



LIGHT & LIFE

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Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P., *Director* Oct-Nov 2026, Vol 79, No 6 Western Dominican Province

GLORY BE IS OUR DESTINY

Everybody wants to go to Hell. Well, at least when it comes to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. People *love* seeing all the people punished in his *Inferno*, almost as if they're taking delight in seeing how the evil are punished; perhaps they're imagining certain coworkers, family members, or politicians suffering in those Circles of Hell. But then, the interest diminishes when Dante travels onward and upward through his Purgatory, since there the souls are still punished, in a way, but perhaps a better word here would be "corrected." Dante's *Purgatorio* is more like a spiritual rehab facility – not exactly "fun" when you undergo it, but at least you know you're getting fully healed and functional. I would venture that his *Paradiso* is the least popular part of his trilogy. There are fewer personalities that speak, and they speak longer and in a more philosophical discourse, explaining the cardinal and theological virtues. It's a bit like hearing a coach or teacher on how to become excellent at your sport or craft – almost nobody is interested in practice, but everyone *loves* to perform and excel, without doing all the hard work and process that it takes to get there. But those who excel without some kind of inherent high supernatural talent come to love and embrace "the process," as sportscasters and athletes are fond of saying. That's where we go back to Purgatory. This is a curious note for the secular reader who encounters the souls in Purgatory. Who would be happy in Purgatory? Well... *everyone*. Again, Purgatory is not a pleasant experience, but it *is* leading to the ultimate true and everlasting pleasure, the long desire of our souls – God.

Even in this life, we are constantly doing practice. We gain the virtues and their rewards by *practicing* the virtues. Many ask God *for* patience, but nobody wants to *put* patience into practice. You become patient *by* practicing patience, especially if it's not in your character to be patient (of which I am guilty). As there is a whole *process* as an athlete before you get to the podium, bearing your medal and honors, so there is a whole process for the saints to excel at the virtues.

Sure, we all have our gifts and talents, and grace builds upon nature, but none of us is a completed edifice of saintliness. We *need* God's grace, and we need to build up that edifice, brick by brick, patiently.

The most famous example is perhaps that of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Readers often love her very lovely and flowery (pun intended) language and prose, but for me, my favorite part of her writings is *how* she came to be a saint, especially the so-called "Christmas Miracle," for it was not just the Christ Child born that Christmas, but also the death of the old Thérèse, and the birth of the *new* Thérèse.



The Immaculate Conception

Franz Sebald Unterberger

Now I will tell you, dear Mother, how I received this inestimable grace of complete conversion. I knew that when we reached home after Midnight Mass I should find my shoes in the chimney-corner, filled with presents, just as when I was a little child, which proves that my sisters still treated me as a baby. Papa, too, liked to watch my enjoyment and hear my cries of delight at each fresh surprise that came from the magic shoes, and his pleasure added to mine. But the time had come when Our Lord wished to free me from childhood's failings, and even withdraw me from its innocent pleasures. On this occasion, instead of indulging me as he generally did, Papa seemed vexed, and on my way upstairs I heard him say: "Really all this is too babyish for a big girl like Thérèse, and I hope it is the last year it will happen." His words cut me to the quick. Céline, knowing how sensitive I was, whispered: "Don't go downstairs just yet—wait a little, you would cry too much if you looked at your presents before Papa." But Thérèse was no longer the same—Jesus had changed her heart.

Choking back my tears, I ran down to the dining-room, and, though my heart beat fast, I picked up my shoes, and gaily pulled out all the things, looking as happy as a queen. Papa laughed, and did not show any trace of displeasure, and Céline thought she must be dreaming. But happily it was a reality; little Thérèse had regained, once for all, the strength of mind which she had lost at the age of four and a half.

On this night of grace, the third period of my life began—the most beautiful of all, the one most filled with heavenly favours. In an instant Our Lord, satisfied with my good will, accomplished the work I had not been able to do during all these years.

(*Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, accessed via Christian Classics Ethereal Library, ccel.org).

(Continued on page 4)

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TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

Adam & Eve-Faithful? - Baltimore Catechism

By Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.

43 Q. Did Adam and Eve remain faithful to God? A. Adam and Eve did not remain faithful to God, but broke His commandment by eating the forbidden fruit.

As it is told in the Bible (Gen. 3), Eve went to the forbidden tree and was standing looking at it, when the devil came in the form of a serpent and, tempting, told her to take some of the fruit and eat. It does not appear that she went and tasted the fruit of all the other trees and finally came to this one, but rather that she went directly to the forbidden tree first. Do we not sometimes imitate Eve's conduct? As soon as we know a certain thing is forbidden we are more strongly tempted to try it.

See, then, what caused Eve's sin. She went into the dangerous occasion, and was admiring the forbidden fruit when the tempter came. She listened to him, yielded to his wicked suggestions, and sinned. So will it be with us if through curiosity we desire to see or hear things forbidden; for once in the danger the devil will soon be on hand to tempt us—not visibly indeed, for that would alarm us and defeat his purpose, but invisibly, like our guardian angels; for the devil is a fallen angel who still possesses all the characteristics of an angel except goodness. But this is not all. Eve not only took and ate the fruit herself, but induced Adam to do likewise. Most sinners imitate Eve in that respect. Not satisfied with offending God themselves, they lead others into sin...

45 Q. What evil befell us on account of the disobedience of our first parents? A. On account of the disobedience of our first parents we all share in their sin and punishment, as we should have shared in their happiness if they had remained faithful.

Does it not seem strange that we should suffer for the sin of our first parents, when we had nothing to do with it? No. It happens every day that children suffer for the faults of their parents and we do not wonder at it. Let us suppose a man's father leaves him a large fortune—houses, land, and money—and that he and his children are happy in the enjoyment of their inheritance. The children are sent to the best schools, have everything they desire now, and bright hopes of happiness and prosperity in the future. But alas! their hopes are vain. The father begins to drink or gamble, and soon the great fortune is squandered. House after house is sold and dollar after dollar spent, till absolute poverty comes upon the children, and the sad condition of their home tells of their distress. Do they not suffer for the sins of their father, though they had nothing to do with them? Indeed, many families in the world suffer thus through the faults of others, and most frequently of some of their members. Could you blame the grandfather for leaving the estate? Certainly not; for it was goodness on his part that made him give. Let

us apply this example. What God gave Adam was to be ours also, and he squandered and misused it because he had free will, which God could not take from him without changing his nature; for it is our free will and intelligence that make us men, distinct from and superior to all other animals. They can live, grow, feel, hear, see, etc., as we can, but the want of intelligence and free will leaves them mere brutes. Therefore, if God took away Adam's intelligence and free will, He would have made him a mere animal—though the most perfect.

For Adam was formed first, then Eve

Some folks will say that Eve gets the bad rap for the story of the Fall (Genesis 3), but we tend to refer to this Fall as the Sin of Adam. We do say that the Sin of Eve was disobedience, and that Our Lady helped undo it by her obedience to God and consenting to the Incarnation. Yet, there is Adam, the whole time the Tempter deceives Eve, standing with her, as we read, "So [Eve] took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it" (Gen 3:6b). What was he doing the whole time? He likewise consented, as the old legal maxim goes, *qui tacet consentit*, that is, "He who remains silent, consents." Not only that, but as the elder of God's favored creatures, he should have known even better than Eve what God *actually* said, and that the Tempter was the Deceiver in all this. If you're the oldest sibling, you might recognize this when you babysit your kid sister, and she does something dumb, but mom is perhaps even madder at *you* for letting it happen.

This pattern repeats itself throughout human history – the one who leads the Church, whether the Church Universal, the Church Local, the Parish, or the Home; when that one fails, the whole Church fails, or is greatly tempted away from God. This is why we *must* pray for our religious leaders and our families. Both the Church Universal and the Church Domestic, that is, the family, are under attack, and have been since the very beginning.

However, there is another speculation that I would like to make here. Adam saw that Eve took the apple. Certainly, he was a coward, and should have spoken up. But once she partook of the apple, *why* did he also partake? Perhaps he realized that now, Eve *would* die. He might be alone if God did not create another helpmate, or worse, Eve might die alone. Whatever happened, she was his wife, the bone of his bones, and in his then-innocent capacity, *did* love her, for better or for worse (even if there was no worse in Eden). But remember, whatever else we are, married or single, we are still called to *first* love God. It becomes very easy to justify pretty much anything if we do not begin *with* God, and circle it back to God. To bring in our newly-minted Blessed, Fulton J. Sheen, "It takes three to make love, not two: you, your spouse, and God."

Without God people only succeed in bringing out the worst in one another. Lovers who have nothing else to do but love each other soon find there is nothing else. Without a central loyalty life is unfinished" (*Seven Word of Jesus and Mary: Lessons from Cana and Calvary*).

Married couples: **love one another**, as Christ loves His Church! St. Paul gets the label of misogynist for his views in Scripture, but again, like Genesis, he places the greater onus on the man, as I alluded to what happened in Eden. Adam and Eve helped each other get out of Eden. But as Blessed Charles of Austria said to his wife, Zita, after they were married, "Now, we must help each other get to Heaven." That's your vocation in the married state. People miss that St. Paul is mirroring the Church and Matrimony, which means that he is likewise placing the onus of sacrifice on *himself* as apostle and bishop. Holy Mother Church is called to obedience of her spouse, the Lord, represented by the bishop and hierarchy, but those bishops better be good and ready to sacrifice everything for that spouse, for to whom much has been given, much will be demanded. This is the ideal of the bishop, that he have "one wife," as he tells St. Timothy in 1 Tim 3. When listing the other qualities of a good bishop, St. Paul adds several key qualities, including being "not violent, but gentle; not quarrelsome; and no lover of money." This is not a bishop lording it over his flock, but serving Holy Mother Church and doing everything for her, to help all her children get to Heaven. This is supposed to be a mirror for *any* husband.

This is something the modern world has forgotten, or is too preoccupied with worries to notice: all of society's individual members and groups exist in order to support the flourishing of the human family. Without the human family, we are doomed. Even traditionally, husbands worked *in order to provide* for and defend the family. The family did not exist in order to provide for and support the husband and his career. Yes, a loving family should always help the father, but the hierarchy of power is always meant to be a hierarchy of *service*. The family does not exist for the bishop or priest – the priest and bishop exist in order to help sanctify and strengthen and defend the individual family and all members of the human family at large, to help them, as Blessed Charles said, get to Heaven.

Sin and Its Effects

The Catechism takes pains to expand on the idea that sin has consequences, even on those we do not intend to harm, whether it's our helpmate in Paradise, our family and loved ones, or society at large. In Original Sin, while we do not participate in the *moral* aspect of the First Sin, we share in the effects. Sin, as classically defined, is the absence of a good. What *should* be there, friendship and union with God, is not.

When I lived in another city in Oregon and would drive to my ministry site, I would pass this "Adult Entertainment" venue with a sign that said, "Harmless Visual Stimulation." That was an odd phrase, but very reminiscent of the Tempter in the Garden. "What can it hurt?" It can hurt – a LOT. To bring in our new blessed, Fulton J. Sheen, once

again, "There are two reasons for the primacy of sex over love in a decadent civilization. One is the decline of reason. As humans give up reason, they resort to their imaginations. That is why motion pictures and picture magazines enjoy such popularity. As thinking fades, unrestrained desires come to the fore. Since physical and erotic desires are among the easiest to dwell upon, because they require no effort and because they are powerfully aided by bodily passions, sex begins to be all-important. It is by no historical accident that an age of anti-intellectualism and irrationalism, such as our own, is also an age of carnal license" (*Three to Get Married*).

Sins of the flesh are not sins because the flesh is "dirty" in itself. This is one of the key theological points that Dominicans have historically stressed over and over, the goodness of Creation and the human body. But we lose the greater good, the true treasure we have in front of us. Adam and Eve lost sight of God and their own holiness in God, and the image of God in each other. We lose sight of the whole person, and focus on the limited good of the flesh, which, ironically, draws us *away* from the other. Our very heart of being, love, becomes corrupted and deformed. We lust, that is, we seek to possess the other's flesh for our selfish drive, rather than offer our whole selves in love for the other. For this reason, Our Lord teaches that "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). This *isn't* "Puritanical," but instead, it is truly holistic *and* holy.

What Can It Hurt? Everything

"What can it hurt?" is probably *the* worst question to ask when we are tempted, since we have already placed ourselves in the same frame of mind as our first parents. The *right* question should be "Will this help?" Not, will we "think" it helps in some way, but will it *actually* help us or the other person or persons. Just as we often love the feeling of being loved more than love itself, so do we often love feeling helpful, rather than doing what it actually takes to *be* helpful.

This is where the Blessed Virgin Mary steps in and shows us the way. After the Incarnation, St. Luke tells us that when the angel departs, she likewise departs "in haste" to her kinswoman, St. Elizabeth, who would be three months pregnant at this point. She shares the joy of the Gospel, the Good News that God is coming in the flesh, with her kinswoman, singing her song of praise, the *Magnificat*. She gives thanks to God for the wonder He has done for such a seemingly-insignificant young woman of a conquered people, and radiates her thanks for answering the prayers of a world that has longed pined for a Savior. Mary dwelt with St. Elizabeth about three months, one can only imagine that she was not as an uninvited guest, but as a helper for her much-older kinswoman in her more advanced pregnancy (cf Luke 1:39-56).

Our Lady likewise shows us the way at the Wedding at Cana. She is quiet, presumably enjoying and rejoicing in the joy of the young married couple, when a potential embarrassment to ruin their happy day arises

– *they have no wine! The shame!* What is beyond her power, she knows her Son, Our Lord, knows best and is capable of all things, so she humbly places her request at His feet, telling the servers, “Do whatever He tells you,” and steps aside.

Sometimes stepping aside is the hardest part, knowing that we have done all we can, or that we are powerless to help any further. All we can do is place our petitions at the feet of God. Unbelievers will sometimes mock the idea of “thoughts and prayers” in the face of some disaster or tragedy, but it is simply an admission that something is beyond our power to help, at least at that moment, and that we need Divine assistance. Yes, we use human help when we can, but it is arrogance to think that we can solve all issues, or at least solve them right away.

Sometimes being silent is absolutely the hardest thing. St. Joseph knew his own limitations well, and speaks not in Scripture. Certainly, he spoke in the everyday life of the Holy Family, but he yields to those higher in grace and nature. Our Lady, like Our Lord, lived the quiet, everyday life of Nazareth, without too much of a fuss, it seems, at least to the outside world. There is nothing wrong with the “ordinary” life of Nazareth. This is where the Kingdom of God was slowly building up before emerging like a thunderclap at the Proclamation of the Kingdom.

Neither Our Lady nor St. Joseph seemed that interested in getting the last word in, or sharing every opinion on religious topics, but in helping to build the coming Kingdom of God of the First-born Son of the Holy Family. Now, let us go, and do likewise. ■

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GLORY BE IS OUR DESTINY (Continued from page 1)

Sometimes the best lesson as a boxer-in-training is simply taking a punch to the face. Sometimes the best lesson for a saint is take a direct hit to the soul, like St. Thérèse, or St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Because *then* we truly learn what we've been doing wrong, and now we put the lessons of the Lord into practice. The best occasions for me when I have gone to confession are not always the ones where I

feel the experience of God's mercy warmly and softly, like the Prodigal Son, but when I take that spiritual “body blow” right to the solar plexus and realize where I went wrong.

What does all this have to do with the Glory Be? The Glory Be is where we all *want* to end up, whether we like the “practice” we do in this life or not. The Glory Be is really the final, eternal, and definitive act of the soul *thanking* God for all His goodness, for loving God as *He is* and what He is – goodness and being itself. As I've mentioned before, and it may well be the thing I'm most remembered for, we *have* to practice thanksgiving, we *have* to learn to be grateful, even if it feels like spiritual “rehab” and we don't want to do it. Virtue is often not an emotion for the virtue itself, but a choice to *do* the virtue, to put it into *actual* practice. St. Therese shows us that in her life.

This is why we, like the spoiled spiritual children that we often are (again, guilty here), *need* to worship God, to give Him thanks in this life, because that's what we're all *hopefully* going to be doing in the next. Not going to Sunday Mass or failing in the bare minimum of worship is being a spiritual ingrate. “But Father, it's difficult.” Yes, so are all things in the beginning, even in practice. Only laziness and mediocrity are easy. We need to be good spiritual children and write our thank-you notes, and give our prayers. In liturgy we often speak of “a sacrifice of praise,” taken from Hebrews 13:15. It is our most basic function as the priesthood of believers. The ministerial priest offers the sacrificial gifts at Mass, *together* with that sacrifice of praise of the laity, offering it all to God.

Let's pray for that Little Flower-like Christmas Miracle for each of us, to recognize the good gifts God has given us, and continues to give to us, even in and especially in the difficult situations. We take so many things for granted – all the hard work, all the sacrifices people make to bring food to our table, to keep everything running, even the very beauty of creation all around us, the wonder of nature, and the very basic beauty of the human soul, made in the image and likeness of God. We *expect* to be given things, not realizing that, in the natural order, nothing is due to us. As a society we choose to organize ourselves in certain ways so folks do not lack the basic necessities, but without the anchor of Faith and God, we lose our thankfulness, and become warring classes, rich against poor, poor against rich, without realizing that we are called to be there for each other, giving thanks for what we have, and for what we are capable of giving others, and for what we *receive* from others.

This is where blessedness dwells, in that spirit of thankfulness. The blessed angels where, in the moment of their decision, gave thanks to God and served His goodness. The fallen angels are the ones who said, “No thanks” and went their own unmerited way.

When we get to those Pearly Gates, therefore, will we say “Thanks” or “No thanks” to God? Nobody is *forcing* us to go to Heaven, because no one is forcing us to be grateful. So let's all start practicing those little spiritual “thank yous” in this life.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Thank you, God! ■