on the plane to Madrid. Under my seat was a blue bag in which I had Roschini's book on Mary based on *Poem of the Man God*. I seemed to hear the bishop's voice say:

*"I have a message for you in that book."*

So I reached under the seat, pulled out the bag, found the book and opened it not at random but as though somehow guided. At the top of the page I read: *"One is*



Above: Frank Duff, Founder of the Legion of Mary. Could there be a finer model for the laity of modern times? He passed his ninetieth year when he was called into the eternal light. "If we are looking for some real miracle, what better place to seek it than from a person whom God may wish to glorify?" The Legion is a great blessing to the Church and the example of this saintly layman shines out like a guiding beacon to all the world.

*never closer to those one loves as when one becomes light entering into the Divine Light."*

Normally a book opened at random will break near the middle. But this was *almost at the very end*. And the words were the first I read. I had to turn back the page to understand the context.

They were words spoken as Our Lady explained that as the time of Her assumption approached She was longing to go to Heaven because She knew *She could do more for souls and for the Church in Heaven than She could by Her prayers on earth.\**

I have received wonderful favors and signs from Bishop Venancio. I know he is in Heaven and I feel very close to him because I *knew* him in life. We can get to know persons also through their work and their writing. We can get to KNOW Little Rose, Alexandrina, Frank Duff (who would not love him!), and all these other great lay apostles of our time. Knowing them, we will love them and feel close to them and experience their intercession as well as the inspiration of their holy lives even before they are canonized.

### **A Practical Suggestion**

The Lay Apostolate Foundation suggests that one pick SEVERAL models, beginning with those whose interests during their time in the world were similar to ours. For example: Martha Robin for *lay retreats*, Theresa Neumann for *humble work*, Mr. and Mrs. Martin as *parents*, Alexandrina for *Eucharistic Reparation*, Frederic Ozanam and Pauline Jaricot for *concern for the poor*, Francis and Jacinta Marto for *holiness in children*, Frank and Maisie Ward for *publishing, lecturing, use of media*, Bartolo Longo and Juan Diego for *Shrines*, Edel Quinn for extension of the Legion and *missions*; Little Rose for the *apostolate of suffering*, Matt Talbot for *sobriety*, and so on... making up our own list.

Even from the above models we can choose many other vocations and many other virtues and many other ways to be involved in the life of the Church.

*It would be difficult to think of any possible calling to serve the Church, outside of administering the Sacraments, to which saintly lay persons have not already responded.*

### **Suggested Novena**

Both for imitation and heavenly aid we might say:

*Dear Jesus, You established Your Church to nourish us and to lead us to Heaven. With infallible authority, after seeking and proving the evidence of miracles, this same holy Mother the Church rejoices in offering us the heroic example of those who have already reached the Eternal goal.*

*I now seek a miracle through the intercession of \_\_\_\_\_ whose virtue of \_\_\_\_\_ I shall try to imitate for the next nine days.*

*If it be Your Holy Will that \_\_\_\_\_ be glorified and that I should obtain this favor, I humbly ask it for Your Greater Glory, for the good of souls, and for the glory and triumph of Your Church.*

Note: One miracle is needed for beatification and another for canonization. PROOF of the miracle is required. In giving such proof, doctors do not need to testify that a miracle has taken place. They merely need to testify that according to current medical knowledge the cure cannot be explained.

### **Promise of God to His Saints**

This suggested novena has few words but a great promise: To try each day for the nine days *to imitate some outstanding virtue* of the person in whose name we pray. If your favor is a spiritual one, rather than physical, why not ask for a little sign that your prayer has been heard, as some who pray to Mary Rose Ferron ask for a yellow rose?

\*Following is the full quotation from the *Poem of the Man God* (Vol. X, p. 353, of the French edition):

"O Christians, hasten into total love. Let all things of earth lose their value. Admire only God. And when you will be rich in this poverty of desiring only His immeasurable treasure, God will bend over your soul to instruct it and then to take it into His embrace. And you will mount up with Him to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to know and love Them for a happy eternity and *to possess Their riches of Graces for those you love*. *One is never so active for those whom one loves as when one is no longer with them but has become light rejoined to the Light Divine.*"

## Chapter Twenty Eight

### WHAT ABOUT MONEY?

For dealing with money, yet remaining poor in spirit, we have given the example of the Martins. Money seems not to have been a problem for them as it is perhaps not a problem for many of those who respond to the call, "You too, go into the Vineyard!" The majority are the regular parishioners who support themselves in regular jobs.

Some have a need for money as soon as they group together in an apostolate, even if only for postage and telephone costs and other expenses connected with meetings. The apostolates to which they belong cannot print literature, produce audio and television tapes, sponsor regional and national get-togethers, etc., without money to cover the costs. And what about those who are called to serve *full time* in the lay apostolate? In that regard there are probably as many stories as there are people. The best help I can offer is to tell what happened to me.

#### "I Don't Know How"

I knew I had a calling, and I knew it was to be followed in the lay state. That was before the Council, before the new Canon Law, and almost half a century before the call of Pope John Paul II: "You too, go into the Vineyard." It was a time when full time service in the Church meant, in the minds of most, becoming a priest or religious.

When my Bishop told me he felt that only in the lay state could I fulfill my mission (because as a priest I might not be free) he said: "I do not know how you can do it, but I am sure it is the only way."

My parents, and especially my father, had great difficulty accepting this. When a bank of which he was Director failed, my father did not cry. When his little business "empire" of four newspapers and three printing plants crumbled and he barely held onto one, he did not

cry. The only time I saw my father cry was when it became apparent that I was absolutely set on taking no full time job other than an apostolate which did not exist except in my heart.

He wept partly because he had hoped I would walk in his footsteps, but mostly because *he saw no future for me* but abject poverty. He thought that I had foolishly decided to be a "bum."

But with the gift of a vocation came a gift of faith. There was nothing heroic about it. I simply did not doubt for one moment the words of Our Lord: "Seek first the kingdom of Heaven and all else shall be added unto you." (And it is one of the joys of my life that my caring father lived to see that faith justified.) This story is already told in my book *The Brother and I*. Small investments multiplied so incredibly that my father, recalling that he had thought I would be a "bum," said: "If you were, and you were kicked off a freight train, you would have landed in a gold mine." (This could be said far more for my generous father who recouped and became the successful publisher of several magazines.)

I have mentioned elsewhere that as I was writing this book I received a manuscript from Daniel J. Lynch who was writing a similar book at the same time. He had been interested in the lay apostolate for many years and was particularly preoccupied about money because he had a family to support. He wanted to be "full time," but he could not afford it. He wondered how he could make it possible both for himself and for others who felt called.

#### **Example of St. Benedict Joseph**

Recall the experience of St. Benedict Joseph Labre. After being rejected by religious communities no less than SIX times, he was finally told: "Providence is not calling you to us. Follow the inspirations of Grace." He went out penniless and relied totally and completely on Divine Providence as he travelled thousands of miles from one Shrine to another. And he did not beg! He relied solely on God. People who saw him praying or sleeping outside the door of some Shrine (such as the Holy House Basilica in Loreto) would offer him food or lodging. In Rome he found space under a stairway, or in a stable.

We really do not know much about him because whenever people recognized how holy he was, he moved.

Would that many who feel called would imitate him.

Often in the Blue Army we tried to employ persons at the national center who distinguished themselves out in the field. But most who were invited, because they had positions in the world and often families to support, when asked to come and work full time were fearful of the change. Not many felt called to full time service. Yet, at the same time, where would we be if those who are called do not have the faith to respond?

St. Paul spent more time (at least in the beginning) making tents rather than evangelizing. He could not bring himself to bring people to Jesus and ask them in return to pay him. Making tents when there were no sewing machines must have been very time consuming and, since he was an expert, he probably employed workers. When he had proved his great sincerity the Church would not permit him to share his time with moneymaking. But certainly his attitude towards money never changed.

### **It IS a Problem**

I mentioned above that some of my experience in this regard has sometimes been unfortunate. Make no bones about it, this is a problem. I do not think there are any easy rules. Any apostle, or apostolate, can be affected.

One day (I believe it was in 1956 when I heard that Lucia said there was imminent danger of atomic war... and it turned out to be just before the Hungarian uprising) I made a special appeal for funds. I myself put absolutely everything I owned on the line. I wanted to get the best brains on Madison Avenue behind the message of Fatima.

In response to this appeal there was a letter scrawled on note paper with \$6.34 enclosed. The letter was from a mother who had been saving up for shoes for her children but decided they could use some cardboard in the bottoms awhile longer. From that day, every dollar which came into the apostolate was more sacred to me by far than any dollar of my own. How could I in conscience ask anyone to contribute to such an important cause as the triumph of the Immaculate Heart and then waste or

squander even one cent? I set aside a certain amount which I felt proper to safeguard the flow of monthly expenses and all the rest was spent in making known Our Lady's messages. I found that when I did need to raise large sums for major projects the words of Our Lord were always verified: "Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and all things shall be added unto you."

But Satan never rests, and money is his special coin. He can sow suspicions, he can plant rumors, suggest scandals... and he has minds and hearts already tinged with greed or jealousy to respond to his promptings. Our Lord set us a shinningly clear example in all this. He multiplied bread and fishes, but never money. If a miracle was needed to pay a tax, He provided it through the mouth of a fish. He will always provide, and He Who is the Truth said: "Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and all else shall be added unto you."



**St. Benedict  
Joseph Labre  
gave up his  
inheritance.  
He took  
literally  
the words of  
Our Lord and  
set forth  
solely with  
trust in God.**

**Chapter Twenty Nine****IS UNITY POSSIBLE?**

The Conciliar Decree says: "The faithful should exercise their apostolate *by way of united effort.*" Does this imply that apostles should not work alone? And does it imply that organizations should unite? The Decree goes on to say "*The group apostolate is highly important... much better results can be expected than if each member were to act on his own.*" At very least this states that a lay person will be more effective as part of an organized apostolate, and that it is advisable for all apostolates to communicate and interact (especially those of similar purpose).

The great challenge of Islam to Christianity, perhaps especially in Africa and Asia, is so important that to meet it is *sine qua non* for the "era of peace for mankind." This will require a highly motivated and concerted involvement of the laity, perhaps beginning not as an apostolate for the "conversion" of Islam but of "Islam-Christian Cooperation."

When it comes to REAL conversion, many Christians may need it more than Moslems. In the spirit and example of St. Francis, dialogue can begin most naturally on what Christianity and Islam have in common, such as devotion to Mary. Obviously such challenges demand unity of effort. At the very least they require the united prayer and effort of the most dynamic apostolates of our time.

There can be unity of effort, *but each organization has its own charter.* Some vie for virtually the same following. If people may subscribe to only two or three Catholic magazines, will not each organization want ITS magazine chosen because each organization has its own goals and needs? These are questions we might like to avoid but which need to be addressed. I had actually decided to

omit this chapter when I received a letter from an attorney in Vermont who felt inspired to follow through on something I had written many years ago in the book *Russia Will Be Converted* from which he attached the following excerpt:

For the past few years, there has been a growing interest in the idea of integrating the various devotions... striking to their fundamental meanings, showing how one aids the other, all to the one purpose of living with Christ through Sacramental life. Marian Federation, which has been constitutionally founded at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, is one of the most important modern developments in the field of Marian organization.

This federation (which unites approximately two million Marian apostles) was founded in response to the primary resolutions of the important Marian Congress which Pope Pius X convened in Rome, in 1903, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the definition of the Immaculate Conception. In that Papal Congress, after many discussions of the growing materialism and problems being born with the new century, the Cardinals resolved that all over the world we should particularly promote the Family Rosary, the Scapular, and devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and they then advocated: "That directors of different Marian organizations... should meet several times a year to confer together on the needs and progress of the propagation of these devotions."

Fourteen years after this congress and these resolutions, Our Lady appeared at Fatima. In addition to other messages and devotions, She asked for the daily Rosary and She appeared in the final vision as Our Lady of the Scapular. In the visions it has been made clear that devotion to Her Immaculate Heart should be established as a way of bringing the Reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to mankind.

Therefore, on December 8, 1945, twenty-fifth anniversary of America's yet unfinished National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Marian leaders of the United States met in the shrine, and in the incompletely built building they discussed the incompleteness of the entire Marian effort. Recalling the Congress of Pope Pius X and the subsequent verification of the recommendations at Fatima, the most important address at that first meeting was made by Father Terence Seery, Servite from Chicago, who said: "It is remarkable that *in the apparitions at Fatima our Blessed Mother... for the first time in history... brought together all Her major devotions* in one mighty series of apparitions. After this series She wrought a public miracle to

confirm Her promise to save the world and to bring it to Christ. Certainly this same Blessed Mother has brought us together here. She is right here with us. Since it is She who is to save the world, and since we (speaking to all the other leaders) are the bearers of the devotions through which She comes to the world, we must find a way to unity. She said, Herself, at Fatima: 'Only the Blessed Virgin can save the world.' Therefore I make a motion that we form a permanent committee of the leaders here assembled for a united furtherance of the Reign of Jesus through Mary."

The motion was immediately and unanimously adopted. In subsequent meetings a constitution was drawn and approved... and for the first time in America steps were taken to meet a request made in Rome almost half a century before!

If only these things were done sooner, and if only they would now be pursued with greater selflessness and fervor! "It is almost staggering to think," Father Daniel Lord, S.J., said at that first Congress, "of the great apostolic power that we could wield in the United States, and subsequently in the world, by uniting our strength in common objectives promoting... together... all the devotion which Mary through the centuries has given us. We have here, in this meeting, an opportunity such as we may not have again for a generation."

One might almost say, with a worried look back over the shoulder upon the mustering land and air groups of East and West, simply: "This is an opportunity we may not have again."

### **Hopes Ran High**

As can be seen from this quotation from the book *Russia Will Be Converted*, hopes ran high when, for the first time, *the leaders of every major apostolate in America met together*. There was a "gung ho" feeling that with such united power they could certainly speed up the triumph promised at Fatima.

These apostolates had enormous mailing lists and publications. The magazine I was publishing with Carmelite backing reached a million readers, and our apostolate was one of the smallest. The Carmelite General had come from Rome to participate in this truly high level meeting.

In addition to large memberships, these apostolates also had enormous funds. Something was suddenly possible which at that time could not have been dreamed of by any single apostolate: *A nationwide television*

*program. And Father Peyton, of the Family Rosary apostolate, brought in commitments from several Hollywood personalities such as Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, and he was willing to let the Federation decide the content of the program.*

It almost worked. But it didn't. Just as the gears seemed to be moving just one voice of opposition halted it. I know all the painful details because, much to my surprise, the Federation had unanimously elected me secretary and I was enthusiastically and deeply involved.

### **The Door Remains Open**

In *Christifideles* (p. 51), Pope John Paul II refers to the following declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

*"The Church is a differentiated body in which each individual has a role; the tasks are distinct and must not be confused; they do not favor the superiority of one over the other, nor do they provide an excuse for jealousy; the only better gift, which can and must be desired, is love."*

Even though the big hope of the Federation failed (and the Federation consequently became moribund), Father Peyton got his backing and the Family Rosary Crusade became one of the biggest items on the Catholic American menu. Impetus was given for the completion of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. (then still only a basement). Who knows what might happen in the new times coming if united effort becomes a reality?

What vision was shown by St. Pius X! Not only did he see that *most needed in the Church* is a holy and dynamic lay group in every parish but the Marian Congress he convened on the 50th anniversary of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception gave us the resolution: "*Directors of different Marian organizations should meet several times a year to confer together on the needs and progress...*"

ANY organization can initiate such meetings just by inviting the others. A united secretariate is needed only for meeting arrangements, keeping records, circulating information between meetings. This is overdue. The vision of St. John Bosco reveals the bark of Peter braving horrendous waves with the faithful pulling oars, with the

Pope at the tiller, towards the pillars of Our Lady and the Eucharist. And in *Christifideles Laici* the Pope is crying out to the laity: "You, too, go into My vineyard!"

There is no room for jealousy. Over and above all the gifts, "the only better gift is love." Approaching the year 2000 this cry was taken up by Cardinal Vidal and a group of Philippine bishops sponsoring a grand alliance of apostolates with the *international magazine VOICE* to promote this. (See inside back cover of this book.)

In a meeting of leaders of various apostolates from all over Europe, assembled at Fatima in October 1993, Cardinal Vidal said: "This is a time for all apostles of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary to gather *more strength as they become more united*. What is lacking in one can be supplemented by another. If our unity is based on truth and is rounded by trust in God and each other, it can achieve the *Era of Peace* promised by the Immaculate Heart of Mary."

Below: At the meeting in Washington D.C. in 1948, seated at the table (left to right) are his secretary and Father Skelly (founder of the Miraculous Medal Shrine and Novena), Most Rev. K. Lynch, O.Carm., Prior General of the Carmelites; Father Daniel Lord, S.J., of the Queen's Work; Father Dominic Dolan, O.P., head of the Rosary Confraternity. Leaders of every major Marian apostolate attended. Standing, background, are Dorothy Willmann and John Haffert. "*An opportunity we may not have again for a generation*," said Father Lord.



## Chapter Thirty One

### COUNSEL AND COMMAND

In my own life counsel from old men helped me to understand my own vocation and the important role of Mary in the lay apostolate. In these pages I have presumed on my eighty years of life, most of which were spent in the apostolate, to offer advice. One reason is that when I was a young man some advice I received colored my whole life and apostolate.

When we are fresh out of college we seem so certain about everything. But when we come to the end of our years we are acutely aware that there is so much we do not know no matter how many hundreds of books we have accumulated, no matter how much we have traveled, no matter how many languages we speak. We are only at the begining of knowledge.

As I come to the end of this book I am more aware than when I began of the little I know of the mystical Body of Christ and It's multiple vocations.

That there were "other" vocations is a truth I had struggled with almost all my life. My traditional mindset took me to a seminary and would have led me to the priesthood. It was so rigid and deep that as a "lay-apostle" I felt anomalous. In the light of the Vatican Council I began to write this book in the sole hope that I might help others feel less so. And I began without realizing how little I knew. Research for this book has held more surprises for me than the book itself may hold for most who read it.

Several times, in the first drafts, I spoke of vocations to the priesthood and religious life as "higher" vocations. But I was corrected by a priest far more learned than I, far more illuminated by the Council, far more experienced in the multiple facets of the vital, living, real Mystical Body of Christ. He said we must speak only of

"other" vocations. And to a person of my generation this seems (as Le Tourneau put it) almost "heretical".

Will the Church ever come to this? I have not. I stand timidly at the door wondering what the future Church will be.

I know it will be different.

It is not going to be so much a Church of sheep and shepherds as of sheep with one Shepherd. And those following the one Good Shepherd, knowing His Voice, will blend together harmoniously, a flock like one great moving body which we will come to understand is Christ Himself in the world, multifaceted, multimembered. In the light from the Immaculate Heart of Mary we will see the unseen: The Mystical Body animated by the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus with His Divine Blood of Grace.

The difficult time is now.

### To Deal With the Old Mindset

Now is the time of wrestling with the old mindset. Now is the time of adjusting to closing seminaries and convents. Even in Catholic Spain, some *3,000 priests retire each year* according to a 1994 report, while *barely 250* young men are ordained to replace them.

With hesitation I wrote in an early chapter that perhaps God is issuing *other* vocations. I meant it as merely a suggestion, merely something to consider.

But one of those surprises of researching this book is that a high and credible source stated that it was not conjecture but fact.

Standing timidly at the door, I am not prepared to go that far, any more than I am prepared to think of lay vocations as just "other" vocations, although I firmly assert that they are *real* and terribly important both for the Church now and for the Church of the future.

For the lay reader *now*, from my personal experience (which is what impelled me to write this book in the first place) I dare to offer some practical advice.

The first is to begin the day with the Rosary *with an intention for each prayer*. A specific intention before each Hail Mary adds less than three minutes to the entire Rosary and *makes it come alive*. Until this becomes easy

one can pray *in the light of each mystery* or the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit or to overcome the seven deadly sins, and then pray for faith, hope and charity...making ten intentions in all. Will you be going to Mass today? Would you not like Our Lady to go with you to share the mysteries of Her Immaculate Heart? *This Rosary will give you this Grace!* Do you have a full day ahead of you? Will you be quite active? Then this Rosary can sanctify it all.

As was pointed out in the first two chapters, the PRIMARY message to the laity of today from the Council and from *Christifideles Laici* is **holiness**. In the world we do not have the scheduled morning meditation, the scheduled prayer time in community. But our Lady comes to us in almost all Her apparitions and tells us specifically to PRAY the Rosary. Those who undertake this practice, especially if they are AWARE OF HER PRESENCE as they are clothed in Her Scapular, will begin the ascent of Carmel. (See book: *Her Glorious Title*)

The next piece of advice and by far the most important: *Daily Mass and Communion*. Should we fail in all else, we should not fail in this. (See book: *The World's Greatest Secret*) But I mentioned the Rosary first because to be a daily communicant is a great grace and we need Our Lady's help.

### **See Them Together**

Jesus said He sent His Mother at Fatima to establish devotion to Her Heart in the world. He asked specifically: "That devotion to Her Immaculate Heart be placed alongside devotion to My Own Sacred Heart." Mary is the shortcut to sanctity. (See books: *Sign of Her Heart* and *Her Glorious Title*.)

The Sacraments are the effective source of Grace, but sacramentals can play a major role in preparing us for the Sacraments by helping us to receive them with proper dispositions. The miraculous medal holds before us the image of the Sacred Hearts. The Scapular places us under Our Lady's mantle. As St. Claude de la Colombiere expressed so forcefully: The Scapular gives us *tangible assurance of Her presence* as our Mother and Mediatrix. By the Rosary She leads us into the mysteries of Jesus.

Several times in these pages we have quoted Frank

Sheed and his wife, Maisie Ward, two of the greatest lay apostles of the 20th century as well as two of its greatest minds. Writing about Maisie after her death Frank said:

"She had learned most of the Gospels by heart. She had begun the reading of the Office in Latin, which was to stay with her till the end of her life. *But neither Mass nor Office dimmed her joy in the Rosary.*" (The Instructed Heart, p. 77).

I like to call the Scapular and the Rosary the baby steps with Mary to God. They put us on the path from which giants in the spiritual life like Frank and Maisie never wandered. They found that they added lightness and strength to their steps all the way to the peak of the mountain.

### **What Will You Read?**

Naturally, all my books! Just joking. But any author thinks his own books are important and I have not hesitated mentioning a few. *Sex and the Mysteries* gives a good idea of how to pray the Rosary so that you come to esteem it as Maisie did, not MORE than but, IN ADDITION to the Divine Office and *getting to know the New Testament*.

Indeed, you can be sure that is why the Rosary was so important in her spiritual life. *She knew the mysteries.* And in that regard, after the scriptures, the *Poem of the Man God*, by Maria Valtorta, is worth considering. It is a book all about the New Testament.

Earlier I spoke of my friendship with Bishop Venancio. It was he, the Bishop of Fatima and formerly a professor of Dogmatic Theology in Rome, who introduced me to this extraordinary work. I happened to be with him in Rome when he bought all ten volumes of the Italian edition on the recommendation of Rev. Andrew Richard; a Doctor of Philosophy in Paris, a mutual friend who founded the Blue Army in France.

Years passed and Bishop Venancio retired. Whenever I visited him our conversation turned to the Poem which, in his last years, the Bishop read every day. Finally he must have read all ten volumes over and over.

I was so impressed that I bought the original Italian edition, then the French (which I found easier to read),

and finally the English when it finally came out. Then not only did I read the entire work (3,327 pages) again but I continue, like Bishop Venancio, to read it almost daily.

Father Roschini, who was considered one of the greatest mariologists of the 20th century and who wrote 125 books, said he had read a veritable library in his lifetime but found nothing like the Poem. He said that what he and others like him had written about Our Lady presented only a paper figure compared to the real, living person found in the Poem. And yet the book is only *incidentally* about Our lady.

Unlike Catherine Emmerick and Theresa Neumann, whose visions of the life of Our Lord were reported by others, Maria Valtorta herself wrote down the events as she saw them taking place. She describes actual scenes and quotes verbatim the conversations she hears. The gospels come alive. There has never been a book like it.

Some may wonder why different visionaries see the same places and events differently and sometimes even the same visionary does so, as did Theresa Neumann, who saw the mystery of Christmas every year. Sometimes she saw animals in the cave of Bethlehem and sometimes did not. God reveals different facets of the same event which in the supernatural realm are beyond history and geography.

#### **Papal Imprimatur**

After considerable controversy, even while this present book was being written the Holy See authorized reading of the Poem, not as a revelation but as pious reading. Such visions as Maria Valtorta describes seem so very real. But, as we have said, they are not intended to be historical. (For a more detailed explanation see the pamphlet, *That Wonderful Poem*, available from 101.)

Pope Pius XII, after reading the Poem, told the Servite Fathers to publish it saying: "Those who read it will understand." Cardinal Gagnon later certified that this statement of the Pope to two reliable witnesses and reported in *Osservatore Romano* constituted a papal *imprimatur*. And those words of the Pope would be our counsel: Read it, *and you will understand* that this work is a special gift of Jesus to our troubled times as he

Himself declared while explaining why He had given it.

Maria Valtorta should have been mentioned in chapter fourteen but it seemed fitting to summarize her story here.

She died in 1961 at the age of sixty-four. In 1973, after two previous exhumations, her body was solemnly entombed in the Annunciation Basilica in Florence.

She was virtually unknown until after her death. Then her marvelous revelations on the life of Jesus, translated into the major languages, spread all over the world.

While we may be dazzled by the greatness of her work we should not lose sight of the fragile girl chosen to accomplish it.

### A Victim Soul

She was severely injured by a wanton act of violence when she was 23 years old. While walking with her mother, a crazy youth struck her in the back with an iron bar. Suffering became her constant companion. Five years later, after reading the autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux (another recommended book) she offered herself as a victim soul. She renewed the offering every day as she became totally committed to Catholic Action, an apostolate of lay involvement in the life of the Church which began to flourish at that time in Italy.

Her health deteriorated until she was barely able to walk. After April 1, 1934, she was bedridden for the remaining 27 years of her life.

Ten years later began the revelations of the life of Our Lord. It was a colossal work during which she was often in physical pain, often exhausted. Before she died she wrote her own epitaph: "*I have finished suffering, but I will go on loving.*"

Just one little detail of her life reveals her as a person of this world while she was seeing so much of the world of our dear Lord: Although many of us do not bother to vote in political elections, she had herself transported to the polling place in a wheelchair to exercise that civil responsibility and privilege.

One has the impression that Maria Valtorta would prefer to be forgotten like a pencil layed aside. But from now until the end of the world readers of the *Poem of the*

*Man God will bless the day she offered herself as a victim soul and became what Jesus liked to call her: "My little John,"* likening her to St. John the Evangelist.

Any good and well recommended spiritual reading can feed our souls but the New Testament is the best food of all. *The Poem* not only fleshes out the New Testament but impels us to read it more attentively.

Some books are a waste of time. St. Therese of Lisieux, who wrote one of the greatest classics of all, said if she had her few years to live over she would read *ONLY the New Testament, the Imitation of Christ, and lives of the saints*. Was she warning us against reading those ascetical studies which try to pinpoint where one is on the way of perfection... purgative, unitive, contemplative? She wrote of the way of spiritual *childhood*. How odd it must have seemed to her in Heaven that after her death shelves of books were written analyzing her little way to show just how she progressed according to the categories and niches of ascetical scholars.

Their work is undoubtedly important for spiritual directors, but can be a distraction on the little, wonderful and sure way of spiritual childhood. The advice of St. Therese is noteworthy. Not all spiritual books are helpful.

### **Contradiction and Rejection**

After we accept that *holiness is the basic first command of the Council and of Pope John Paul II for the lay apostolate*, and before we come to the other commands, what other advice might help?

First, like St. Therese and ALL the saints, expect contradiction. Expect even rejection. Consider the case of Pauline Jaricot, whose cause for beatification was approved by Pius XI in 1930.

Perhaps no lay person in history surpassed Pauline as a lay apostle. She founded the *Propagation of the Faith* (first in Lyons and then, after it became international, in Rome). It is the main arm of the Church today for support of the missions. She also founded the *Living Rosary* and the *Association of the Holy Childhood* (to save babies in the third world), both flourishing, international apostolates today. She was so greatly esteemed that once when she went to Rome to see the Pope and became too ill to go

to the audience, the Pope came to see her. But after many years of such recognition God gave her the great grace of humiliation.

In the last years of her life she fell victim to a thief to whom she entrusted funds for a work to help poor miners. He used the money for personal debts and a luxurious lifestyle. She refused to declare bankruptcy saying she had to pay back every penny.

Reviled, on relief, this scion of a wealthy family died in abject poverty at the age of 69. The house (named after the Holy House of Loreto) from which she and her four companions had unstintingly served the poor was sold by her family to pay off the last of her debts. The wealthy Propagation of the Faith which she had founded not only refused any aid but even denied that she was its foundress.

Tragedy? Oh, no! That was a purification Jesus had foretold for her through her close friend, St. John Vianney. That was the water on the seed of the THREE apostolates she had founded and which flourish to this day.

### **Best Way: Obedience**

Regardless of what may happen in the world and in the Church, *Jesus is in the Church* and His Voice is heard through legitimate Church authority.

Suppose you have a pastor who in your opinion is "in the opposition?" Our Lady's advice to Estelle Fagquette, which is quoted elsewhere in these pages, was "Go higher." But that should be in a real extremity. In my own half century of experience, only twice did I go "higher." Once it was with permission of my bishop. Once it was because I simply did not ask... and the latter proved a disastrous mistake.

What if after your work has become successful someone else takes over, as in the case of Pauline Jaricot and *The Propagation*? That happened to me three times. Each time I thought "This is the end." But after some period of pain and acceptance, it proved to be not the end but the beginning of something greater.

I think one of the greatest graces one could have would be a genuine belief that the voice of the superior is the Voice of God even when we may suspect the motives. It

helps to remember that when Our Lord was condemned to death the scripture says that Caiphas, speaking as the high priest, was fulfilling the Will of God.

Contradiction and rejection water the seeds and the plants. They also help to purify our motives. Perhaps understanding this will not make these crosses less painful. But it may help us bear them obediently and with trust.

But what if we feel that Satan has tried to stop our apostolate by false accusations and contradictions? Should we just resign silently and let the work fail?

When the children of Fatima were imprisoned on August 13, 1917, many thousands of people saw the globe of light appear as in the previous apparitions. The ground trembled. Our Lady gave the crowd an amazing evidence of Her presence despite the absence of the children. Indeed one witness told me: "I think what happened on August 13 was greater than the miracle of October 13." But the children had been put in jail!

#### **If It Is From God, Leave It To God**

The great crowd, enraged that the anti-clerical civil authorities had arrested the children, decided to storm the jail to free them.

How different the history of Fatima might read were it not that the father of two of the children, Ti Marto, got the attention of the crowd. He was the one most involved. They were *his* children who had been maltreated. He cried out: "*If this is from God, let us leave it with God!*"

Good advice! It saved bloodshed. *But it was not a surrender.* It was sublimation of anger and resentment. After calm was restored, a crowd of people went to the jail not to storm it but to show by their presence that they supported the children. They were willing to place their own security at risk. They were willing to "stand up and be counted."

We are engaged in spiritual warfare. Each point of conflict must be evaluated. Never in anger, but to meet opposition in prayer and calmness. (Remember the counsel of Our Lady to Estelle Faguette?) Remembering Our Lady's words and the example given by the saints, and by so many holy souls, can help us to win the battle!

So far what we have given in this chapter is advice which is said to be cheap. But the Council gives us *specific direction* that bears the awesome power of the Holy Spirit speaking in the Church. It *provides answers to some of the problems mentioned above* which have now been coded into Church law, including the right of lay persons to organize and to direct apostolates.

The reader will know by now that I have always seen the authority of a lay apostle as dependent and subject to association with a priest. But when Bishop Jerome Hastrich read the manuscript of this book he expressed the opinion that my attitude in this regard was too rigid in view of the declarations of the Council and the changes in Canon Law. This law is NEW.

The most relevant passages are quoted at the end of this book. *They are stronger than any advice from even the most experienced old man.*

### **With Jesus, All is Possible!**

We do not tire of saying that holiness is the "bottom line". If we are truly holy we will have only ONE goal in our apostolate: *The Will of God*. We will seek to work WITH the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and not in front of Them. Our mission is IN the Church and never independent of the Church.

The above statement is deeper and more important than it may first appear. If I speak from experience, it is more on this point than any other.

A friend whom I greatly admire and who has achieved great things for God in the lay apostolate was one day seen in vision by a mystic walking in front of Jesus towards a high electrified fence. The mystic wanted to cry out a warning: "Wait, walk WITH Jesus, not in front of Him!" But the lay apostle kept striding ahead and was "zapped" at the fence.

How I recognize myself in that picture! How often I walked, even ran ahead! How often I felt that I knew just what to do, plunging ahead without stopping to make sure I was with Jesus and Mary and They were with me. In retrospect I realize now that my work failed often because I plunged into Satan's traps because I was out front, alone, forgetting the words of Jesus to Lucia when

the superior to whom Lucia had entrusted the important message of the First Saturdays said she could not do anything. Jesus said: "Of herself, no, but *with Me she could do it all.*"



Above: St. Joseph Moscati and Maria Valtorta.  
Below: Martha Robin at the end of the passion.



## Chapter Thirty

### FINAL WORD

On December 30, 1988, Pope John Paul II wrote his apostolic exhortation on the *Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World* to which we referred at the very beginning of this book. The English translation (published by the Daughters of St. Paul) is 181 pages in which the Holy Father *sees a revitalized, responsible laity as the greatest need of our time.*

Applying to lay Catholics the words of Our Lord: "Why do you stand here idle all the day? You, too, go into My Vineyard" (Mt. 20:3-4), the Pope makes these points:

1) Today's secularism underscores *the need for religion*. We are in a time so different from the days when most lived on farms and lived close family and parish lives. "Growing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 7).

2) The Holy Father emphasizes the dignity of the Lay Faithful in the mystery of the words of Jesus: "I am the Vine, you are the branches" (Jn. 15:5). By Baptism we become children in the Son, One Body in Christ, "Sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Jesus Christ." *He stresses that our first calling is to holiness.*

3) The Pope also goes into the subject of the Ecclesiology of Communion as defined by Vatican II and on the ministries and charisms from Holy orders and from the offices and roles of the Lay Faithful.

*After holiness the Pope places the greatest stress on evangelization.* It is especially incumbent upon the laity to promote the dignity of the human person so violated not only by interference with natural conception but by abortion and euthanasia. His Holiness sees youth as the hope of the Church. He exalts the vocation to sublime suffering, and the various vocations in the lay state.

The entire last part of the Pope's message calls for a continual process of development of holiness in the laity and of *acceptance of its responsibility* as "sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly mission of Jesus Christ." He emphasizes the need for formation.

*The formation is not to be something separate from the lay state. It is to be a formation "according to the union which exists from being members of the Church and citizens of human society."*

In other words we are not called to holiness just for ourselves, but to share holiness... that is, life in Christ... with the society in which we live. For convenience at the end of this chapter, the end of this book, we shall quote some of the more pertinent parts of Chapter 4 of *Lumen Gentium* and of the *Decree on the Laity* upon which the exhortation of John Paul II is based.

### No Longer Matter of Choice

This is the voice of the CHURCH. *This is the Will of God in our time and for our time.*

Jean Guitton wrote in 1985, just after the collegial consecration to the Immaculate Heart was made in Rome and changes were beginning in Russia: "*I am convinced that the epoch we are blindly entering, our backs turned to the future (on which we project an image drawn from the past), has no true analogue in history or the prehistory of men on this planet. One can recall the end of empires, especially that of Rome. But empires have succeeded one another without the outcome of humanity hanging in the balance.*"

He does not think we are in the end of times but in a "final phase." The final time began with the time of Jesus. Speaking to Martha Robin he says: "You generously have desired to represent all humanity, to take upon you all the sorrows to alleviate them, to abolish them... You, Martha, were fully conscious of the character of this new time."

In the miracle of Martha Robin, Guitton saw a vision of the era of the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He adds: "When we have passed through the trial and surmounted the crisis, whether humanity will be a small remainder of survivors after an 'apocalypse,' or on the

contrary a new order will have been restored, one thing is certain: *this present time will be judged.*"

The Holy Spirit is working and HAS SPOKEN THROUGH THE HOLY FATHER AND THE COUNCIL. If we do not respond to the Divine Voice, if the triumph promised at Fatima is hindered and delayed, *we must know that we shall be held accountable.*

What must be worrisome to all is the painfully long reaction time usually needed when the Divine Voice is finally heard. Just consider the slow reaction time to the great miracle of Fatima, even though it was a miracle unprecedented in all human history. One of the reasons for this "lassitude" must certainly be that too few speak out.

A man like Jean Guitton may be heard because he was the *only Catholic layman authorized by the Pope to attend the first session of the Second Vatican Council.* (The following year he became a lay auditor of all the other sessions.) Divine Providence provided that this great man be in a sense ***the representative of all lay persons in a Council which defined the role of the laity in the Church*** and came up with clear directives which could prove to be one of the Council's greatest fruits.

And Jean Guitton says: "When we have passed through the trial and surmounted the crisis, whether humanity will be a small remainder of survivors after an apocalypse, or on the contrary a new order will have been restored, one thing is certain: *this present time will be judged.*" As we hear the Council speak of the action of the Holy Spirit today inspiring many to become truly "lay apostles," we need but look around us. *It is as though a great spiritual energy were just waiting to burst forth.*

Catherine de Hueck Doherty, who founded the Friendship Houses and later the Madonna House for retreats in Combermere, Ontario, said of the postconciliar period: "This is the era of the Spirit. Vatican II shook us all up as a powerful wind would do... Let us be full of hope. Although shaken up, we have truly been thrown into the arms of hope... wondrous, soul-healing, joyous hope."\* This is why Lay Apostolates like Opus Dei raise hope. They tap the apostolic wealth of men and women

already on the path of holiness and already in positions to make a difference. *It is, as the Council predicted, a wealth waiting to be spent by the Church, waiting across the chasm, waiting often for just a word, just a call.*

As mentioned elsewhere, when I first set out to write this book in 1989, I had scanned the large volume of causes before the congregation in Rome. There were virtually NO lay persons listed. But in just the next five years, after hundreds of years of vacuum, several have leaped into the light. One keeps hearing of more and more lay persons being considered for canonization such as Pierre Toussaint, Teresa Musco, and others we have barely mentioned.

We must leave it to others, such as the Lay Apostolate Foundation, to bring them to light and perhaps to give us something almost totally missing: *Images of them* to have in our churches and in our homes. Meanwhile we rejoice that for this historical moment, at the hinge of history, the Church has already raised up the torch of holiness in the world, some examples of which already shine in these pages.

Attitudes will not change overnight. And they will change only at snail's pace if something isn't done to see that the decrees of the Council are implemented. But the wind of change is blowing. Our hearts may ache when it seems too light to fill the sails. We are still caught in the lee of preconciliar traditions and training. But the ship of lay involvement is beginning to move.

May this little book, which I entrust to all the lay saints both recognized and unknown, help to stir the wind.

Note: Translations of Jean Guitton are by the writer from *Portrait de Marthe Robin*, p. 234. (Editions Grasset et Fasquelle, ISBN 2-7242-2903-7.)

\**Catherine*, 32 page biography of Catherine de Hueck Doherty by Boniface Hanley, O.F.M., The Anthonian, Vol. 62, 1988. Married to a Russian Baron, she fled the Communist revolution and, like Dorothy Day, countered atheistic socialism with Christianity. She died in 1985.

## Epilogue

# THE DOCUMENTS

### *Lumen Gentium, Chapter IV:*

**Para.#33** — Gathered together in the People of God and established in the one Body of Christ under one head, the laity — no matter who they are — have, as living members, the vocation of applying to the building up of the Church and to its continual sanctification all the powers which they have received from the goodness of the Creator and from the grace of the Redeemer.

The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, and especially by the Eucharist, that love of God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished. The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth. Thus, every lay person, through those gifts given to him, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself “according to the measure of Christ’s bestowal” (Eph. 4:7).

Besides this apostolate which belongs to absolutely every Christian, the laity can be called in different ways to more immediate cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy, like those men and women who helped the apostle Paul in the Gospel, laboring much in the Lord (cf. Phil. 4—3; Rom. 16:3 ff). They have, moreover the capacity of being appointed by the hierarchy to some ecclesiastical offices with a view to a spiritual end.

**Para.#35** — As the sacraments of the New Law, which nourish the life and the apostolate of the faithful, prefigure

the new heaven and the new earth (cf. Apoc., 21:1), so too the laity become powerful heralds of the faith in things to be hoped for (cf. Heb. 11:1) if they join unhesitating profession of faith to the life of faith. This evangelization, that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life, acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world.

The state of life that is sanctified by a special sacrament, namely, married and family life, has a special importance in this prophetic office.

**Para.#37** — Like all Christians, the laity should promptly accept in Christian obedience what is decided by the pastors who, as teachers and rulers of the Church, represent Christ.

The Pastors, indeed, should recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church. They should willingly use their prudent advice and confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, leaving them freedom and scope for acting. Indeed, they should give them the courage to undertake works on their own initiative. They should with paternal love consider attentively in Christ initial moves, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity. Moreover the pastors must respect and recognize the liberty which belongs to all in the terrestrial city. Many benefits for the Church are to be expected from this familiar relationship between the laity and the pastors.

**From the Document on Sacred Liturgy:**

The more clearly the faithful understand the place they occupy in the liturgical community and the part they have to play in the Eucharistic action, the more conscious and fruitful will be the active participation which is proper to that community.

Catechetical instruction should therefore explain the doctrine of the royal priesthood to which the faithful are consecrated by rebirth and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

**From the Document on Missionary Activity:**

**Para.#21** — The Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is a perfect sign of Christ unless there

is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy. For the Gospel cannot become deeply rooted in the mentality, life and work of a people without the active presence of lay people. Therefore, from the foundation of a church very special care must be taken to form a mature Christian laity. Ministers of the Church should greatly value this arduous apostolate of the laity. They should so train them as members of Christ that they would become conscious of their responsibility for all men. They should instruct them deeply in the mystery of Christ, teach them practical techniques, and help them in their difficulties, all according to the spirit of the Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Lay Apostolate.

**The more one reads the complete documents of Vatican II the more one realizes how mightily the Holy Spirit moved in this extraordinary meeting of all the Bishops of the world to emphasize the role of the laity in the vitality of the Church today. This is summarized in the following:**

**From the *Introduction to the Lay Apostolate Decree*:**

**Para.#1** — In its desire to intensify the apostolic activity of the People of God, the Council now earnestly turns its thoughts to the Christian laity. Mention has already been made in other documents of the laity's special and indispensable role in the mission of the Church. Indeed, the Church can never be without the lay apostolate; it is something that derives from the layman's very vocation as a Christian. Scripture clearly shows how spontaneous and fruitful was this activity in the Church's early days (cf. Act 11:19-21; 18:26; Rom. 16: 1-16; Phil. 4:3).

No less fervent a zeal on the part of lay people is called for today; present circumstances, in fact, demand from them an apostolate infinitely broader and more intense. For the constant increase in population, the progress in science and technology, the shrinking of the gaps that have kept men apart, have immensely enlarged the field

of the lay apostolate, a field that is in great part open to the laity alone; they have in addition given rise to new problems which require from the laity an intelligent attention and examination. All the more urgent has this apostolate become, now that autonomy — as is only right — has been reached in numerous sectors of human life, sometimes with a certain relinquishing of moral and religious values, seriously jeopardizing the Christian life. Besides, in many regions where priests are very scarce or (as is sometimes the case) deprived of the freedom they need for their ministry, it is hard to see how the Church could make her presence and action felt without the help of the laity.

The need for this urgent and many-sided apostolate is shown by the manifest action of the Holy Spirit moving laymen today to a deeper and deeper awareness of their responsibility and urging them on everywhere to the service of Christ and the Church.

### **Foundations of the Lay Apostolate**

Para.#3 — From the fact of their union with Christ the Head flows the laymen's right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord Himself that they are assigned to the apostolate. If they are consecrated a kingly priesthood and a holy nation (cf. 1 pet. 2:4-10), it is in order that they may in all their actions offer spiritual sacrifices and bear witness to Christ all the world over.

### **Mary Model of Lay Apostles**

Perfect model of this apostolic spiritual life is the Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Apostles. While on earth her life was like that of any other, filled with labors and the cares of the home; always, however, she remained intimately united to her Son and cooperated in an entirely unique way in the Saviour's work. Now, assumed into Heaven, "her motherly love keeps her attentive to her Son's brothers, still on pilgrimage amid the dangers and difficulties of life, until they arrive at the happiness of the fatherland." Everyone should have a genuine devotion to her and entrust his life to her motherly care.

### **Working in Groups**

Para.#18 — For that reason Christians will exercise their apostolate in a spirit of concord. They will be apostles both in their families and in the parishes and dioceses, which already are themselves expressions of the community character of the apostolate; apostles too in the free associations they will have decided to form among themselves.

### **Right to Establish Apostolates**

Para.#19 — While preserving intact the necessary link with ecclesiastical authority, the laity have the right to establish and direct associations, and to join existing ones. Dissipation of forces must, however, be avoided; this would happen if new associations and works were created without sufficient reason, if old ones now grown useless were held on to, if out-of-date methods continued to be employed. It will not always be a wise procedure, either, to transfer indiscriminately into some particular country forms that have arisen in another.

Para.#22 — It is a great joy to the Church to see growing day by day the number of lay people who are offering their personal service to associations and works of the apostolate, whether within the confines of their own country, or in the international field, or, above all, in the Catholic communities of the missions and of the young Churches.

Pastors are to welcome these lay persons with joy and gratitude. They will see to it that their condition of life satisfies as perfectly as possible the requirements of justice, equity and charity, chiefly in the matter of resources necessary for the maintenance of themselves and their families. They should too be provided with the necessary training and with spiritual comfort and encouragement.

### **Relation to Hierarchy**

Para.#24 — In the Church are to be found, in fact, very many apostolic enterprises owing their origin to the free choice of the laity and run at their own discretion. Such enterprises enable the Church, in certain circumstances, to fulfill her mission more effectively; not seldom, therefore, are they praised and commended by the hierarchy.

**The entire decree on the Lay Apostolate, together with Chapter IV of the Decree on the Church, would fill a small book. And in giving the above excerpts we do not wish to give the reader the impression that the documents themselves need not be read.**

Below: Over 2,000 bishops gathered in St. Peter's for four years to give us these documents. The excerpts in this epilogue, chosen especially to show the importance of the role of the laity today, are from the volume of Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents edited by Austin Flannery, O.P., Dominican Publications, St. Saviour's, Dublin 1, Ireland and Costello Publishing Company, Inc. (To order ask simply for *Vatican Council II Documents*.)



## Epilogue Two

### CANON LAW

Most lay people, and even some clergy, think the Canon Law is for Church lawyers. But when John Paul II on February 3, 1983, solemnly presented the new code of Canon Law in the Hall of Benedictions of St. Peter's Basilica His Holiness appropriated the words of St. Augustine: "*Tolle, lege*": Take and read!

In a sense the new Code is a capsulation of the decrees of the Council as well as centuries of development of the legal experience of the Church. It seems simple enough when one reads it. But it took the time of a generation to complete this "reform of the Code" which John XXIII had announced twenty-four years before at the same time he proclaimed the Second Vatican Council.

The Council speaks so much of the rights and duties of the Lay Faithful, of their "royal priesthood." While we may be struck by the novelty of some of it, the bottom line is not only a call to action but also to the necessary religious and mental formation. *The laity have obligations.* "You, too, go into My vineyard!" is more than just an invitation.

Not only priests and religious will be held responsible at the Judgment Seat for the vitality of the Church. So will the laity *who have the same calling but in a different degree.*

Once again, as in the quotations from the *Documents of Vatican II*, the following excerpts are not meant to take the place of reading Canon Law. There is probably no better way to *know* the Church and its structure.

The quotations are from the English translation prepared by the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland. It is published in the U. S. by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 255 Jefferson Avenue, SE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49503

**Canon 205** — Those baptized are in full communion with the Catholic Church here on earth who are joined with Christ in His visible body, through the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance.

**Canon 208** — Flowing from their rebirth in Christ, there is a genuine equality of dignity and action among all of Christ's faithful. Because of this equality they all contribute, each according to his or her own condition and office, to the building up of the Body of Christ.

**Canon 211** — All Christ's faithful have the obligation and the right to strive so that the divine message of salvation may more and more reach all people of all times and all places.

**Canon 212 #1** — Christ's faithful, conscious of their own responsibility, are bound to show Christian obedience to what the sacred Pastors, who represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith and prescribe as rulers of the Church. #2 — Christ's faithful are at liberty to make known their needs, especially their spiritual needs, and their wishes to the Pastors of the Church. #3 — They have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred Pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the Church. They have the right also to make their views known to others of Christ's faithful, but in doing so they must always respect the integrity of faith and morals, show due reverence to the Pastors and take into account both the common good and the dignity of individuals.

**Canon 215** — Christ's faithful may freely establish and direct associations which serve charitable or pious purposes or which foster the Christian vocation in the world, and they may hold meetings to pursue these purposes by common effort.

**Canon 216** — Since they share the Church's mission, all Christ's faithful have the right to promote and support apostolic action, by their own initiative, undertaken according to their state and condition. No initiative, however, can lay claim to the title 'Catholic' without the

consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority.

**Canon 225** #1 — Since lay people, like all Christ's faithful, are deputed to the apostolate by baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and they have the right, whether as individuals or in associations, to strive so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all people throughout the world. This obligation is all the more insistent in circumstances in which only through them are people able to hear the Gospel and to know Christ. #2 — Lay people who are outstanding in the requisite knowledge, prudence and integrity, are capable of being experts or advisors, even in councils in accordance with the law, in order to provide assistance to the Pastors of the Church.

**Canon 229** #1 — Lay people have the duty and the right to acquire the knowledge of Christian teaching which is appropriate to each one's capacity and condition, so that they may be able to live accordingly.

**Canon 230** #1 — Laymen whose age and talents meet the requirements prescribed by decree of the Episcopal Conference, can be given the stable ministry of lector and of acolyte, through the prescribed liturgical rite. This conferral of ministry does not, however, give them a right to sustenance or remuneration from the Church. #2 — Lay people can receive a temporary assignment to the role of lector in liturgical actions. Likewise, all lay people can exercise the roles of commentator, cantor or other such, in accordance with the law.

**Canon 304** #1 — All associations of Christ's faithful, whether public or private, by whatever title or name they are called, are to have their own statutes. These are to define the purpose or social objective of the association, its center, its governance and the conditions of membership. They are also to specify the manner of action of the association, paying due regard to what is necessary or useful in the circumstances of the time and place.

Note: Anyone establishing a new public association (with new statutes, name, etc.) must study and comply with Canons 321-329.

## Epilogue Three

### **Principal Purposes of The Lay Apostolate Foundation**

The Lay Apostolate Foundation (L A F) has as its primary purposes:

- 1) Formation of lay apostles (by publications, audio and video tapes, scholarships, retreats);
- 2) Unified effort (promoting cooperation of various apostolates for special projects);
- 3) Lay Saints (promoting their causes and making them known);
- 4) Application of Canon Law as it affects lay apostolates and their members;
- 5) Other means of **involvement of the laity in the life of the Church** as decided by the Board of Directors.

Anyone interested in the above, or who would like to receive the reports of the Foundation, may write to the business office at P.O. Box 50, Asbury, N.J., 08802.

### **Promotion of Lay Causes**

One of the immediate activities of LAF is a response to the need for more lay models of heroic virtue. Several have now reached the stage of beatification: Juan Diego, Bartolo Longo, Anne Marie Taigi, and others. Also progress is being made in the cause of the parents of St. Therese and others for whom only a miracle is needed for beatification. Many causes need to be introduced.

Since a continuing legal body would be most helpful (and sometimes *necessary*) in promoting the causes of such saints whom God wills to hold up as models for the laity, it is to be hoped that, by the efforts of this Foundation, many such models will be raised to the altars so that the entire Church will better recognize and respond to the call of the Second Vatican Council for a deeper share of the laity in the full and apostolic life of the Church. But in addition to this, the primary purpose of the Foundation is to instruct and aid lay apostles and

apostolates, according to the mandates of the Council, to meet the special needs of the new millenium.

### **The "TV" Sign**

LAF chose for its symbol the thorn-encircled light which accompanied Blessed Anne Marie Taigi, in which she saw her angel and world events.

This miraculous sign was chosen because Blessed Anne Marie was a model of holiness in the world, told by God that she was to be a model for the laity (especially young women and mothers). And no saint in history ever had a similar gift.

The word television comes from the Greek *tele*, meaning "far off". Anne Marie's extraordinary gift, like television, gave her vision of near and far events at that very moment. She saw the need for reparation and for action.

Television plays an unprecedented role today in communications. It must play a major role in the lives of millions in the new millenium. While it has not yet been sufficiently used to convey Heavenly messages, an apostolic and informed laity can make that happen.

### **Ideal Symbol for the 21st Century**

This LAF symbol recalls: (1) A lay woman specifically chosen by God as a *model of holiness in the world*; (2) ONENESS of the *Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary* manifest in the crown of thorns (which Our Lady came at Fatima wearing around Her Immaculate Heart); (3) *Need for prayer and reparation* for what is happening NOW in our world (this is what it meant to Blessed Anne Marie); (4) *Prayer for Angelic light* and the aid of the angels as we enter into the third millenium.

From the moment She heard the angel's word, from the moment of Her "Yes" to the incarnation, a thorn began to pierce Our Lady's Heart. She knew the prophecies. She, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, KNEW what the price of redemption was to be. And She said "Yes" to THAT.

Thus the Crown of Thorns, worn by Jesus on the Cross and by Mary around Her Heart, symbolizes the union of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. It is in *THEIR Light* that sinners will find their way, that saints will be formed, and that the triumph of the Sacred Hearts will be obtained: "*An era of peace for mankind.*"

## Appendix

### THE WORLD APOSTOLATE OF FATIMA

by

Most Rev. John Venancio, D.D.  
Bishop of Fatima

In this book we have tried to bring to life the dramatic and glorious teachings of the Council on lay involvement in the life of the Church. We chose in particular the Blue army of Our Lady of Fatima, Third Orders and Opus Dei as examples, with mention of others such as the Legion of Mary.

In the official periodical of the Sanctuary of Fatima the Bishop published an important explanation of the Blue Army which is condensed here. The full text may be found as an appendix to the book *Dear Bishop* (AMI Press, 1982, 340pp).

The Bishop brings out that this is a program of holiness given by Our Lady, open to all, which can "collaborate with other movements to give new life to apostolic activity on all levels".

Notwithstanding the excellent organization of the Apostolate of the Church which operates under various well-known titles in many lands, there is no doubt that much remains still to be done and there are still millions of believers who have never heard of this organized Apostolate. For instance, the great number of children, old people, invalids, millions of parents, for example, absorbed exclusively from morning to night in household chores, the care of their children or their work in the fields or the factory, without either time or possibility for the intense organized work of the Apostolate.

To mobilize these reserve forces and bring them to conscientious service of the Church, to collaborate with other movements, to give new life to the various forms of apostolic activity: that is or can be the great and important task of the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima. All the above-mentioned believe that, in spite of their physical or psychological incapacity, they can serve the active Apostolate of the Church in the strict sense of the word, seeing that they are fully capable of responding to the requests made by the Queen of the Rosary. They can pray, they can sacrifice themselves, they can expiate, they can live and

work according to the desires of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, thus contributing to the fulfillment of the essential part of the spirit of the message, the great work to which we are all called—the interior renovation of the Church, the victory over atheistic communism and securing for the world a true and lasting peace.

Pope Pius XI said in his encyclical on Atheistic Communism:

"Nevertheless We cannot deny that there is still much to be done in the way of spiritual renovation. Even in Catholic countries there are still too many who are Catholics hardly more than in name. There are too many who fulfill more or less faithfully the more essential obligations of the religion they boast of professing, but have no desire of knowing it better, of deepening their inward conviction, and still less of bringing into conformity with the external gloss the inner splendor of a right and unsullied conscience, that recognizes and performs all its duties under the eye of God. We know how much Our Divine Savior detested this empty pharasaic show—He Who wished that all should adore the Father "in spirit and in truth." The Catholic who does not live really and sincerely according to the Faith he professes will not long be master of himself in these days when the winds of strife and persecution blow so fiercely, but will be swept away defenseless in this new deluge which threatens the world. And thus, while he is preparing his own ruin, he is exposing to ridicule the very name of Christian."

Another factor that contributes to the popularity of the Blue Army is the fact that it asks for nothing new in practice. The old devotional practices of the Church carried out with greater fervor of spirit will suffice.

The task of The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima consists in making known to the whole world the Message of Fatima, by all the means at its disposal so that men of all nations will realize it in their personal lives. In a word this message asks for nothing more than that which the Church recommends to her children with pressing urgency. The Apostolate of The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima does not address itself to an elite class. Its practices are contained in those *duties of the Christian which are rooted in the Gospel.*

Again to quote Pope Pius XI's encyclical:

"As in all the stormy periods of the history of the Church, the fundamental remedy today lies in a sincere renewal of private and public life according to the principles of the Gospel by all those who belong to the Fold of Christ, that they may be in truth the salt of the earth to preserve human society from total corruption."

Still, if anyone asks, "Why the Blue Army? Why this special form of propaganda for things which the Church daily asks from the consciences of each one?" we ask in return "Why did the Mother of God come especially to Fatima to ask for this?"

Why? Because humanity so often turns a deaf ear to the voice of the Church, God sends His Immaculate Mother to *remind men in an extraordinary way of these obligations* which the Church preaches sometimes in vain.

In this way God reminds men of the Church which He Himself instituted among us as a propagator and defender of the Truth.

No more than Fatima has the Blue Army any private objective of its own: it is simply at the service of the Church. The reason of its existence is to try by means of the message and the apparitions to give to the Church new hearers of her word and proselytes especially in those places where she is not listened to and at times despised.

As the Message of Fatima is *addressed to all men without exception*, independently of the fact that they already belong or do not belong to an ecclesiastical organization, so the Blue Army is open to all.

To already belong to any Marian Association does not justify a refusal to join the Blue Army. Practically speaking this is not a movement apart from others but rather an appeal to all to establish in the life of the individual and in the life of society a Christian foundation built on the message of Mary.

There is no doubt but that each organization and movement has its own specific end, its own method, but all are directed towards the same final end. In harmony with the Message of Fatima the Blue Army seeks with this special motive to bring the individual in these organizations to work with double application. If, in a last analysis, all the members of all Catholic associations, spurred on by the Message of Fatima, pray more than they ever did before, do penance for the sins of the world and consecrate themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, it follows logically that each and every form of the Apostolate of the laity, animated by this spiritual renewal, will be of inesti-

mable profit not only in the personal sanctification of the individual associated but also in the accumulated work of the entire Apostolate. To each member will be given that broad Catholic outlook which must always be the *sine qua non* (indispensable condition) of spiritual fecundity.

*It would be a lamentable error to see in the Blue Army nothing more than a tributary stream to other Marian movements.* Not at all. These Marian movements should be the first to seek to accept, understand and realize the Message of the Queen of Heaven. They should form the vanguard of the Army of "the Conqueror of all the battles of God," who in Fatima called us all to fight against the powers of darkness, comforting us with the promise that Her Immaculate Heart would triumph in the end.

*Those who join The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima have one sole obligation*—to make every effort in all seriousness to fulfill the obligation which they sign. (There is no question of being obliged under sin.)

Only when one is thoroughly acquainted with the content and completely possessed with the spirit of the message may one proceed to the further obligation of doing all in one's power to secure that the greatest possible number of one's friends and acquaintances be ready to fulfill the conditions laid down by Our Lady for the realization of Her promises.

Needless to say, neither the organization of collaborators nor the active Apostolate of the movement may be attempted in any place *without the express permission of the ecclesiastical authority.* Any Catholic animated with the Marian spirit knows that an apostolate alienated from ecclesiastical authority, or in opposition to it, is a silly illusion.

*Without the seal of obedience there can be no authentic apostolate.*

As we all know, in order that Unity (of Eastern and Western Christianity) be realized in a lasting way, *the West must prepare for and proceed to an authentic spiritual renovation.* We must decide once and for all to return to the Cross of Christ. It was at the foot of the Cross that Mary became our Mother. So the Message of Fatima is the splendid offer and the strong incentive to this renovation.

"The conversion of the West," says Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, "is the anterior condition for the conversion of the East." To this all Christians of the world are called, *even little children.* In fact Christ Himself called,

embraced and blessed the little children and Mary in Her apparitions spoke again and again to children and called them to Her service. In some countries the movement provides formulas of dedication especially for children, adapted to their mentality, and from time to time they receive their own circular letters. The prayer of a child pierces the clouds. At this hour of the world's history when we hear such expressions as "Mothers who have no time," "increasing critical conditions for children and young people," *the little ones are surely in great danger*. However, "their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 18:10). *Does God will to save this generation by children?* "But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the strong" (I Cor. 1:27-28). Our Lord also said to the grown-ups "Amen, I say to you, unless you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 18:3)

The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima calls to each and all, great and small, rich and poor, cultured and ignorant. In truth "*our wrestling is not against flesh and blood*, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Eph. 6:12). In this combat every man of good will is engaged. And peace belongs to those who are united in the fight.

To strengthen ever more and more "the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ," being the first and greatest intention of its Apostolate, The Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima takes as its motto those words of Pius XI in his encyclical "Divini Redemptoris" of March 19, 1937:

"When our country is attacked, all that is not strictly necessary for and immediately directed towards the common defense, takes second place. So now it is our duty to desist from work, however good and beautiful it may be, *confronted as we are with the vital necessity of saving the very foundations of our Faith and Christian culture.*"

I am sure that we all agree that we have arrived at a very definite crossroads in the history of the world. The future is in the balance. Today more than ever before that verse of Scripture is verified, "They arise, the kings of the earth, princes plot against the Lord and His anointed" (Ps. 2:2). The powers of darkness in an apocalyptic effort advance in their united strength to try to blot out the name of God from the entire world.

It is into this scene, so full of foreboding, that Our Lady comes, appearing in the Cova da Iria to bring us Her celestial message.

*The Blue Army is born in the light of Fatima that the message may be made known to the whole world.*

Again let us listen to the words of Pope Pius XI in the encyclical on Atheistic Communism:

"When the Apostles asked the Savior why they had been unable to drive the evil spirit from a demoniac, Our Lord answered: "This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting." So, too, the evil which today torments humanity can be conquered only by a world-wide holy crusade of prayer and penance... Let them implore also the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Virgin who, having crushed the head of the serpent of old, remains the sure protectress and invincible Help of Christians."

The Church is essentially an Army, in pacific march to the Fatherland of Heaven—an army in which every one of us is enlisted.

The Blue Army is to remind us that every single one of us is needed, that victory may be ours; that there is a common front where each has his place, from the least fervent to the most zealous and exacting member of Catholic Action and all Apostolic Movements.

It comes to remind us and convince us in a practical way that, with Mary the Mother of God and our Mother, the Holy Church once again will triumph and in her and with her will triumph Christ, Our Lord.

"I am sure we all agree that we have arrived at a very definite crossroads in the history of the world. The future is in the balance..."

*"The Blue Army is born in the light of Fatima that the message may be made known to the whole world..."*

"There is a common front... each has his place, from the least fervent to the most zealous and exacting member of Catholic Action and all apostolic movements."

*Continued from inside front cover:*

miracle of Fatima which scientist and theologian Pio Sciatizzi called "The greatest, most colossal miracle in history." It has been translated into several languages.

### Three Special Books

Three of Haffert's books especially recommended are *THE WORLD'S GREATEST SECRET* (the Eucharist), *SEX AND THE MYSTERIES* (the Rosary), and *SIGN OF HER HEART* (the Scapular).

Of the first of these, which has already sold over 100,000 copies, Padre Pio said: "It will have some success in his lifetime but especially after his death.." He hopes this will be true also of *YOU, TOO, GO INTO MY VINEYARD*, for which he had felt a "calling".

Two smaller books deal with Islam (*HAND OF FATIMA*) and the Queenship of Mary (*WHO IS THE WOMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE?*) The author expresses the belief that Our Lady chose the name *Fatima* (the name of the daughter of Mohammed) because She came for the conciliation of Islam with Christianity.

In 1993, on the invitation of the *International Alliance of the Holy Family*, sponsored by a group of Phillipine Bishops led by His Eminence Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, Mr. Haffert became editor of an international magazine titled *VOICE of the Sacred Hearts*.

Over a million copies of Haffert's books are in circulation. He has never accepted royalties. All proceeds go to the apostolate. Quantity discounts available.

— L A F, PO Box 50, Asbury, N.J., 08802. —

Also order by fax or telephone using credit card

— Tel.: (908) 689-8792 or FAX: 689-1957. —

Note: In addition to publishing books and pamphlets related to the lay apostolate LAF sponsors annual five day retreats in which outstanding lay apostles of our time share their experiences, "small flames joining to make one great fire." It also sponsors individual societies for the promotion of lay causes such as the Alexandrina Society and publishes an annual bulletin sent free to all who wish to receive it.

**This book gets its title, and is based upon, the words with which Pope John Paul II reaffirmed the teachings of the Council in *Christifideles Laici* on the role of the laity in the active life of the Church.**

In witness to this message the Church, since the Council, has beatified and canonized several lay persons. On April 24, 1994, when three were beatified, John Haffert took advantage of the moment to ask the Holy Father, in the name of Blessed Isidore Bakanja, for a special blessing on the apostolate.

**The Pope's response, pictured on the front cover, seems not only for one lay person involved in the life of the Church (which is the subject of this book) but for all.**

You will find Blessed Isidore Bakanja in these pages, together with Juan Diego, Pier Frassati, Anne Marie Taigi, Elizabeth Mora, Joan Molla, and a host of others already raised to the altars, and some on the way: Frank Duff, Frank and Maisie (Ward) Sheed, Pauline Jaricot, Louis and Zelie Martin (parents of St. Therese), and an unexpected number of others.

Finished in 1994 after years of writing and rewriting, this very original book is based on more than fifty years of active involvement in the life of the Church. The author said:

“As it is published in my eightieth year, I am content to think that most will be reading it when I hope to be in the Divine Light.

**“It is a parting cry of joy and hope to millions called by God into His Vineyard at the dawn of a new and glorious age.”**