

Meméto



VERITAS



THE PRIESTLY FRATERNITY OF ST. PETER

AUGUST 2020

Dear Friends of our Fraternity,

The mentality of Western civilization has always relied on the external world to be a safeguard for the determination of truth. If a person was to ask three others where a particular coffee cup is, one may reply that it is in the cupboard; another may answer that it is in the cellar; and the third may say that it is in the dining room. Faced with different answers, the person would then go and check and, finding the cup in the dining room, is able to say which response was true. In other words, the correct answer was discovered to be in accordance with external reality. Nor would this have changed if all the responses agreed that the cup was in the cellar; not finding it there, with a little persevering effort, the cup would eventually be found in the dining room.

Our modern age seems to be locked in the final stages of a concerted war waged against this fundamental principle of truth. We have all witnessed an escalation in recent months. The tearing down of statues and monuments is the visible manifestation of the tearing down of this last pillar of Western civilization that defines truth as the conforming the mind to reality. The destruction of monuments is an effort to break from the past, to redefine it, to bury it or dig it up from the roots. Without a history, we are left free (so it is thought) to determine and define a new path. But with the past cut off, unable to know where we have been, how are we able to know where to go? To change the past is to change the reality of the present. If truth is not to be found in reality, then it must be found elsewhere. In the case of Communism, “truth” would be defined by whatever the party line is for the day; in our country today, this same sentiment prevails within the propaganda the biased media

relentlessly distributes to support a party line that seeks to redefine nature, economics, marriage – the entire social order – with the Catholic Church evidently as the final target.

We should not be surprised, since Western civilization is the product of Christianity, a veritable social and moral order founded upon God’s loving Law as manifested in nature *and divine revelation*, courtesy of Jesus Christ on the authority of the Catholic Church which comes from Him. Remember that the world view of one who believes in Christ and lives accordingly will be radically different from one who does not believe, has rejected, or simply hates Him. The violent efforts we see to cast off the past and redefine it is yet another instance of Christ’s words coming true in the parable of the pounds: *But his citizens hated him, and they sent an embassy after him saying: We will not have this man to reign over us.* (Lk. 19:14)

Nonetheless, we know that the lies of propaganda can never squelch the efforts of hearts searching for the only Truth that can set us free – and there are many, whether they know it or not, and He is never far from any of us. Strive always to be faithful, in season and out of season, and let us not underestimate the power of good example, knowing with great faith and confidence that, after we may have suffered a little while, the truth cannot be buried long and will always rise again stronger and more glorious than ever. ✝

Fr. Michael J. Stinson, FSSP
North American Superior



ASK FATHER

Over the centuries, the wise men whose teachings form the fabric of the perennial philosophy have recognized that each and every human person is a small universe. And this in more than one way. To understand the most evident way in which each of us is a small universe, we must attend to the hierarchical constitution of God’s creation.

At the base of this hierarchy, we find various humble creatures, such as minerals, water, air, and so forth, all of which are corporeal substances devoid of life. Just above this realm of inanimate substances, we encounter the lowest of God’s living creatures. While the most familiar of these are what we readily recognize to be plants, there are myriads of kinds of these animate substances, ranging from microscopic bacteria to the gigantic sequoias. Three principal powers common to all these corporeal substances having vegetative life are the power to transform nutrients into themselves, the power to grow, and the power to reproduce. As corporeal substances, these low-level living things contain within themselves the sorts of perfection possessed by their inanimate counterparts. Yet, inasmuch as they are alive, they are clearly more perfect than any bodily substance lacking life.

Above these creatures having vegetative life, we find those which have sentient life. These, of course, are the irrational animals. Every animal minimally has the sense of touch, and many higher animals share with us the five external senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch (together with various internal senses such as memory). Additionally, the irrational animals experience emotions, such as desire and aversion, towards various things which they sense, and the higher animals are certainly capable of moving themselves from one determinate place to another. Inasmuch as they are living corporeal substances that eat, grow, and reproduce, the animals contain within themselves the sorts of perfections possessed by inanimate substances and plants. Yet, inasmuch as they are sentient, the irrational animals are evidently more perfect than both of these kinds of creatures.

Now above the irrational animals, we find the human person. Besides containing within himself all of the aforesaid sorts of perfections possessed by inanimate substances, plants, and animals, the human person has an intellectual nature. And it is through having an intellectual nature that the human person is, on the one hand, the crown and glory of God’s material creation, and, on the other hand, the lowest of creatures which bear the very image of God. As the Psalmist says, “What is man that you are mindful of him? Or the son of man that you visit him? You have made him a little less than the angels, you have crowned him with glory and honor. And you have set him over the works of your hands” (*Psalms* 8:5–8).

What the Psalmist makes manifest is that the human person unites within himself not only the various levels of perfection found in the material creatures below him (namely, substantiality, corporeality, vegetative life, and sentient life), but also the intellectual nature which is possessed more perfectly by the angels above him. And, in this way, every human person is a small universe. For every human person has within himself all of the levels of substantial perfection which exist in the created order.

While this first way of being a small universe pertains to what the human person is, a second way in which the human person can be a small universe has to do with what he is able to know. Through each of our external senses, we can grasp a full range of particular sensible objects. For example, through our sense of sight, we can grasp this whiteness, that blackness, and every particular color in between. Likewise, with our sense of hearing, we can grasp this high sound, that low sound, and every particular sound in between.

With our intellects, though, we grasp the very natures of things. Thus, it is through our intellects that we grasp what color is and what sound is, as well as what the things are that are colored, and what the things are that produce sounds. Further, because the intellect is a purely spiritual faculty of the soul, each of us is able to know in some

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Sisters of Laborae Mariae:

Why is St. Andrew in the “*Libera nos*” prayer?
(Continued from the May issue)

The Our Father is truly a summary of the whole gospel. Composed of seven petitions, it perfectly forms the prayer of the faithful. Innocent III divides the petitions into three groupings; “*the first three* (... hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come..., Thy will be done...) *look forward toward our heavenly homeland, the last three* (forgive us our trespasses..., lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil) *consider our path towards it. The central petition* (give us this day our daily bread) *pertains to both.*”¹ In the Our Father, Christ has taught us what direction to walk, how to walk, and what to stay united to every step of the way. Christians are wayfarers seeking a heavenly home and must walk a narrow difficult path to get there. They must live a eucharistic life: one of thankful sacrifice, one united to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

The last petition is one which resounds at the Mass as the entire congregation sings, “deliver us from evil!” I have often wondered what this petition fully entails. Christ said, “*ask and you shall receive,*”² but does anyone think they can be delivered from all evil? He also said, “*he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me.*”³ There is no escape from hardship, from suffering evil, in this life. All get infirm, grow old, and die. Likewise, all battle temptations, the devil, spiritual weakness. “*The life of man upon earth is a warfare,*”⁴ against the world, the evil one, and himself. Much evil exists in our lives, and it is proper to have a certain despair at being freed from it—this is the way of things.

Some commentators narrow the field of reference to “evil” in the Lord’s prayer. True, the Greek has an article, so one could translate it as, “*free us from the evil one,*” just as many

of the Church Fathers did, but even if this is the case, the embolism which expands on the final petition universalizes the concept of evil: “*deliver us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, from all evils, past, present, and to come...*” The three tenses of this phrase are full of meaning. Innocent III, tied them back to the last three petitions of the Our Father; “forgive us our trespasses,” for the past, “deliver us from evil,” for the present, and “lead us not into temptation,” for the future. That is, forgiveness for past sins, victory in current trials, and avoidance of sin. Despite this, “all evils” seems even more universal than the spiritual references of sin and temptation. Physical hardship, sins of the parents falling onto the children, and current effects of one’s past mistakes are obstacles one must contend with in life. We must continually suffer much evil. We need to be delivered from personal moral evil—absolutely—and we receive sufficient grace to do so, but we also need not to be beaten by the hardships of life, be they self-inflicted, inherited, or embraced. We must pray like Christ in the garden, “*remove this chalice from me, but not my will, but thine be done.*”⁵ We may pray for no chalice or only a small chalice, but ultimately for the power to drink from a chalice, no matter what agony is placed in the cup.

Understanding how we are delivered from all evils may be a key insight into why Andrew’s intercession is important. We are not ever freed completely from experiencing evil in this life—the cross is unavoidable, and we will always have something to unite to Christ’s cross when we receive Communion. When we pray the Our Father and the *Libera nos prayer*, we ask for an interior power to rise from our hardships—to be freed by way of strength not avoidance. Such is the purpose of the gift of fortitude from the Holy Ghost and to a lesser degree the cardinal virtue of courage.

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AFONSO I: CONSTANTINE OF THE CONGO



On June 4th, in the year of Our Lord 1491, a Congolese Prince named Nzinga Mbemba was baptized by Portuguese missionaries, taking the name of Afonso.

By 1509, his father the King of Kongo had died, touching off a war for succession that

fractured the kingdom along a religious fault line. On the one side was the Catholic Afonso, and on the other his pagan half-brother Mpanzu a Kitima.

The two rivals met in a decisive battle at the capital of Mbanza Kongo, and what happened next is the stuff of Catholic legend. According to Afonso's own account, his vastly outnumbered army appealed to St. James for assistance. The great Apostle then miraculously appeared in the sky along with five heavenly swordsmen, and the sight so frightened the pagans that their superior force broke and abandoned the field.

Afonso thus succeeded his father as Manicongo. Bolstered in his convictions by a wondrous act of divine aid, this Constantine of West-Central Africa did everything he could to shift the kingdom away from its traditional paganism and toward the Catholic religion. To commemorate his victory, he devised a coat of arms emblazoned with five sword-arms, the scallops of St. James, and broken idols. He made

the feast of St. James a national holiday. He established Catholicism as the state religion of the Kongo, declared the worship of idols illegal, and burned a pagan temple. He encouraged the founding of confraternities, as well as missionary schools that instructed the Congolese aristocracy in Christian doctrine and in Latin. His son was even ordained a bishop by Pope Leo X. Afonso did so much to advance the Catholic faith during his reign that a contemporary Portuguese historian dubbed him "the Apostle of Congo."

Historians have long debated the extent to which the Kingdom of Kongo was actually Christianized during this period – and even whether Afonso's own faith was as sincere as he portrays. But this is nothing new. Historians ask the same questions of Constantine and, really, any leader who throws his political weight behind the Church.

But one testament to the sincerity of Afonso's faith was his apparent willingness to cling to its tenets even as relations deteriorated with those who had first brought it. The growth of an international market for slaves, and the massive profits it generated, pushed many Portuguese and Congolese toward what one historian has called "a mercantile economy based on chattel slavery and ruthless greed."

Afonso grew increasingly alarmed about the insidious and illegal trafficking of his subjects, and in 1526, he wrote an impassioned letter to John III of Portugal—one Catholic king to another.

"Each day the traders are kidnapping our people – children of this country, sons of our nobles and vassals, even people of our own family. This corruption and depravity are so widespread that our land is entirely depopulated. We need in this kingdom only priests and schoolteachers, and no merchandise, unless it is wine and flour for Mass."

He told the Portuguese King that the slavers were "ruining our kingdom and the Christianity which has been established here for so many years and which cost your predecessors so many sacrifices." He appealed to the king's missionary impulse to provide "this great blessing of faith" to new peoples – and said he was anxious to preserve that faith intact in the Congo. But:

"...European goods exert such a fascination over the simple and the ignorant that they leave God in order to obtain them... The lure of profit and greed lead the people of the land to rob their compatriots, including members of their own family and of ours, without considering whether they are Christians or not. They capture them, sell them, barter them. This abuse is so great that we cannot correct it without striking hard and harder."

King Afonso I of Kongo died in 1542, unable to snuff out the slave trade in its infancy. In ensuing years, it would metastasize into an intercontinental nightmare that would see some 10–12 million Africans brought across the Atlantic in chains, over a million of them perishing along



the way. It is not hard to imagine what the writer of those letters would have felt about the future, had he lived to see it.

Because of the precedents Afonso established, the Kingdom of Kongo was set on a religious course that it maintained for centuries afterward. His successors were duly recognized as Catholic Monarchs by the Pope and the Royal Houses of Europe, who extended to the African nobility such European titles as Count and Duke. The kingdom would, however, continue to be beset by internal dissension and external conflict until it was weakened and finally abolished in 1914, during a decade that proved fatal to so many of the ancient monarchies of Christendom.

Afonso, like Constantine, is not ultimately to be judged by the miraculous events that surrounded his accession, the geopolitical situation he navigated, or even the

longevity of his nation. He is to be judged – as all of us are – by one thing alone: how did he respond to the graces that God gave him?

It is not for history to answer that question. But there is good reason for the Catholics of today, particularly those descended from his subjects, to admire this loyal son of Holy Mother Church who forged an island of Christendom in the heart of the Congo. ✚

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All the virtues in some manner shine in adversity. Some are outright dependent on it. One cannot have patience, perseverance, or courage without an evil obstacle. One cannot have meekness without a crime, one cannot learn humility without shortcomings, and one cannot do penance without sorrow. Virtue not only responds to hardship, it grows because of it: “power is made perfect in infirmity.”⁶ Because of this, some evils in life—if we want to be perfect—must be accepted and embraced. Even faith shines forth stronger in persecution.

Saint Andrew best personifies the desire of undergoing evils for a greater gain. He is unique among all the apostles in his martyrdom account. Unlike St Peter who was carried to a place he “did not wish to go,”⁷ St Andrew ran towards his crucifixion despite the pleadings of others. The Roman divine office is sensitive to this aspect of St Andrew; the theme that predominates is St Andrew’s love affair with the cross:

“O precious cross, which the Members of my Lord have made so fair and goodly, welcome me from among men, and join me again to my Master, That, as by thee He redeemed me, so by thee also He may take me unto Himself. The blessed Andrew stretched forth his hands to heaven and prayed, saying: Precious cross, be my salvation”⁸

St Andrew’s dialogue with the cross continues up till the end of his life. As a debate ensues amongst bystanders on whether to take him down, he prays that he may remain united to the cross until death:

“The holy Andrew lifted up his eyes to heaven, and prayed, and cried with a loud voice, and said: Thou art my God, Whom I have seen; suffer not the unjust judge to take me down from the cross, for now I know what the power of Thy holy Cross is.”⁹

St Andrew’s orientation to the cross, as tradition preserves in our liturgy, is probably a direct result of his name. In salvation history, names carry power. Sometimes they indicate a special attribute of the person which God will use for the benefit of His people. Hence, Moses draws the people out of the Red Sea, Samuel hears God, and Jesus saves. Andrew’s name means “manliness.” It is Aristotle’s word for courage. It is best translated into Latin as *virtus*. Because of this, we may see the intercession of St. Andrew in the *Libera nos* as a final coda to our petitions. We pray to be delivered from the evil one, from temptations, from all evils; yet for those which we must endure for our perfection, Oh Lord, let us never be defeated by the help of your Andrew. ✚

*Answered by Fr. Dominic Savoie,
Assistant Pastor, FSSP Sacramento*

Filiae Laboris Mariae is a Marian, semi-contemplative community of religious Sisters, founded in 2017, who are blessed to exercise their apostolate and have their convent at FSSP Minneapolis. Their mailing address is Mater Divinae Gratiae Convent, 428 5th St. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413.

¹ Innocent III, *De Sacro Altaris Mysterio*, P.L. 217.893.B.

² Luke, 11:7

³ Matthew 10:38

⁴ Job 7:1

⁵ Luke 22:42

⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:9

⁷ John 21:15

⁸ 5th respond at Matins for St Andrew.

⁹ 7th respond at Matins for St Andrew.

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way the natures of both material substances and spiritual substances. It was for this reason that Aristotle says that the human soul is in some way all things. And in keeping with this, St. Thomas Aquinas reports that, “According to the philosophers, the ultimate perfection to which the soul can come is to have the whole order of the universe and its causes described within itself; and in this they placed the ultimate end of man.”

Here St. Thomas is describing what the ancients understood to be the highest happiness attainable by man’s natural powers. According to them, if a man becomes a small universe through his intellectual grasp of the order of all creatures and their causes (including a certain knowledge of God as the first cause of all creatures), such a man indeed would be blessed.

Yet, as we know from God’s supernatural revelation, the ultimate perfection of the soul and the ultimate end of man actually consists not in being a small universe according to intellectual knowledge, but in the face-to-face vision of God. At the same time, the ancients were not entirely mistaken about their understanding of the ultimate end of man. After all, grace does not destroy nature, but, rather, presupposes it and perfects it. And so it is that the human person’s participation in God’s beatific vision entails all the perfection involved in being a small universe according to intellectual knowledge, plus infinitely more. Accordingly, St.

*... the human person is,
on the one hand, the crown
and glory of God’s material
creation, and, on the other
hand, the lowest
of creatures which bear
the very image of God.*

Gregory the Great beautifully asks, “What do they not see who see the One who sees all things?” ✚

ANNUAL APPEAL

All across America, there’s a growing demand for the beauty, splendor, and dignity of the Traditional Latin Mass. The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter is helping to meet this demand by producing faithful, well-formed priests at our Nebraska seminary. But we can’t continue this work without your assistance.

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Everyone giving to this Annual Appeal will be remembered in a Mass on the Feast of SS. Peter & Paul on June 29, 2021 at the National Shrine of St. Alphonsus Liguori in Baltimore, MD, offered by Fr. Daniel Alloy, FSSP.

WHAT'S NEWS

Introducing the Memento online edition! Featuring the same informative articles and news about Fraternity apostolates in a flipbook format that you can access from your desktop or mobile phone. New issues will be posted at: <https://fssp.com/memento-online/>

We've also brought our monthly prayer card online! No need to worry about lost or misplaced cards—have instant access anywhere in the world via desktop or mobile. Or download a pdf and print out as many as you like! <https://fssp.com/fssp-monthly-prayer-card/>

Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, TX offered his first Latin Mass on June 11th thanks, in part, to the example and assistance of our own St. Joseph the Worker parish and instructional videos on the FSSP North American District YouTube channel.

Three new FSSP priests were ordained on June 27th in the cathedral of Laon, France, with two more priests being ordained in Sydney, Australia on August 8th.
Ad multos annos!

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