

LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER JOSEPH SERGOTT, O.P., *DIRECTOR*

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ALL SOULS' DAY

A friend once remarked, "Your parents' friends die first, then your parents, then your friends." We need but a moment to discern whose death comes next in this equation. Death is an inevitable part of our human existence, and the daily media reports of random attacks on innocent victims tell us just how very fragile is our hold on life. An old verse in the night prayers Dominicans offered during Lent reminded us, "In the midst of life, we are in death," and these words underscore how quickly we pass our time on earth.

A relatively young member of the Western Dominican Province – no more than sixty-two or three years old – died slightly more than a year ago. When physicians told Fr. Michael he had but a short time to live, our brother said he hoped to complete a book he was crafting, on Marian art. To do so, he abandoned a couple of other literary projects. Someone asked how he felt as he considered the prospect of his death, and our brother replied, "It seems like a great adventure." May we all face death with similar enthusiasm and joy!

We may look upon our death as an adventure, but, more frequently, the death of someone we love is unquestionably quite sad – St. Augustine says we shrink from death precisely because it is so sad – but what should prove a source of immense consolation and strength is the promise of Purgatory, and the value of our prayers for those who have died. Our faith teaches, "The souls of the just which, in the moment of death, are burdened with venial sins or temporal punishment due to sins, enter Purgatory." Another article of our belief assures us, "The living faithful can come to the assistance of the Souls in Purgatory by their intercessions." These are defined as "intercessory prayers...indulgences, alms, and other pious works, above all, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass."

The Rosary Center will offer two novenas of Masses for the dead, beginning on All Souls Day, November 2. We beg you to join your prayers to ours for those who have died – and to share with us the names of those you wish us to remember during these holy days. We may be certain our parents, their friends, and our friends who



Silhouette by Sr. Jean Dorcy, O.P.

have died, will be deeply grateful for our holding them in special remembrance as we embrace the sacrifice Our Savior offered for our salvation.

FAREWELL TO FR. DISMAS

Fr. Dismas Sayre, who directed the Rosary Center for the past year, has been assigned to direct the Western Province's Shrine of St. Jude. We are certain the skills and vision he brought to the Rosary Center will prove equally valuable in his new ministry. Those skills and good ideas are legion, and include bringing all the Center's computer systems up to the latest standards, and establishing new security protocols to protect information shared with us by our friends and benefactors.

Fr. Dismas also laid the groundwork for our new internet presence (coming online soon), and this has resulted in vast financial savings for the Center, as two-thirds of our friends have expressed a preference for the electronic version of our newsletter. An additional benefit of this project is the Rosary Center's now enjoying a place on the Western Dominican Province website, among the Province's many other ministries, and a new and considerably improved on-line store.

Continued on page 4

THE ROSARY LIGHT & LIFE

Rosary Center

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2 Novenas of Masses
in honor of

OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

Sep. 29 - Oct. 7 — Oct. 8 - 16

TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

The Signs of the Church II

The Church is Holy

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

THE "ONE" CHURCH, REVISITED

In our last reflection, we considered the unity that characterizes the Catholic Church. We observed that the Church is called to be the visible sign, on earth, of the Blessed Trinity. Like the Persons of the Trinity, who retain their individual character, while joined as one, in love, baptized Christians are called to contribute their unique, characteristic gifts and talents to form the reality we know as the Church.

IN THE COMPANY OF POPE BENEDICT

Fr. Brian Mullady, a contemporary Dominican theologian, well-known to the friends of the Rosary Center, has written a series of essays on the theology of Pope Benedict XVI, *The Certitude of Truth*. For Pope Benedict, the Trinity, and its reflection in our Christian life, is an essential element of our faith.

Fr. Mullady wrote,

The Pope felt there is a negative sense in which the whole idea of communion can be interpreted. This springs from looking at the source of communion as a mere horizontal, earthly sort of social contract... Thus, healthy pluralism is the hallmark of the Church as a society characterized by healthy pluralism which goes across the board from the interpretation given to the nature of authority to cultural expressions of liturgical prayer. The Church would be a sort of United States with the Pope acting as a president.

A COMMON MISPERCEPTION

Fr. Brian quotes the former Pontiff, "[In] this conception of the communal structure of the Church the horizontal dominates. The emphasis is on the idea of self-determination within the vast community of individual faith communities." What ought to characterize our communion as a Church, however, is the vertical union with God, founded on our union with Christ through grace, in the Holy Spirit. "Grace transforms our very inner life," Fr. Brian writes, "so that through Christ's flesh as a tool, the members of the one Church can experience unity with the Holy Trinity. Our personal union with others, in the Church on earth, must be founded in and nourished by the personal union of the three Persons of the Trinity in heaven."

THE REMEDY OF THE EUCHARIST

The essential key to this union is the Eucharist, the "one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17), which sustains and nourishes our participation in the one Body (1 Cor. 10:17), which is

Christ. Our Eucharistic liturgy affirms this union when, at the close of the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest-celebrant elevates the chalice and the consecrated bread before the congregation, and says, "Through him [Jesus], with him, and in him, O God, Almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, forever and ever."

Pope Benedict observed, "Christianity, from the one Lord, the one bread, which seeks to make of us one body, has from the beginning aimed at the unification of humanity." The Eucharist supports our communion with one another because it is a spiritual food that transforms our souls and makes them like the one Christ, the source of our communion with God. Pope Benedict wrote, "St. Augustine expressed this in a passage which he perceived as a sort of vision: eat the bread of the strong, you will not transform me into yourself, but I will transform you into me."

Fr. Brian concludes,

The Church then cannot be a society brought into existence from a number of autonomous societies which surrender some of their independence to a central bureaucracy. The Church is not a Council of Churches with a tenuous union in belief, practice, culture and prayer. Instead, the Church is a sacrament, an external sign of same life the Persons of the transcendent Trinity experience among themselves.

THE RESULT OF UNION: HOLINESS

Our faith teaches we have been created in the image of God, so we should not be surprised to conclude we are called to manifest to the world the holiness of the God in whose image we have been formed. Our *Catechism* teaches, "The Church... is 'the holy People of God,' and her members are called 'saints'." (CCC, 823) Moreover,

United with Christ, the Church is sanctified by him; through him and with him she becomes sanctifying. "All the activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, to the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God." It is in the Church that "the fullness of the means of salvation have been deposited. It is in her that "by the grace of God we acquire holiness." (CCC, 824, quoting documents of the Second Vatican Council)

UNION & HOLINESS IN THE TRINITY

When we consider these words, the Trinity may not be the first image that comes to mind, but we must

remember that while each Person of the Trinity enjoys an individual identity, none acts alone. Thus, what we say of Christ we may say of the Father and the Holy Spirit, so the mysterious love that unites them is reflected in the “communion of saints” of which we are a part, a membership that makes us holy – and directs us to sanctify our world.

A CALL TO REFLECT

However, lest we take undue delight in this honor, an early - 20th Century writer observed,

...we say that the Church is holy [but] we must make no mistake as to the meaning of this statement. That the Church is holy does not mean that all of us who compose her are holy! ...if we were tempted to do so, our enemies would be there to remind us – that at some unhappy moments even our religious heads... have been far from being all their office demanded.
(A.D. Sertillanges, *The Church*, Ch. II)

Our author continues, “The continuity of the Church with Christ and with God: the one surpassingly holy, the other Holiness itself, imparts to the Church a sacred character in spite of the failings of her members.”

THE TRIUMPH OF HOLINESS

This is good news, indeed; we individuals may fail to live up to our Baptismal promises, but the holiness of the Church, rooted in the sacred mystery of the Holy Trinity, remains undiminished. In this regard, our *Catechism* is quick to cite *Lumen Gentium*, the Vatican Council’s document on the nature of the Church, “The Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real, though imperfect.” The text adds, “In her members perfect holiness is something yet to be acquired...[and] all the faithful, whatever their condition or state...are called by the Lord to that perfection of sanctity by which the Father himself is perfect.” (CCC, 825)

THE SOURCE OF HOLINESS

The first letter of St. John provides the key to understanding where the holiness of the Church may be found – and where our own holiness comes from. “Let us love one another,” the evangelist urges us, “because love is from God...For God is love.” Once again, this is a reminder that we have been created in God’s image, and if we look like God we have an obligation to act as He does. St. Therese of Lisieux sums this up very succinctly, when she exclaims, “... [the Church] must have a Heart, and a Heart BURNING WITH LOVE...LOVE, IN FACT, IS THE VOCATION WHICH INCLUDES ALL OTHERS; IT’S A UNIVERSE OF ITS OWN, COMPRISING ALL TIME AND SPACE....”

THE EFFECT OF HOLINESS

Love begins with God, and His love enables us to love in return. We first love God, of course, and then we learn to love His creation. This begins with our loving ourselves, and extends to loving other individuals – and, finally, God’s non-human creation, and even the material world. As our 20th Century theologian observes, “... [since] we participate in a measure in His life, we, even

we, must attain to be divine creatures, espousing God’s point of view, God’s intentions, in order that we, after our plan and according to our degree, may do the works of God.” To do this is to become nothing less than the Heart of the Church, which is the vocation St. Therese so eloquently begs us to embrace.

HOLINESS & OUR HEART

Our hearts are an extremely valuable part of our lives. We may reduce our hearts to sentimental decorations on greeting cards, or enshrine them as the all-important center of our physical health, but in our spiritual life, our hearts stand for everything we hold most dear. Jesus understands this quite clearly, and we will have to look very hard to find a more frightening passage in the gospel than Our Savior’s telling us, “where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.” (Mt. 6:21)

SAD NEWS & GOOD

Experience teaches us, sadly, that we do not always find our treasure where we ought, and that we are, at least occasionally, somewhat profligate in directing our affections. Our *Catechism* laments, “The root of sin is in the heart of man, in his free will, according to the teaching of the Lord: ‘For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander’.” (Mt. 15:19; CCC, 1853)

The predictable effect of sin is a weakening of God’s image in us – and a corresponding weakening of those bonds that ought to unite us to one another. We might fear that the weakness and sin, which result in our loss of personal holiness, would result in a corresponding diminishing of the Church’s holiness, but such – fortunately – is not the case. We must remember the Church reflects the nature of her source, the Trinity, not that of her often-sinful children. As the Blessed Pope Paul VI taught, “The Church is...holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace.”

This grace can penetrate even our sin, and it never fails to call us back to the unity and holiness we received at our Baptism. Our 20th Century author, Sertillanges, offers an astoundingly consoling reflection when he observes, “The Gospel has moulded us; even when we give ourselves up to evil, we keep within us that interior stratum of good which is called remorse.” He continues,

...we cannot believe that there is any other cause for this than the leaven of the Gospel; that is to say that immanent sanctity which works in us, and in spite of our resistance urges the world in its paths, drawing from our malice some little goodness, from our wretchedness some little of the ideal.

That is what is called progress; it is the living Gospel; it is Christ working even in those who withstand Him; it is the Spirit striving, though it be by using what is in opposition to it, to renew – with how much pain! – the face of the earth.

THE POWER OF GOD’S LOVE

We have probably never imagined such a compelling image of God’s love at work for our conversion, and yet,

what a powerful picture this image presents. First, it reminds us that no matter how carelessly we cast away our hearts, we do not cast away God's image in the process. No matter the gravity of our sin, God's love always calls us to re-embrace the holiness that is the loving sign of the Church in our midst.

Secondly, this powerful image of God's striving to transform us demonstrates that even when we sin, we remain part of God's plan to make the created world a sign of his Kingdom. As he draws his chapter on the holiness of the Church to a close, Sertillanges observes, "The truth is that the Church, Holy Church, which we see better in the past, which seems to be suffering in the present, and which for that reason has, we think, little assurance of the future, is barely beginning her work."

OUR CONTRIBUTION

We might reasonably ask what assistance we can offer the Church as she daily undertakes the challenge of renewing God's creation? Seeking the transformation of our lives is a powerful first step, and a valuable contribution to this enterprise. Pope St. John Paul II wrote, "holiness is the hidden source and infallible measure of [the Church's] apostolic activity and missionary zeal." The more we strive for a personal holiness, the more we contribute to increasing the visibility of the Church.

THE ASSISTANCE OF THE SAINTS

Our prayer, especially our prayerful reaching out to the saints, strengthens those bonds that unite us to one another in the Church, and, by calling to mind the holiness of those who have triumphed in their moral struggles, helps us realize the holiness we strive for. Pope John Paul II reminds us, "The saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the Church's history." Most of us bear the name of a saint we received at our Baptism, and we all had the opportunity to choose another patron when we approached the sacrament of Confirmation. We may not have cultivated an affection for these heroes of our faith, but that should prove no obstacle to finding a saint with whom we can identify, and to whom we can not only draw closer in prayer, but from whom we can learn valuable lessons in achieving the holiness we seek.

THE INESTIMABLE VALUE OF MARY

The Second Vatican Council reminds us that in our quest for holiness we can find no greater example than the Mother of God. "...while in the most Blessed Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she exists without spot or wrinkle, the faithful still strive to conquer sin and increase in holiness. And so they turn their eyes to Mary." (CCC, 829) One of the maxims of our faith teaches that the Church believes as she prays. If we look at the prayers we offer Mary, we find her "a gracious Advocate" blessed with "eyes of mercy." Our faith assures us she has never ignored the plea of anyone who sought her intercession or protection. Thus, we are encouraged

to beg her assistance in present difficulties, and to be a source of help at the moment of our death. In Mary, the Council reminds us, "the Church is already the 'all-holy'." As we proceed along our pilgrimage of holiness, we can find no more helpful companion than Mary; how reasonable, then, to beg her to "show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus." ■

FAREWELL TO FR. DISMAS *Continued from page 1*

And lest we imagine Fr. Dismas' interests limited solely to the invisible and cryptic world of electronics, we must thank him for producing a new version of our ever-popular Scripturally Based Rosary meditation booklet, as well as for designing a spiritual-bouquet card, and greatly increasing the inventory in our store. If you are among those who have not yet investigated our updated (and very user-friendly) website, we urge you to take a look at store.rosary-center.org. You will be delighted with what you find.

WELCOME TO FR. JOSEPH

Our new director, Fr. Joseph Sergott, has taken the helm at the Rosary Center, and we look forward to our ministry's thriving under his leadership. He has already taken an active role in the life of the Rosary Center, and we extend our thanks for the part he played in organizing the Center's new website. When Fr. Joseph entered the Dominican novitiate, in 1988, he took "Mary" as a middle name, so we should have no doubt of his loyalty to our mission.

SPIRITUAL BOUQUET CARDS

We mentioned these new cards in our catalog of Fr. Dismas' contributions to our inventory, and we have no doubt they will prove immensely popular. They are not a greeting-sized missive, but a small card (two by three and a half inches) that can easily be tucked into a note or letter – or simply handed to whomever one wishes to pray for.

The front of the card boasts a reproduction of a magnificent stained-glass window, which depicts the Blessed Virgin giving the Rosary to St. Dominic; two angels stand to the side. The back of the card lists prayers and other good deeds the giver will undertake on behalf of the recipient. Spaces are provided for names of the donor and recipient. The cards are available in packages of ten (\$3.00), twenty-five (\$6.25), and one hundred (\$20.00).

To order please visit online, store.rosary-center.org

AN APOLOGY TO OUR FOREIGN FRIENDS

We regret we can no longer accept foreign cash, as our financial institutions will not deal with banknotes. For some time, the banks have made depositing Canadian and other non-U.S. currency increasingly difficult, but now they have made it impossible.

As we move into what appears to be a more and more restrictive financial future, we must ask our non-US. benefactors to make their gifts by credit card, checks or money orders payable in U.S. funds.

We deeply regret this inconvenience, and thank you – sincerely! – for your cooperation.