



MICHAEL

For the Triumph of the Immaculate

A journal of Catholic patriots
for the kingship of Christ and Mary
in the souls, families, and countries

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Saved by hope

Pope Benedict XVI's second Encyclical Spe Salvi

True happiness is to be with God in Heaven forever

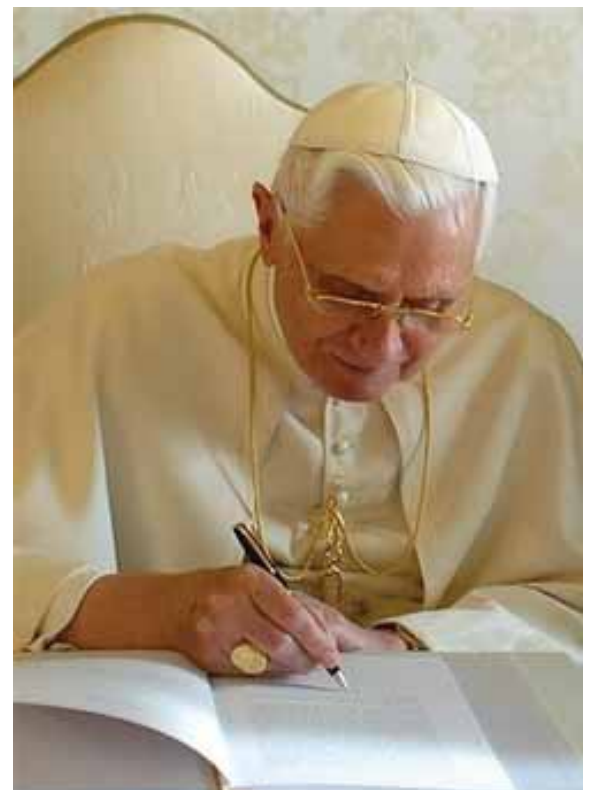
Spe salvi (Saved by hope), that is the title of Pope Benedict XVI's second Encyclical, on the theme of Christian hope, released November 30, 2007 at the Vatican. It follows the Holy Father's first encyclical Deus Caritas Est dedicated to the theme of love. Here are large excerpts from this Encyclical:

"*SPE SALVI facti sumus*"—in hope we were saved, says Saint Paul to the Romans, and likewise to us (*Rom* 8:24). According to the Christian faith, "redemption" — salvation — is not simply a given. Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of

which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey.

Faith is Hope

"Hope", in fact, is a key word in Biblical faith — so much so that in several passages the words "faith" and "hope" seem interchangeable. Thus the *Letter to the Hebrews* closely links the "fullness of faith" (10:22) to "the confession of our hope without wavering" (10:23). Likewise, when the *First Letter of*



Benedict XVI signing his new Encyclical

Peter exhorts Christians to be always ready to give an answer concerning the *logos*—the meaning and the reason — of their hope (cf. 3:15), "hope" is equivalent to "faith".

Paul reminds the Ephesians that before their encounter with Christ they were "without hope and without God in the world" (*Eph* 2:12). Of course he knew they had had gods, he knew they had had a religion, but their gods had proved questionable, and no hope emerged from their contradictory myths. Notwithstanding their gods, they were "without God" and consequently found themselves in a dark world, facing a dark future.

In the same vein he says to the Thessalonians: you must not "grieve as others do who have no hope" (*1 Th* 4:13). Here too we see as a distinguishing mark of Christians the fact that they have a future: it is not that they know the details of what awaits them, but they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness. Only when the future is certain as a positive reality does it become possible to live the present as well. So now we can say: Christianity was not only "good news"— the communication of a hitherto unknown content. In our language we would

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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical on Christian Hope

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say: the Christian message was not only "informative" but "performative". That means: the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known—it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing. The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.

Saint Josephine Bakhita

To come to know God — the true God — means to receive hope. We who have always lived with the Christian concept of God, and have grown accustomed to it, have almost ceased to notice that we possess the hope that ensues from a real encounter with this God.

The example of a saint of our time can to some degree help us understand what it means to have a real encounter with this God for the first time. I am thinking of the African Josephine Bakhita, canonized by Pope John Paul II. She was born around 1869 — she herself did not know the precise date — in Darfur in Sudan.



St. Josephine Bakhita

At the age of nine, she was kidnapped by slave-traders, beaten till she bled, and sold five times in the slave-markets of Sudan. Eventually she found herself working as a slave for the mother and the wife of a general, and there she was flogged every day till she bled; as a result of this she bore 144 scars throughout her life. Finally, in 1882, she was bought by an Italian merchant for the Italian consul Callisto Legnani, who returned to Italy as the Mahdists advanced. Here, after the terrifying "masters" who had owned her up to that point, Bakhita came to know a totally different kind of "master" — in Venetian dialect, which she was now learning, she used the name "paron" (Master) for the living God, the God of Jesus Christ.

Up to that time she had known only masters who despised and maltreated her, or at best considered her a useful slave. Now, however, she heard that there is a "paron" above all masters, the Lord of all lords, and that this Lord is good, goodness in person. She came to know that this Lord even knew her, that he had created her — that he actually loved her. She too was loved, and by none other than the supreme "Paron", before whom all other masters are themselves no more than lowly servants. She was known and loved and she was awaited. What is more, this master had himself accepted the destiny of being flogged and now he was waiting for her "at the Father's right hand".

Now she had "hope" — no longer simply the modest hope of finding masters who would be less cruel, but the great hope: "I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me — I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good." Through the knowledge of this hope she was "redeemed", no longer a slave, but a free child of God. She understood what Paul meant when he reminded the Ephesians that previously they were without hope and without God in the world — without

hope because without God. Hence, when she was about to be taken back to Sudan, Bakhita refused; she did not wish to be separated again from her "Paron".

On January 9, 1890, she was baptized and confirmed and received her first Holy Communion from the hands of the Patriarch of Venice. On December 8, 1896, in Verona, she took her vows in the Congregation of the Canossian Sisters and from that time onwards, besides her work in the sacristy and in the porter's lodge at the convent, she made several journeys round Italy in order to promote the missions: the liberation that she had received through her encounter with the God of Jesus Christ, she felt she had to extend, it had to be handed on to others, to the greatest possible number of people. The hope born in her which had "redeemed" her she could not keep to herself; this hope had to reach many, to reach everybody.

(Mother Bakhita breathed her last on February 8, 1947 at the Canossian Convent of Schio, Italy. She was beatified on May 17, 1992, and declared a saint on October 1, 2000, by Pope John Paul II.)

It is not difficult to realize that the experience of the African slave-girl Bakhita was also the experience of many in the period of nascent Christianity who were beaten and condemned to slavery. Christianity did not bring a message of social revolution like that of the ill-fated Spartacus, whose struggle led to so much bloodshed. Jesus was not Spartacus, he was not engaged in a fight for political liberation like Barabbas or Bar-Kochba. Jesus, who himself died on the Cross, brought something totally different: an encounter with the Lord of all lords, an encounter with the living God and thus an encounter with a hope stronger than the sufferings of slavery, a hope which therefore transformed life and the world from within.

The *First Letter to the Corinthians* (1:18-31) tells us that many of the early Christians belonged to the lower social strata, and precisely for this reason were open to the experience of new hope, as we saw in the example of Bakhita. Yet from the beginning there were also conversions in the aristocratic and cultured circles, since they too were living "without hope and without God in the world". Myth had lost its credibility; the Roman State religion had become fossilized into simple ceremony which was scrupulously carried out, but by then it was merely "political religion".

Stars do not govern mankind God governs the stars

The Divine was seen in various ways in cosmic forces, but a God to whom one could pray did not exist. Paul illustrates the essential problem of the religion of that time quite accurately when he contrasts life "according to Christ" with life under the dominion of the "elemental spirits of the universe" (Col 2:8). In this regard a text by Saint Gregory Nazianzen is enlightening. He says that at the very moment when the Magi, guided by the star, adored Christ the new king, astrology came to an end, because the stars were now moving in the orbit determined by Christ.



This scene, in fact, overturns the world-view of that time, which in a different way has become

fashionable once again today. It is not the elemental spirits of the universe, the laws of matter, which ultimately govern the world and mankind, but a personal God governs the stars, that is, the universe; it is not the laws of matter and of evolution that have the final say, but reason, will, love — a Person.

And if we know this Person and he knows us, then truly the inexorable power of material elements no longer has the last word; we are not slaves of the universe and of its laws, we are free. In ancient times, honest enquiring minds were aware of this. Heaven is not empty. Life is not a simple product of laws and the randomness of matter, but within everything and at the same time above everything, there is a personal will, there is a Spirit who in Jesus has revealed himself as Love.

A definition of faith

In the eleventh chapter of the *Letter to the Hebrews* (v. 1) we find a kind of definition of faith which closely links this virtue with hope. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the proof of things not seen"... Saint Thomas Aquinas explains it as follows: faith is a *habitus*, that is, a stable disposition of the spirit, through which eternal life takes root in us and reason is led to consent to what it does not see... Faith is not merely a personal reaching out towards things to come that are still totally absent: it gives us something. It gives us even now something of the reality we are waiting for, and this present reality constitutes for us a "proof" of the things that are still unseen.

A better basis for life

This explanation is further strengthened and related to daily life if we consider verse 34 of the tenth chapter of the *Letter to the Hebrews*, which is linked by vocabulary and content to this definition of hope-filled faith and prepares the way for it. Here the author speaks to believers who have undergone the experience of persecution and he says to them: "you had compassion on the pris-

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oners, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession."

Property is what in earthly life constitutes the means of support, indeed the basis, the "substance" for life, what we depend upon. This "substance", life's normal source of security, has been taken away from Christians in the course of persecution. They have stood firm, though, because they considered this material substance to be of little account. They could abandon it because they had found a better "basis" for their existence — a basis that abides, that no one can take away... Faith gives life a new basis, a new foundation on which we can stand, one which relativizes the habitual foundation, the reliability of material income.

This new freedom, the awareness of the new "substance" which we have been given, is revealed not only in martyrdom, in which people resist the overbearing power of ideology and its political organs and, by their death, renew the world. Above all, it is seen in the great acts of renunciation, from the monks of ancient times to Saint Francis of Assisi and those of our contemporaries who enter modern religious Institutes and movements and leave everything for love of Christ, so as to bring to men and women the faith and love of Christ, and to help those who are suffering in body and spirit.



In their case, the new "substance" has proved to be a genuine "substance"; from the hope of these people who have been touched by Christ, hope has arisen for others who were living in darkness and without hope. In their case, it has been demonstrated that this new life truly possesses and is "substance" that calls forth life for others. For us who contemplate these figures, their way of acting and living is *de facto* a "proof" that the things to come, the promise of Christ, are not only a reality that we await, but a real presence: he is truly the "philosopher" and the "shepherd" who shows us what life is and where it is to be found.

Eternal life – what is it?

So now we must ask explicitly: is the Christian faith also for us today a life-changing and life-sustaining hope? Is it "performative" for us — is it a message which shapes our life in a new way, or is it just "information" which, in the meantime, we have set aside and which now seems to us to have been superseded by more recent information?

In the search for an answer, I would like to begin with the classical form of the dialogue with which the rite of Baptism expressed the reception of an infant into the community of believers and the infant's rebirth in Christ. First of all the priest asked what name the parents had chosen for the child, and then he continued with the question: "What do you ask of the Church?" Answer: "Faith". "And what does faith give you?" "Eternal life".

According to this dialogue, the parents were seeking access to the faith for their child, communion with believers, because they saw in faith



the key to "eternal life". Today as in the past, this is what being baptized, becoming Christians, is all about: it is not just an act of socialization within the community, not simply a welcome into the Church. The parents expect more for the one to be baptized: they expect that faith, which includes the corporeal nature of the Church and her sacraments, will give life to their child — eternal life. Faith is the substance of hope.

But then the question arises: do we really want this — to live eternally? Perhaps many people reject the faith today simply because they do not find the prospect of eternal life attractive. What they desire is not eternal life at all, but this present life, for which faith in eternal life seems something of an impediment. To continue living for ever — endlessly — appears more like a curse than a gift. Death, admittedly, one would wish to postpone for as long as possible. But to live always, without end—this, all things considered, can only be monotonous and ultimately unbearable.

To eliminate death or to postpone it more or less indefinitely would place the earth and humanity in an impossible situation, and even for the individual would bring no benefit. Obviously there is a contradiction in our attitude, which points to an inner contradiction in our very existence. On the one hand, we do not want to die; above all, those who love us do not want us to die. Yet on the other hand, neither do we want to continue living indefinitely, nor was the earth created with that in view. So what do we really want?

Our paradoxical attitude gives rise to a deeper question: what in fact is "life"? And what does "eternity" really mean? There are moments when it suddenly seems clear to us: yes, this is what true "life" is — this is what it should be like. Besides, what we call "life" in our everyday language is not real "life" at all. Saint Augustine, in the extended letter on prayer which he addressed to Proba, a wealthy Roman widow and mother of three consuls, once wrote this: ultimately we want only one thing — "the blessed life", the life which is simply life, simply "happiness". In the final analysis, there is nothing else that we ask for in prayer. Our journey has no other goal — it is about this alone.

Is Christian hope individualistic?

Salvation has always been considered a "social" reality. Indeed, the *Letter to the Hebrews* speaks of a "city" (cf. 11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14) and therefore of communal salvation. Consistently with this view, sin is understood by the Fathers as the destruction of the unity of the human race, as fragmentation and division. Babel, the place where languages were confused, the place of separation, is seen to be an expression of what sin fundamentally is. Hence "redemption" appears as the reestablishment of unity, in which we come together once more in a union that begins to take shape in the world community of believers.

While this community-oriented vision of the "blessed life" is certainly directed beyond the present world, as such it also has to do with the building up of this world — in very different ways, according to the historical context and the possibilities offered or excluded thereby... Let us now consider a more or less randomly chosen epi-

sode from the Middle Ages, that serves in many respects to illustrate what we have been saying. It was commonly thought that monasteries were places of flight from the world (*contemptus mundi*) and of withdrawal from responsibility for the world, in search of private salvation. Bernard of Clairvaux, who inspired a multitude of young people to enter the monasteries of his reformed Order, had quite a different perspective on this.

In his view, monks perform a task for the whole Church and hence also for the world. He uses many images to illustrate the responsibility that monks have towards the entire body of the Church, and indeed towards humanity; he applies to them the words of pseudo-Rufinus: "The human race lives thanks to a few; were it not for them, the world would perish...".



St. Bernard

Hope becomes faith in progress

How could the idea have developed that Jesus's message is narrowly individualistic and aimed only at each person singly? How did we arrive at this interpretation of the "salvation of the soul" as a flight from responsibility for the whole, and how did we come to conceive the Christian project as a selfish search for salvation which rejects the idea of serving others?

In order to find an answer to this we must take a look at the foundations of the modern age. These appear with particular clarity in the thought of Francis Bacon (*an English philosopher who died in 1616*).



Francis Bacon

Hope, in Bacon, acquires a new form. Now it is called: *faith in progress*. For Bacon, it is clear that the recent spate of discoveries and inventions is just the beginning; through the interplay of science and praxis, totally new discoveries will follow, a totally new world will emerge, the kingdom of man.¹⁶ He even put forward a vision of foreseeable inventions — including the aeroplane and the submarine. As the ideology of progress developed further, joy at visible advances in human potential remained a continuing confirmation of *faith in progress* as such.

At the same time, two categories become increasingly central to the idea of progress: reason and freedom. Progress is primarily associated with the growing dominion of reason, and this reason is obviously considered to be a force of good and a force for good. Progress is the overcoming of all forms of dependency — it is progress towards perfect freedom. Likewise freedom is seen purely as a promise, in which man becomes more and more fully himself. In both concepts — freedom and reason — there is a political aspect. The kingdom of reason, in fact, is expected as the new condition of the human race once it has attained total freedom.

Reason and freedom seem to guarantee by themselves, by virtue of their intrinsic goodness, a new and perfect human community. The two key concepts of "reason" and "freedom", however, were tacitly interpreted as being in conflict with the shackles of faith and of the Church as well as those of the political structures of the period. Both concepts therefore contain a revolutionary potential of enormous explosive force.

We must look briefly at the two essential stages in the political realization of this hope, because they are of great importance for the development of Christian hope, for a proper understanding of it and of the reasons for its persistence.

First there is the French Revolution — an attempt to establish the rule of reason and freedom as a political reality. To begin with, the Europe of

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Spe Salvi

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the Enlightenment looked on with fascination at these events, but then, as they developed, had cause to reflect anew on reason and freedom.

In 1792 Immanuel Kant wrote "The Victory of the Good over the Evil Principle and the Founding of a Kingdom of God on Earth". In this text he says the following: "The gradual transition of ecclesiastical faith to the exclusive sovereignty of pure religious faith is the coming of the Kingdom of God." He also tells us that revolutions can accelerate this transition from ecclesiastical faith to rational faith.



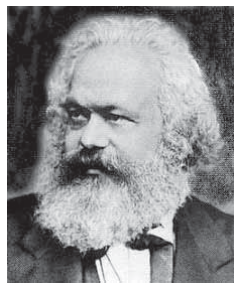
Immanuel Kant

The "Kingdom of God" proclaimed by Jesus receives a new definition here and takes on a new mode of presence; a new "imminent expectation", so to speak, comes into existence: the "Kingdom of God" arrives where "ecclesiastical faith" is vanquished and superseded by "religious faith", that is to say, by simple rational faith.

The nineteenth century held fast to its faith in progress as the new form of human hope, and it continued to consider reason and freedom as the guiding stars to be followed along the path of hope. Nevertheless, the increasingly rapid advance of technical development and the industrialization connected with it soon gave rise to an entirely new social situation: there emerged a class of industrial workers and the so-called "industrial proletariat", whose dreadful living conditions Friedrich Engels described alarmingly in 1845.

Karl Marx's revolution

A revolutionary leap was needed. Karl Marx took up the rallying call, and applied his incisive language and intellect to the task of launching this major new and, as he thought, definitive step in history towards salvation — towards what Kant had described as the "Kingdom of God". Once the truth of the hereafter had been rejected, it would then be a question of establishing the truth of the here and now.



Karl Marx

Together with the victory of the revolution (in Russia), though, Marx's fundamental error also became evident. He showed precisely how to overthrow the existing order, but he did not say how matters should proceed thereafter.

He simply presumed that with the expropriation of the ruling class, with the fall of political power and the socialization of means of production, the new Jerusalem would be realized. Then, indeed, all contradictions would be resolved, man and the world would finally sort themselves out. Then everything would be able to proceed by itself along the right path, because everything would belong to everyone and all would desire the best for one another. Thus, having accomplished the revolution, Lenin must have realized that the writings of the master gave no indication as to how to proceed.

Marx's real error is materialism: man, in fact, is not merely the product of economic conditions, and it is not possible to redeem him purely from the outside by creating a favourable economic environment.

When is progress good?

We must ask ourselves: what does "progress" really mean; what does it promise and what does it not promise? The ambiguity of progress becomes evident. Without doubt, it offers new possibilities for good, but it also opens up appalling possibilities for evil — possibilities that formerly did not exist. We have all witnessed the way in

which progress, in the wrong hands, can become and has indeed become a terrifying progress in evil. If technical progress is not matched by corresponding progress in man's ethical formation, in man's inner growth (cf. Eph 3:16; 2 Cor 4:16), then it is not progress at all, but a threat for man and for the world.

Reason needs faith

As far as the two great themes of "reason" and "freedom" are concerned, here we can only touch upon the issues connected with them. Yes indeed, reason is God's great gift to man, and the victory of reason over unreason is also a goal of the Christian life. But when does reason truly triumph? When is it detached from God? When it has become blind to God? Is the reason behind action and capacity for action the whole of reason? If progress, in order to be progress, needs moral growth on the part of humanity, then the reason behind action and capacity for action is likewise urgently in need of integration through reason's openness to the saving forces of faith, to the differentiation between good and evil.

Only thus does reason become truly human. It becomes human only if it is capable of directing the will along the right path, and it is capable of this only if it looks beyond itself... Let us put it very simply: man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope. Given the developments of the modern age, the quotation from Saint Paul with which I began (Eph 2:12) proves to be thoroughly realistic and plainly true. There is no doubt, therefore, that a "Kingdom of God" accomplished without God — a kingdom therefore of man alone — inevitably ends up as the "perverse end" of all things: we have seen it, and we see it over and over again.

Man is redeemed by love

Francis Bacon and those who followed in the intellectual current of modernity that he inspired were wrong to believe that man would be redeemed through science. Such an expectation asks too much of science; this kind of hope is deceptive. Science can contribute greatly to making the world and mankind more human. Yet it can also destroy mankind and the world unless it is steered by forces that lie outside it.

It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love... The human being needs unconditional love. He needs the certainty which makes him say: "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).

If this absolute love exists, with its absolute certainty, then — only then — is man "redeemed", whatever should happen to him in his particular circumstances. This is what it means to say:

Jesus Christ has "redeemed" us. Through him we have become certain of God, a God who is not a remote "first cause" of the world, because his only-begotten Son has become man and of him everyone can say: "I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

In this sense it is true that anyone who does not know God, even though he may entertain all kinds of hopes, is ultimately without hope, without the great hope that sustains the whole of life (cf. Eph 2:12). Man's great, true hope which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God — God who has loved us and who continues to love us "to the end," until all "is accomplished" (cf. Jn 13:1 and 19:30). Whoever is moved by love begins to perceive what "life" really is. He begins to perceive the meaning of the word of hope that we encountered in the Baptismal Rite: from faith I await "eternal life" — the true life which, whole and unthreatened, in all its fullness, is simply life.

Jesus, who said that he had come so that we might have life and have it in its fullness, in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10), has also explained to us what "life" means: "this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17:3). Life in its true sense is not something we have exclusively in or from ourselves: it is a relationship. And life in its totality is a relationship with him who is the source of life. If we are in relation with him who does not die, who is Life itself and Love itself, then we are in life. Then we "live".

Love of God and neighbour

Our relationship with God is established through communion with Jesus — we cannot achieve it alone or from our own resources alone. The relationship with Jesus, however, is a relationship with the one who gave himself as a ransom for all (cf. 1 Tim 2:6). Being in communion with Jesus Christ draws us into his "being for all"; it makes it our own way of being. He commits us to live for others, but only through communion with him does it become possible truly to be there for others, for the whole.

In this regard I would like to quote the great Greek Doctor of the Church, Maximus the Confessor († 662), who begins by exhorting us to prefer nothing to the knowledge and love of God, but then quickly moves on to practicalities: "The one who loves God cannot hold on to money but rather gives it out in God's fashion... in the same manner in accordance with the measure of justice." Love of God leads to participation in the justice and generosity of God towards others. Loving God requires an interior freedom from all possessions and all material goods: the love of God is revealed in responsibility for others.

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A great "Siege of Jericho" in Rougemont

From Easter Sunday, March 23, 2008

To Divine Mercy Sunday, March 30, 2008

In our chapel of the House of the Immaculate, 1101 Principale St.

Seven days and six nights of adoration and Rosaries in front of the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Monstrance
Opening: March 23, 10 a.m. Mass at 5 p.m. on Sundays, and 7 p.m. on weekdays.

March 30: monthly meeting

All are invited to come for the days and nights that are convenient for them. They will be lodged free of charge in our two houses. And they will be able to prepare their own meals in our dining room.



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Let us say once again: we need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain.

The fact that it comes to us as a gift is actually part of hope. God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. His Kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us. His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect.

Let us now develop this idea in more detail as we focus our attention on some of the “settings” in which we can learn in practice about hope and its exercise.

Prayer as a school of hope

A first essential setting for learning hope is prayer. When no one listens to me any more, God still listens to me. When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God. When there is no longer anyone to help me deal with a need or expectation that goes beyond the human capacity for hope, he can help me.



Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan

When I have been plunged into complete solitude ...; if I pray I am never totally alone. The late Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, a prisoner for thirteen years, nine of them spent in solitary confinement, has left us a precious little book: *Prayers of Hope*. During thirteen years in jail, in a situation of seemingly utter hopelessness, the fact that he could listen and speak to God became for him an increasing power of hope, which enabled him, after his release, to become for people all over the world a witness to hope — to that great hope which does not wane even in the nights of solitude.

Saint Augustine, in a homily on the *First Letter of John*, describes very beautifully the intimate relationship between prayer and hope. He defines prayer as an exercise of desire. Man was created for greatness — for God himself; he was created to be filled by God. But his heart is too small for the greatness to which it is destined. It must be stretched. “By delaying [his gift], God strengthens our desire; through desire he enlarges our soul and by expanding it he increases its capacity [for receiving him]”.

It is only by becoming children of God, that we can be with our common Father. To pray is not to step outside history and withdraw to our own private corner of happiness. When we pray properly we undergo a process of inner purification which opens us up to God and thus to our fellow human beings as well. In prayer we must learn what we can truly ask of God — what is worthy of God. We must learn that we cannot pray against others. We must learn that we cannot ask for the superficial and comfortable things that we desire

at this moment—that meagre, misplaced hope that leads us away from God. We must learn to purify our desires and our hopes. We must free ourselves from the hidden lies with which we deceive ourselves. God sees through them, and when we come before God, we too are forced to recognize them. “But who can discern his errors? Clear me from hidden faults” prays the Psalmist (*Ps* 19:12 [18:13]).

How should we pray

For prayer to develop this power of purification, it must on the one hand be something very personal, an encounter between my intimate self and God, the living God. On the other hand it must be constantly guided and enlightened by the great prayers of the Church and of the saints, by liturgical prayer, in which the Lord teaches us again and again how to pray properly. Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, in his book of spiritual exercises, tells us that during his life there were long periods when he was unable to pray and that he would hold fast to the texts of the Church’s prayer: the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the prayers of the liturgy.

Praying must always involve this intermingling of public and personal prayer. This is how we can speak to God and how God speaks to us. In this way we undergo those purifications by which we become open to God and are prepared for the service of our fellow human beings. We become capable of the great hope, and thus we become ministers of hope for others. Hope in a Christian sense is always hope for others as well. It is an active hope, in which we struggle to prevent things moving towards the “perverse end”. It is an active hope also in the sense that we keep the world open to God. Only in this way does it continue to be a truly human hope.

Action and suffering

All serious and upright human conduct is hope in action. This is so first of all in the sense that we thereby strive to realize our lesser and greater hopes, to complete this or that task which is important for our onward journey, or we work towards a brighter and more humane world so as to open doors into the future.

Yet our daily efforts in pursuing our own lives and in working for the world’s future either tire us or turn into fanaticism, unless we are enlightened by the radiance of the great hope that cannot be destroyed even by small-scale failures or by a breakdown in matters of historic importance. If we cannot hope for more than is effectively attainable at any given time, or more than is promised by political or economic authorities, our lives will soon be without hope.

It is important to know that I can always continue to hope, even if in my own life, or the historical period in which I am living, there seems to be nothing left to hope for. Only the great certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can then give the courage to act and to persevere.

Certainly we cannot “build” the Kingdom of God by our own efforts — what we build will always be the kingdom of man with all the limitations proper to our human nature. The Kingdom of God is a gift, and precisely because of this, it is great and beautiful, and constitutes the response to our hope.

Suffering is part of human existence

Like action, suffering is a part of our human existence. Suffering stems partly from our finitude, and partly from the mass of sin which has accumulated over the course of history, and continues to grow unabated today. Certainly we must do whatever we can to reduce suffering: to avoid as far as possible the suffering of the innocent; to soothe pain; to give assistance in overcoming mental suffering. These are obligations both in justice and in love, and they are included among the fundamental requirements of the Christian life and every truly human life.

Great progress has been made in the battle against physical pain; yet the sufferings of the

innocent and mental suffering have, if anything, increased in recent decades. Indeed, we must do all we can to overcome suffering, but to banish it from the world altogether is not in our power. This is simply because we are unable to shake off our finitude and because none of us is capable of eliminating the power of evil, of sin which, as we plainly see, is a constant source of suffering.



Jesus suffered for us in His Passion

Only God is able to do this: only a God who personally enters history by making himself man and suffering within history. We know that this God exists, and hence that this power to “take away the sin of the world” (*Jn* 1:29) is present in the world. Through faith in the existence of this power, hope for the world’s healing has emerged in history. It is, however, hope — not yet fulfillment; hope that gives us the courage to place ourselves on the side of good even in seemingly hopeless situations, aware that, as far as the external course of history is concerned, the power of sin will continue to be a terrible presence.

Let us return to our topic. We can try to limit suffering, to fight against it, but we cannot eliminate it. It is when we attempt to avoid suffering by withdrawing from anything that might involve hurt, when we try to spare ourselves the effort and pain of pursuing truth, love, and goodness, that we drift into a life of emptiness, in which there may be almost no pain, but the dark sensation of meaninglessness and abandonment is all the greater. It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love.

The true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer. This holds true both for the individual and for society. A society unable to accept its suffering members and incapable of helping to share their suffering and to bear it inwardly through “com-passion” is a cruel and inhuman society. Yet society cannot accept its suffering members and support them in their trials unless individuals are capable of doing so themselves; moreover, the individual cannot accept another’s suffering unless he personally is able to find meaning in suffering, a path of purification and growth in maturity, a journey of hope.

Indeed, to accept the “other” who suffers, means that I take up his suffering in such a way that it becomes mine also. Because it has now become a shared suffering, though, in which another person is present, this suffering is penetrated by the light of love. The Latin word *con-solatio*, “consolation”, expresses this beautifully. It suggests *being with* the other in his solitude, so that it ceases to be solitude.

To suffer for justice

Furthermore, the capacity to accept suffering for the sake of goodness, truth and justice is an essential criterion of humanity, because if my

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Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical on Christian Hope

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own well-being and safety are ultimately more important than truth and justice, then the power of the stronger prevails, then violence and untruth reign supreme. Truth and justice must stand above my comfort and physical well-being, or else my life itself becomes a lie. In the end, even the "yes" to love is a source of suffering, because love always requires expropriations of my "I", in which I allow myself to be pruned and wounded. Love simply cannot exist without this painful renunciation of myself, for otherwise it becomes pure selfishness and thereby ceases to be love.

To suffer with the other and for others; to suffer for the sake of truth and justice; to suffer out of love and in order to become a person who truly loves—these are fundamental elements of humanity, and to abandon them would destroy man himself. Yet once again the question arises: are we capable of this? Is the other important enough to warrant my becoming, on his account, a person who suffers? Does truth matter to me enough to make suffering worthwhile? Is the promise of love so great that it justifies the gift of myself?

In the history of humanity, it was the Christian faith that had the particular merit of bringing forth within man a new and deeper capacity for these kinds of suffering that are decisive for his humanity. The Christian faith has shown us that truth, justice and love are not simply ideals, but enormously weighty realities. It has shown us that God—Truth and Love in person—desired to suffer for us and with us. Bernard of Clairvaux coined the marvellous expression: *Impassibilis est Deus, sed non incompassibilis*—God cannot suffer, but he can suffer with. Man is worth so much to God that he himself became man in order to suffer with man in an utterly real way—in flesh and blood—as is revealed to us in the account of Jesus's Passion.

Offering up our sufferings

I would like to add here another brief comment with some relevance for everyday living. There used to be a form of devotion—perhaps less practised today but quite widespread not long ago—that included the idea of "offering up" the minor daily hardships that continually strike at us like irritating "jabs", thereby giving them a meaning. Of course, there were some exaggerations and perhaps unhealthy applications of this devotion, but we need to ask ourselves whether there may not after all have been something essential and helpful contained within it. What does it mean to offer something up? Those who did so were convinced that they could insert these little annoyances into Christ's great "com-passion" so that they somehow became part of the treasury of compassion so greatly needed by the human race. In this way, even the small inconveniences of daily life could acquire meaning and contribute to the economy of good and of human love. Maybe we should consider whether it might be judicious to revive this practice ourselves.

The Last Judgement

At the conclusion of the central section of the Church's great *Credo*—the part that recounts the mystery of Christ, from his eternal birth of the Father and his temporal birth of the Virgin Mary, through his Cross and Resurrection to the second coming—we find the phrase: "he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead". From the earliest times, the prospect of the Judgement has influenced Christians in their daily living as a criterion by which to order their present life, as a summons to their conscience, and at the same time as hope in God's justice.

In the modern era, the idea of the Last Judgement has faded into the background: Christian faith has been individualized and primarily oriented towards the salvation of the believer's own soul, while reflection on world history is largely dominated by the idea of progress. The fundamental content of awaiting a final Judgement, however, has



not disappeared: it has simply taken on a totally different form. The atheism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is—in its origins and aims—a type of moralism: a protest against the injustices of the world and of world history. A world marked by so much injustice, innocent suffering, and cynicism of power cannot be the work of a good God. A God with responsibility for such a world would not be a just God, much less a good God. It is for the sake of morality that this God has to be contested. Since there is no God to create justice, it seems man himself is now called to establish justice.

If in the face of this world's suffering, protest against God is understandable, the claim that humanity can and must do what no God actually does or is able to do is both presumptuous and intrinsically false. It is no accident that this idea has led to the greatest forms of cruelty and violations of justice; rather, it is grounded in the intrinsic falsity of the claim. A world which has to create its own justice is a world without hope.

God has given himself an "image": in Christ who was made man. In him who was crucified, the denial of false images of God is taken to an extreme. God now reveals his true face in the figure of the sufferer who shares man's God-forsaken condition by taking it upon himself. This innocent sufferer has attained the certitude of hope: there is a God, and God can create justice in a way that we cannot conceive, yet we can begin to grasp it through faith. Yes, there is a resurrection of the flesh. There is justice. There is an "undoing" of past suffering, a reparation that sets things aright. For this reason, faith in the Last Judgement is first and foremost hope—the need for which was made abundantly clear in the upheavals of recent centuries.

I am convinced that the question of justice constitutes the essential argument, or in any case the strongest argument, in favour of faith in eternal life. The purely individual need for a fulfilment that is denied to us in this life, for an everlasting love that we await, is certainly an important motive for believing that man was made for eternity; but only in connection with the impossibility that the injustice of history should be the final word does the necessity for Christ's return and for new life become fully convincing.

Only God can create justice

To protest against God in the name of justice is not helpful. A world without God is a world without hope (cf. *Eph* 2:12). Only God can create justice. And faith gives us the certainty that he does so. The image of the Last Judgement is not primarily an image of terror, but an image of hope; for us it may even be the decisive image of hope. Is it not also a frightening image? I would say: it is an image that evokes responsibility, an image, therefore, of that fear of which Saint Hilary spoke when he said that all our fear has its place in love. God is justice and creates justice. This is our consolation and our hope.

And in his justice there is also grace. This we know by turning our gaze to the crucified and risen Christ. Both these things—justice and grace—must be seen in their correct inner relationship. Grace does not cancel out justice. It does not make wrong into right. It is not a sponge which wipes everything away, so that whatever someone has done on earth ends up being of equal value. Dostoevsky, for example, was right to protest against this kind of Heaven and this kind of grace in his novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. Evildoers, in the end, do not sit at table at the eternal banquet beside their victims without distinction, as though nothing had happened.



The rich man and Lazarus

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (cf. *Lk* 16:19-31), Jesus admonishes us through the image of a soul destroyed by arrogance and opulence, who has created an impassable chasm between himself and the poor man; the chasm of being trapped within material pleasures; the chasm of forgetting the other, of incapacity to love, which then becomes a burning and unquenchable thirst. We must note that in this parable Jesus is not referring to the final destiny after the Last Judgement, but is taking up a notion found, *inter alia*, in early Judaism, namely that of an intermediate state between death and resurrection, a state in which the final sentence is yet to be pronounced.

Hell, Heaven, Purgatory

With death, our life-choice becomes definitive—our life stands before the judge. Our choice, which in the course of an entire life takes on a certain shape, can have a variety of forms. There can be people who have totally destroyed their desire for truth and readiness to love, people for whom everything has become a lie, people who have lived for hatred and have suppressed all love within themselves. This is a terrifying thought, but alarming profiles of this type can be seen in certain figures of our own history. In such people all would be beyond remedy and the destruction of good would be irrevocable: this is what we mean by the word *Hell*.

On the other hand there can be people who are utterly pure, completely permeated by God, and thus fully open to their neighbours—people for whom communion with God even now gives direction to their entire being and whose journey towards God only brings to fulfilment what they already are.

Yet we know from experience that neither case is normal in human life. For the great majority of people—we may suppose—there remains in the depths of their being an ultimate interior openness to truth, to love, to God. In the concrete choices of life, however, it is covered over by ever new compromises with evil—much filth covers purity, but the thirst for purity remains and it still constantly re-emerges from all that is base and remains present in the soul. What happens to such individuals when they appear before the Judge? Will all the impurity they have amassed through life suddenly cease to matter? What else might occur?

Some recent theologians are of the opinion that the fire which both burns and saves is Christ himself, the Judge and Saviour. The encounter

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with him is the decisive act of judgement. Before his gaze all falsehood melts away. This encounter with him, as it burns us, transforms and frees us, allowing us to become truly ourselves. All that we build during our lives can prove to be mere straw, pure bluster, and it collapses. Yet in the pain of this encounter, when the impurity and sickness of our lives become evident to us, there lies salvation. His gaze, the touch of his heart heals us through an undeniably painful transformation "as through fire". But it is a blessed pain, in which the holy power of his love sears through us like a flame, enabling us to become totally ourselves and thus totally of God.

In this way the inter-relation between justice and grace also becomes clear: the way we live our lives is not immaterial, but our defilement does not stain us for ever if we have at least continued to reach out towards Christ, towards truth and towards love. Indeed, it has already been burned away through Christ's Passion. At the moment of judgement we experience and we absorb the overwhelming power of his love over all the evil in the world and in ourselves. The pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy.

It is clear that we cannot calculate the "duration" of this transforming burning in terms of the chronological measurements of this world. The transforming "moment" of this encounter eludes earthly time-reckoning — it is the heart's time, it is the time of "passage" to communion with God in the Body of Christ.

The judgement of God is hope, both because it is justice and because it is grace. If it were merely grace, making all earthly things cease to matter, God would still owe us an answer to the question about justice — the crucial question that we ask of history and of God. If it were merely justice, in the end it could bring only fear to us all. The incarnation of God in Christ has so closely linked the two together — judgement and grace — that justice is firmly established: we all work out our salvation "with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). Nevertheless grace allows us all to hope, and to go trustfully to meet the Judge whom we know as our "advocate", or *parakletos* (cf. 1 Jn 2:1).

To pray for the deceased



A further point must be mentioned here, because it is important for the practice of Christian hope. Early Jewish thought includes the idea that one can help the deceased in their intermediate state through prayer (see for example 2 Macc 12:38-45; first century BC). The equivalent practice was readily adopted by Christians and is common to the Eastern and Western Church. The East does not recognize the purifying and expiatory suffering of souls in the afterlife, but it does acknowledge various levels of beatitude and of suffering in the intermediate state. The souls of the departed can, however, receive "solace and refreshment" through the Eucharist, prayer and almsgiving.

The belief that love can reach into the afterlife, that reciprocal giving and receiving is possible, in which our affection for one another continues beyond the limits of death — this has been a fundamental conviction of Christianity throughout the ages and it remains a source of comfort today.

Who would not feel the need to convey to their departed loved ones a sign of kindness, a gesture of gratitude or even a request for pardon?

Now a further question arises: if "Purgatory" is simply purification through fire in the encounter with the Lord, Judge and Saviour, how can a third person intervene, even if he or she is particularly close to the other? When we ask such a question, we should recall that no man is an island, entire of itself. Our lives are involved with one another, through innumerable interactions they are linked together. No one lives alone. No one sins alone. No one is saved alone. The lives of others continually spill over into mine: in what I think, say, do and achieve.

And conversely, my life spills over into that of others: for better and for worse. So my prayer for another is not something extraneous to that person, something external, not even after death. In the interconnectedness of Being, my gratitude to the other — my prayer for him — can play a small part in his purification. And for that there is no need to convert earthly time into God's time: in the communion of souls simple terrestrial time is superseded. It is never too late to touch the heart of another, nor is it ever in vain.

In this way we further clarify an important element of the Christian concept of hope. Our hope is always essentially also hope for others; only thus is it truly hope for me too. As Christians we should never limit ourselves to asking: how can I save myself? We should also ask: what can I do in order that others may be saved and that for them too the star of hope may rise? Then I will have done my utmost for my own personal salvation as well.

Mary, Star of Hope

With a hymn composed in the eighth or ninth century, thus for over a thousand years, the Church has greeted Mary, the Mother of God, as "Star of the Sea": *Ave maris stella*. Human life is a journey. Towards what destination? How do we find the way? Life is like a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives. They are lights of hope.

Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by — people who shine with his light and so guide us along our way. Who more than Mary could be a star of hope for us? With her "yes" she opened the door of our world to God himself; she became the living Ark of the Covenant, in whom

God took flesh, became one of us, and pitched his tent among us (cf. Jn 1:14).



Holy Mary, from the Cross you received a new mission. From the Cross you became a mother in a new way: the mother of all those who believe in your Son Jesus and wish to follow him. The sword of sorrow pierced your heart. Did hope die? Did the world remain definitively without light, and life without purpose? At that moment, deep down, you probably listened again to the word spoken by the angel in answer to your fear at the time of the Annunciation: "Do not be afraid, Mary!" (Lk 1:30).

How many times had the Lord, your Son, said the same thing to his disciples: do not be afraid! In your heart, you heard this word again during the night of Golgotha. Before the hour of his betrayal he had said to his disciples: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27). "Do not be afraid, Mary!" In that hour at Nazareth the angel had also said to you: "Of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1:33). Could it have ended before it began? No, at the foot of the Cross, on the strength of Jesus's own word, you became the mother of believers.

The "Kingdom" of Jesus was not as might have been imagined. It began in that hour, and of this "Kingdom" there will be no end. Thus you remain in the midst of the disciples as their Mother, as the Mother of hope. Holy Mary, Mother of God, our Mother, teach us to believe, to hope, to love with you. Show us the way to his Kingdom! Star of the Sea, shine upon us and guide us on our way!

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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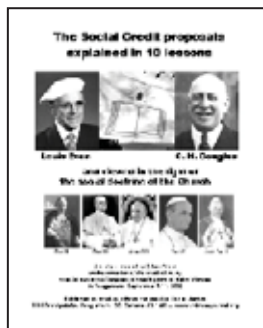
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Social Credit explained in 10 lessons

Lesson 10: Social Credit and the Social Doctrine of the Church (Part II)



Here is the last of the 10 lessons on the Social Credit proposals, which have been published in a serial form in the "Michael" Journal since September, 2006. We have printed a 100-page booklet that contains the 10 lessons that you can order from our office at \$8 each (postage included) if you live in Canada; \$11 for the U.S.A., and \$13 for overseas. You can also find the text of the 10 lessons on our website, at this address: www.michaeljournal.org/whatsnew.htm. Good reading!

Alain Pilote

The subject that we treated in the previous lesson was the first of four basic principles, regarding the primacy of human beings over mere systems, as viewed through the social doctrine of the church.

The four principles of the Church's social doctrine



So that means, according to Church teaching, the aim of the economic and financial system is the service of man. The goal of an economic system should be the satisfaction of human needs, the production of goods (the role of the producing system) and the distribution of goods so that they may reach the people who need them (the role of the financial system). Social Credit proposes a technique that would make the production and financial systems serve their purpose.

In his Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pope Pius XI defined the aspired end of an economic system in this way:

"For then only will the economic and social organism be soundly established and attain its end, when it secures for all and each those goods which the wealth and resources of nature, technical achievement, and the social organization of economic affairs can give.

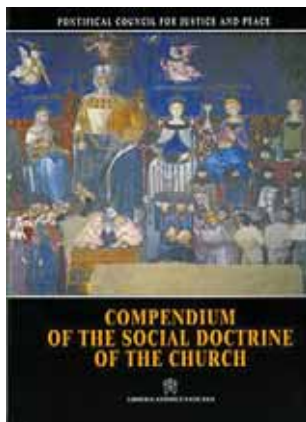
"These goods must be sufficient to supply all needs and an honest livelihood, and to uplift men to that higher level of prosperity and culture which, provided it be used with prudence, is not only no hindrance but is of singular help to virtue." (n. 75)

The common good

Now, let us discuss the three other principles mentioned in the *Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church*: the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity.

164. The principle of the common good, to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people. According to its primary and broadly accepted sense, **the common good indicates "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily."** (*Gaudium et Spes*, 26.)

167. The common good therefore involves all members of society; no one is exempt from cooperating, according to each one's possibilities, in attaining it and developing it. Everyone also has the right to enjoy the conditions of social life that are brought about by the quest for the common good. The teaching of Pope Pius XI is still relevant: "The distribution of created goods, which, as every discerning person knows, is labouring today under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered propertyless, must be effectively called back to, and brought into conformity with, the norms of the common good, that is, social justice." (Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, 197.)



168. **The responsibility for attaining the common good, besides falling to individual persons, belongs also to the State, since the common good is the reason that the political authority exists.** (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1910.) The State, in fact, must guarantee the coherency, unity and organization of the civil society of which it is an expression, in order that the common good may be attained with the contribution of every citizen. The individual person, the family or intermediate groups are not able to achieve their full development by themselves for living a truly human life. Hence the necessity of political institutions, the purpose of which is to make available to persons the necessary material, cultural, moral and spiritual goods. The goal of life in society is in fact the historically attainable common good.

170. The common good of society is not an end in itself; it has value only in reference to attaining the ultimate ends of the person and the universal common good of the whole of creation. God is the ultimate end of His creatures, and for no reason may the common good be deprived of its transcendent dimension, which moves beyond the historical dimension while at the same time fulfilling it.

The universal destination of goods

171. **Among the numerous implications of the common good, immediate significance is taken on by the principle of the universal destination of goods: "God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and all peoples so that all created things would be shared fairly by all mankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity."** (*Gaudium et Spes*, 69.) This principle is based on the fact that "the original source of all that is good is the very act of God, who created both the earth and man, and who gave the earth to man so that he might have dominion over it by his work and enjoy its fruits (Gen 1:28-29).

God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone. This is the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's goods. The earth, by reason of its fruitfulness and its capacity to satisfy human needs, is God's first gift for the sustenance of human life." (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 31.) The human person cannot do without the material goods that correspond to his primary needs and constitute the basic conditions for his existence; these goods are absolutely indispensable if he is to feed himself, grow, communicate, associate with others, and attain the highest purposes to which he is called.

(Cf. Pius XI, Radio Message of June 1, 1941.)

172. The universal right to use the goods of the earth is based on the principle of the universal destination of goods. **Each person must have access to the level of well-being necessary for his full development. The right to the common use of goods is the "first principle of the whole ethical and social order" and "the characteristic principle of Christian social doctrine."** (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42.)

For this reason the Church feels bound in duty to specify the nature and characteristics of this principle. It is first of all a natural right, inscribed in human nature, and not merely a positive right connected with changing historical circumstances; moreover it is an "inherent" right. It is innate in individual persons, and has priority with regard to any human intervention concerning goods, to any legal system concerning the same, to any economic or social system or method: "All other rights, whatever they are, including property rights and the right of free trade, must be subordinated to this norm [the universal destination of goods]; they must not hinder it, but must rather expedite its application. It must be considered a serious and urgent social obligation to refer these rights to their original purpose." (Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 22.)

Private property

176. By means of work and making use of the gift of intelligence, people are able to exercise dominion over the earth and make it a fitting home: "In this way, he makes part of the earth his own, precisely the part which he has acquired through work; this is the origin of individual property."



John Paul II

(John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 31.)

Private property and other forms of private ownership of goods "assure a person a highly necessary sphere for the exercise of his personal and family autonomy, and ought to be considered as an extension of human freedom... stimulating exercise of responsibility, it constitutes one of the conditions for civil liberty." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 71.)



Leo XIII

forms of "common and promiscuous dominion." (Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 11.)

The heritage of progress

179. The present historical period has placed at the disposal of society new goods that were completely unknown until recent times. This calls for a fresh reading of the principle of the

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Social Credit and the Social Doctrine of the Church

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universal destination of the goods, the earth, and makes it necessary to extend this principle so that it includes the latest developments brought about by economic and technological progress. The ownership of these new goods — the results of knowledge, technology and know-how — becomes ever more decisive, because “the wealth of the industrialized nations is based much more on this kind of ownership than on natural resources.” (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 32.)

New technological and scientific knowledge must be placed at the service of mankind's primary needs, gradually increasing humanity's common patrimony. Putting the principle of the universal destination of goods into full effect therefore requires action at the international level and planned programmes on the part of all countries. “It is necessary to break down the barriers and monopolies which leave so many countries on the margins of development, and to provide all individuals and nations with the basic conditions which will enable them to share in development.”

For everyone to be a real “capitalist” and to have the access to the production of today's world we need to install the Social Credit philosophy. As we have stated previously in other lessons, the dividend is based on two factors: inheritance of natural resources and inventions of past generations. Pope John Paul II said as much in his Encyclical letter *Laborem Exercens* on Human Work (n. 13).

“Through his work man enters into two inheritances: the inheritance of what is given to the whole of humanity in the resources of nature, and the inheritance of what others have already developed on the basis of those resources, primarily by developing technology, that is to say, by producing a whole collection of increasingly perfect instruments for work. In working, man also “enters into the labor of others.”

Poverty amidst plenty

God has given us all of the natural wealth that is needed to feed everyone, but because of lack of purchasing power, the production is not meeting the needs; mountains of our country's wealth is decaying under the gaze of millions of starving people. It truly is the paradox of poverty amidst plenty.

Pope John Paul II said to the fishermen of St. John's in Newfoundland on Sept. 12, 1984:

“It is a cruel paradox that many of you who could be engaged in the production of food are in financial distress here, while at the same time hunger, chronic malnutrition and the threat of starvation afflict millions of people elsewhere in the world.”

Pope Paul VI stated at the World Conference of Food in Rome, Nov. 9, 1974:

“No more hunger, hunger never again! Ladies and gentlemen, this objective can be achieved. The threat of starvation and the weight of malnutrition are not an inescapable fate. Nature is not, in this crisis, unfaithful to man. According to a



Paul VI

generally accepted opinion, while 50% of cultivable land is not yet developed, a great scandal catches the eye from the huge amount of surplus food that certain countries periodically destroy for lack of a sound economy which could have ensured a useful consumption of this food.

“Here we are broaching the paradox of the present situation: Mankind has an incomparable control over the universe; it possesses instruments capable of exploiting its natural resources at full capacity. Will the owners of these instru-

ments remain paralyzed and stuck in front of the absurdity of a situation where the wealth of the few tolerates the persistent extreme poverty of the many?... We cannot arrive at such a situation without having committed serious errors of orientation, be it sometimes through negligence or omission; it is high time we discovered how the mechanisms are defective, in order to correct, put the whole situation right.”

“It is obvious that a fundamental defect, or rather a series of defects, indeed a defective machinery is at the root of contemporary economics and materialistic civilization, which does not allow the human family to break free from such radically unjust situations.” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* on Divine Mercy, November 30, 1980, n. 11.)

“So widespread is this phenomenon (poverty amidst plenty) that it brings into question the financial, monetary, production and commercial mechanisms that, resting on various political pressures, support the world economy. These are proving incapable either of remedying the unjust social conditions inherited from the past or of dealing with the urgent challenges and ethical demands of the present... We have before us here a great drama that can leave nobody indifferent.” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 16.)

Reforming the financial system

The Popes have denounced the money dictatorship many times and advocated reform of the financial and economic systems realizing that the economic system must be put at the service of man.

“One must denounce the existence of economic, financial and social mechanisms which, although they are manipulated by people, often function almost automatically, thus accentuating the situation of wealth for some and poverty for the rest.” (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 16.)

“I appeal to those in positions of responsibility, and to all involved, to work together to find appropriate solutions to the problems at hand, including a restructuring of the economy, so that human needs be put before mere financial gain.” (John Paul II in Newfoundland, Sept. 12, 1984.)

“An essential condition is to provide the economy with a human meaning and logic. It is necessary to free the various fields of existence from the dominion of subjugating economism. Economic requirements must be put in their right place and a multiform social fabric must be created, which will prevent standardization. No one is dispensed from collaborating in this task... Christians, wherever you are, assume your share of responsibility in this immense effort for the human restructuring of the city. Faith makes it a duty for you.” (John Paul II to the workers of Sao Paulo, Brazil, June 3, 1980.)

The principle of subsidiarity

One of the most interesting principles of the social doctrine of the Church is subsidiarity, which acknowledges that higher levels of government must not do what families and lesser associations, that are closer to the individual can do. This is in complete contrast to centralization and world government. Governments should exist to help families and other groups or organizations and not to destroy them. The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* states:

185. Subsidiarity is among the most constant and characteristic directives of the Church's social doctrine, and has been present since the first great social encyclical. (Cf. Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*, 11.) It is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities; in short, for that aggregate of economic, social, cultural, sports-oriented, recreational, professional and political expressions to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth.

This is the realm of civil society, understood as the sum of the relationships between individuals and intermediate social groupings, which are the first relationships to arise and which come about thanks to “the creative subjectivity of the citizen.” This network of relationships strengthens the social fabric and constitutes the basis of a true community of persons, making possible the recognition of higher forms of social activity.

186. The necessity of defending and promoting the original expressions of social life is emphasized by the Church in the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, (written by Pope Pius XI in 1931) in which the principle of subsidiarity is indicated as a most important principle of “social philosophy”. “Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice, and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order, to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the social body, and never destroy and absorb them.”



Pius XI

On the basis of this principle, all societies of a superior order must adopt attitudes of help (“subsidiarity”) — therefore of support, promotion, development — with respect to lower-order societies. In this way, intermediate social entities can properly perform the functions that fall to them without being required to hand them over unjustly to other social entities of a higher level, by which they would end up being absorbed and substituted, in the end seeing themselves denied their dignity and essential place.

Subsidiarity, understood in the positive sense as economic, institutional or juridical assistance offered to lesser social entities, entails a corresponding series of negative implications that require the State to refrain from anything that would de facto restrict the existential space of the smaller essential cells of society. Their initiative, freedom and responsibility must not be supplanted.

187. The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority, and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfil their duties. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community. Experience shows that the denial of subsidiarity, or its limitation in the name of an alleged democratization or equality of all members of society, limits and sometimes even destroys the spirit of freedom and initiative. The principle of subsidiarity is opposed to certain forms of centralization, bureaucratization, and welfare assistance, and to the unjustified and excessive presence of the State in public mechanisms.

The “Welfare State”

As Louis Even (the founder of the “Michael” Journal) wrote: “Because Caesar (the State) does not correct the financial system which only he can do, he then goes beyond his proper role and accumulates new functions, using them as a pretext for levying new taxes — sometimes ruinous ones — on citizens and families. Caesar thus becomes the tool of a financial dictatorship that he should destroy, and the oppressor of citizens and families that he should protect.”

These new functions create a burdensome bureaucracy that harasses people instead of serving them. Pope John Paul II wrote in his Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (n. 48):

“In recent years the range of such intervention (of the State) has vastly expanded, to the

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"All of you who have heard the appeal of suffering peoples, all of you who are working to answer their cries, you are the apostles of a development which is good and genuine, which is not wealth that is self-centered and sought for its own sake, but rather an economy which is put at the service of man, the bread which is daily distributed to all, as a source of brotherhood and a sign of providence." (Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, March 26, 1967.)

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point of creating a new type of State, the so-called 'Welfare State'. This has happened in some countries in order to respond better to many needs and demands, by remedying forms of poverty and deprivation unworthy of the human person. However, excesses and abuses, especially in recent years, have provoked very harsh criticisms of the Welfare State, dubbed the 'Social Assistance State'. Malfunctions and defects in the Social Assistance State are the result of an inadequate understanding of the tasks proper to the State.

"Here again the principle of subsidiarity must be respected: a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.

"By intervening directly and depriving society of its responsibility, the Social Assistance State leads to a loss of human energies and an inordinate increase of public agencies, which are dominated more by bureaucratic ways of thinking than by concern for serving their clients, and which are accompanied by an enormous increase in spending."

Most of the taxes today are unjust and useless and could be eliminated in a Social Credit system. Debt service only exists because of corruption — the interest charges the nation has to pay every year on its national debt, for having borrowed at interest from private bankers money that the State could create itself, but without interest.

The *Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church* continues (n. 187):

In order for the principle of subsidiarity to be put into practice, there is a corresponding need for: respect and effective promotion of the human person and the family; ever greater appreciation of associations and intermediate organizations in their fundamental choices and in those that cannot be delegated to or exercised by others; the encouragement of private initiative so that every social entity remains at the service of the common good, each with its own distinctive characteristics; the presence of pluralism in society and due representation of its vital components; safeguarding human rights and the rights of minorities; bringing about bureaucratic and administrative decentralization; striking a balance between the public and private spheres, with the resulting recognition of the social function of the private sphere; appropriate methods for making citizens more responsible in actively "being a part" of the

political and social reality of their country.

188. Various circumstances may make it advisable that the State step in to supply certain functions. One may think, for example, of situations in which it is necessary for the State itself to stimulate the economy because it is impossible for civil society to support initiatives on its own. One may also envision the reality of serious social imbalance or injustice where only the intervention of the public authority can create conditions of greater equality, justice and peace.

To correct the financial system is certainly one of the duties of the State, in other words that money be created by society, and not by private bankers for their own profit, as we have said in previous lessons. As Pope Pius XI wrote in his Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*:

"There are certain categories of goods for which one can maintain with reason that they must be reserved to the community when they come to confer such an economic power that it cannot, without danger to the common good, be left to the care of private individuals."

Families first

This principle of subsidiarity means families are in effect the first cell of society and they come before the State, so governments must not destroy families and the authority of parents. As the Church says, children belong to their parents and not to the State:

"Hence we have the family, the 'society' of a man's house — a society very small, one must admit, but none the less a true society, and one older than any State. Consequently, it has rights and duties peculiar to itself which are quite independent of the State..."

"The contention, then, that the civil government should at its option intrude into and exercise intimate control over the family and the household is a great and pernicious error... Paternal authority can be neither abolished nor absorbed by the State... The socialists, therefore, in setting aside the parent and setting up a State supervision, act against natural justice, and destroy the structure of the home." (Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, nn. 12-14.)

A salary to housewives

As a matter of fact, in its social doctrine, the Church also stresses the importance of recognizing the work of the mothers in the home, by giving them an income. This would be perfectly accomplished by the Social Credit dividend:

"Experience confirms that there must be a social re-evaluation of the mother's role, of the toil connected with it, and of the need that chil-

dren have for care, love and affection in order that they may develop into responsible, morally and religiously mature and psychologically stable persons. It will redound to the credit of society to make it possible for a mother — without inhibiting her freedom, without psychological or practical discrimination, and without penalizing her as compared with other women — to devote herself to taking care of her children and educating them in accordance with their needs, which vary with age. Having to abandon these tasks in order to take up paid work outside the home is wrong from the point of view of the good of society and of the family when it contradicts or hinders these primary goals of the mission of a mother." (John Paul II, Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, n. 19.)

"It is an intolerable abuse, and to be abolished at all cost, for mothers on account of the father's low wage to be forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the home to the neglect of their proper cares and duties, especially the training of children." (Pius XI, Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, n. 71.)

In October 1983, the Holy See issued the "Charter of the Rights of the Family" in which it called for "the remuneration of the work in the home of one of the parents; it should be such that mothers will not be obliged to work outside the home to the detriment of family life and especially of the education of the children. The work of the mother in the home must be recognized and respected because of its value for the family and for society." (Article 10.)

The principle of solidarity

Solidarity is another word for the love of neighbour. As Christians, we must care about the fate of all our brothers and sisters in Christ, for it is on this love of our neighbour that we will be judged at the end of our lives on this earth:

It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize His chosen ones... the poor remain entrusted to us, and it is this responsibility upon which we shall be judged at the end of time (cf. Mt 25:31-46): "Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from Him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are His brethren." (Quote from the *Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church*, n. 183.)

The *Compendium* continues with:

192. Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights, and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever committed unity. Never before has there been such a widespread awareness of the bond of interdependence between individuals and peoples, which is found at every level. The very rapid expansion in ways and means of communication "in real time", such as those offered by information technology, the extraordinary advances in computer technology, the increased volume of commerce and information exchange all bear witness to the fact that, for the first time since the beginning of human history, it is now possible — at least technically — to establish relationships between people who are separated by great distances and are unknown to each other.

In the presence of the phenomenon of interdependence and its constant expansion, however, there persist in every part of the world stark inequalities between developed and developing countries, inequalities stoked also by various forms of exploitation, oppression and corruption that have a negative influence on the internal and international life of many States. The acceleration

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In his first Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), Pope Benedict XVI wrote: "In God's family, no one ought to go without the necessities of life... The aim of a just social order is to guarantee to each person, according to the principle of subsidiarity, his share of the community's goods."



Social Credit and the social doctrine

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of interdependence between persons and peoples needs to be accompanied by equally intense efforts on the ethical-social plane, in order to avoid the dangerous consequences of perpetrating injustice on a global scale. This would have very negative repercussions even in the very countries that are presently more advantaged.

The duty of every Christian

It is therefore a duty and obligation for every Christian to work for the establishment of justice and of a better economic system:

"Anyone wishing to renounce the difficult yet noble task of improving the lot of man in his totality, and of all people, with the excuse that the struggle is difficult and that constant effort is required, or simply because of the experience of defeat and the need to begin again, that person would be betraying the will of God the Creator." (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 30.)

"Such a task is not an impossible one. The principle of solidarity, in a wide sense, must inspire the effective search for appropriate institutions and mechanisms... This difficult road of the indispensable transformations of the structures of economic life is one on which it will not be easy to go forward without the intervention of a true conversion of mind, will and heart. The task requires resolute commitments by individuals and peoples that are free and linked in solidarity." (John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 16.)

There are, of course, many ways to help our brothers in need: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, visiting the imprisoned and the sick, etc. Some people send donations to charitable organizations, either to help the poor of our country or of the Third World. But even though these donations can relieve a few poor people for a few days or weeks, they are not able to correct the cause of poverty.

What would be much more efficient would be to correct the problem at its roots, to attack the very causes of poverty, and to re-establish for every human being, his rights and dignity that belongs to a person created in the image of God, and who is entitled to a minimum of earthly goods:

"More than any other, the individual who is animated by true charity labors skillfully to discover the causes of misery, to find the means to combat it, and to overcome it resolutely. A creator of peace, he will follow his path, lighting the lamps of joy and playing their brilliance and loveliness on the hearts of men across the surface of the globe, leading them to recognize, across all frontiers, the faces of their brothers, the faces of their friends." (Paul VI, Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, n. 75.)

What is needed is apostles to educate the population on the social doctrine of the Church, and the practical application of it, such as the Social Credit financial proposals. Pope Paul VI wrote, also in *Populorum Progressio* (n. 86):

"All of you who have heard the appeal of suffering peoples, all of you who are working to answer their cries, you are the apostles of a development which is good and genuine, which is not wealth that is self-centered and sought for its own sake, but rather an economy which is put at the service of man, the bread which is daily distributed to all, as a source of brotherhood and a sign of providence."

And in his Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, Pope John Paul II wrote (n. 38.):

"These attitudes and 'structures of sin' (the thirst for money and power) are only conquered — presupposing the help of divine grace — by a diametrically opposed attitude: a commitment to the good of one's neighbour..."

Principles and implementation

Some will say that the Popes never publicly approved Social Credit. But in fact, the Popes leave the faithful free to apply the system that would implement principles at the service of the

human person, as the Popes have taught throughout the years, in the best way possible.

To our knowledge, no other solution than Social Credit would apply the social doctrine of the Church in a way that is truly Christian. That is why Louis Even, a great Catholic gifted with an extraordinarily logical mind did not hesitate to bring out the connection between Social Credit and the Church's social doctrine.

Another one who was convinced that Social Credit is applied Christianity, that it would apply wonderfully the Church's teachings on social justice, is Father Peter Coffey, who had a doctorate in Philosophy and who was professor at Maynooth College, Ireland. He wrote the following to a Canadian Jesuit, Father Richard, in March, 1932:

"The difficulties raised by your questions can be met only by the reform of the financial system of capitalism along the lines suggested by Major Douglas and the Social Credit school of credit reform. It is the accepted financing system that is at the root of the evils of capitalism. The accuracy of the analysis carried out by Douglas has never been refuted. I believe that, with their famous price-regulation formula, the Douglas reform proposals are the only reform that will go to the root of the evil..."

A study by nine theologians

As soon as C. H. Douglas published his first writings on Social Credit, the Financiers did everything they could to silence or distort Douglas's doctrine, for they knew that Social Credit would put an end to their control over the creation of money. When Louis Even began spreading Social Credit in French around Canada in 1935, one of the accusations used by the Financiers was that Social Credit was Socialism, or Communism.

But in 1939 the Roman Catholic Bishops of the Province of Quebec appointed nine theologians to examine the Social Credit system in the eyes of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church, and give an opinion as to whether it was tainted with Socialism or Communism. After considerable deliberation, the nine theologians found that there was nothing in the Social Credit doctrine contrary to the teachings of the Church, and that any Catholic was free to support it without danger. (*For the full text of the nine theologians, go to: www.michaeljournal.org/appenA.htm*)

The Financiers were not pleased with this report of the theologians and in 1950 a group of businessmen asked a bishop, Most Rev. Albertus Martin of Nicolet, Quebec, to go to Rome and obtain from Pope Pius XII a condemnation of Social Credit. Once back to Quebec, the Bishop said to the businessmen: **"If you want to get a condemnation of Social Credit, it is not to Rome that you must go. Pius XII said to me: 'Social Credit would create, in the world, a climate that would allow the blossoming of family and Christianity'."**

We need Heaven's help

Divine assistance is especially needed in this fight for a just financial system based on Christian principles, when we know that the real goal of the Financiers is the establishment of a world government that has the objective of the destruction of Christianity and the family, and that the promoters of this "New World Order" are actually led by Satan himself, whose sole aim is the ruin of souls. Back in 1946, C.H. Douglas wrote the following in the Liverpool periodical *The Social Crediter*:

"We are engaged in a battle for Christianity. And it is surprising to see in how many ways this is true in practice. One of these ways goes almost unnoticed — except in its deviations — the emphasis put by the Roman Catholic Church on the family, against the implacable and continuous effort of the Communists and Socialists — who, together with the International Financiers, form the true body of the Antichrist — to destroy the very idea of the family and substitute the State for it."

And Louis Even wrote on the same subject, in 1973:

"Yes, the Pilgrims of St. Michael are patriots, and they wish, as much as anyone else, a regime of order and justice, of peace, of bread and of joy, for every family in their country. But since they are Catholics too, they know very well that order, peace and joy are incompatible with the rejection of God, the violation of His Commandments, the denial of faith, the paganization of life, the scandals given to children in schools where the parents are by law constrained to send them."

"The Pilgrims of St. Michael, relying on the help of the celestial powers, swore to use all of the physical and moral forces, all of the propaganda and educational tools they have, to replace the Kingdom of Satan by the Kingdom of the Immaculate and Jesus Christ."

"In an engagement against the financial dictatorship, we do not deal only with terrestrial powers. The Communist dictatorship and the powerful organization of Freemasonry, as well as, the financial dictatorship are under the command of Satan. Simple human weapons will never be able to overcome that power. What is needed are the weapons chosen and recommended by She who vanquishes all heresies, She who must definitely crush the head of Satan, She who declared Herself, at Fatima, that Her Immaculate Heart will triumph in the end. And these weapons are: the consecration to Her Immaculate Heart marked by the Scapular, Rosary, and penance."

"The Pilgrims of St. Michael are assured that by embracing Mary's program, every act they perform, every 'Hail Mary' they address to the Queen of the World and every sacrifice they offer up, not only contribute to their personal sanctification but also to the coming of a sounder, more humane and more Christian social order with Social Credit. In such a program received from Mary everything counts and nothing is lost."

To conclude, the battle of the Michael Journal and the Louis Even Institute is a battle for the salvation of souls. The Pilgrims of St. Michael ask for what the Pope and the Church demand: a new evangelization — to remind Christians of the basic Christian principles that they forget or cease to practice — and a restructuring of the economic system.

To be a Pilgrim of St. Michael is then one of the most urgent and necessary vocations of our times. Who among those of us who read these words will have the grace and inspiration from Heaven to respond to the call to discipleship? How great and important is the promotion of the social doctrine of the Church through the work of Louis Even! All who thirst for justice should pray for the gift of understanding so they will realize the importance of learning and spreading Social Credit by soliciting subscriptions to the Michael Journal and informing those around them of the urgency of this work!

Alain Pilote

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The North American Union: merger in the making

The architects of a New World Order (as the elder George Bush called it), have been building the economic and legal basis for an eventual North American Union ever since the passage of NAFTA in 1993. The current Bush administration has worked hard to take the next steps in the process.



The John Birch Society, a conservative group that publishes the New American Magazine, recently put on its website (www.jbs.org) a free copy of its special 48-page report on the North American Union, MERGER IN THE MAKING, that can be downloaded for free from the internet.

We invite our readers to read this well-documented report, which proves that the this coming North American Union — the political merger of the U.S.A., Canada and Mexico, is not a myth, but is based on facts, and is to be modeled on the European Union.

Here are just a few excerpts:

MYTH: The North American Union is a delusion perpetrated on the American public by cranks and crackpots.

FACT: The phrase North American Union (NAU) is commonly used to refer to the very real process of merging the United States with Mexico and Canada. This process began when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was approved by Congress in 1993. Next, the launch of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) on March 23, 2005, at a summit meeting between President Bush and his counterparts from Canada and Mexico, greatly accelerated this process.

A key to understanding the North American Union process is recognizing that the government leaders and nongovernmental organization members who are building the NAU routinely minimize the significance of what they are doing. They draw your attention to snapshots of what they've accomplished so far in order to distract you from the real goals and the plans that reveal the overall process they are pursuing.

The U.S. media paid scant attention this past August when President George W. Bush headed for a meeting of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (more commonly referred to as the SPP) in Canada. The two-day summit (August 20-21) with

Mexico's President Felipe Calderon and Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper, as well as top government ministers and business leaders, was conducted behind a cordon of security and secrecy at a luxury resort in Montebello, Quebec, down the Ottawa River from the Canadian capital.

At the summit's concluding press conference on August 21, the three heads of state were confronted with charges leveled by critics of the SPP's goals and process. A Fox News reporter asked the trio:

"Can you say today that this is not a prelude to a North American Union, similar to a European Union? Are there plans to build some kind of superhighway connecting all three countries? And do you believe all of

Manitoba confirms the superhighway project



On November 20, 2007, during the speech from the throne at the opening of the second session of the 39th Legislature of the Province of Manitoba, Lieutenant-Governor John Harvard said: "Manitoba has been working with the Canadian government and state governments in the U.S. to protect and enhance our access to key trade markets. In response to U.S. border security measures, Manitoba will begin offering an enhanced driver's licence as an affordable and secure form of identification for travelers. The new licence will be available in the fall of 2008.

"Manitoba is also taking a major role in the development of a Mid-Continent Trade Corridor, connecting our northern Port of Churchill with trade markets throughout the central United States and Mexico. To advance the concept, an alliance has been built with business leaders and state and city governments spanning the entire length of the Corridor. When fully developed, the trade route will incorporate an "in-land port" in Winnipeg with pre-clearance for international shipping."

these theories about a possible erosion of national identity stem from a lack of transparency from this partnership?"

President Bush and Prime Minister Harper evaded the questions and chose to respond with ridicule, but facts show that the SPP is actually a scheme to create an Eustyle North American Union.

Leading SPP advocates publicly deny that their integration plans will bring about a centralized EU-style government that will override national, state, and local governance. Privately, however, in their speeches and writings, they acknowledge that this is precisely what they are constructing.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci, for instance, in an October 30, 2006 address to the Canadian Defense and Foreign Affairs Institute, said:

"Now, I don't believe that we will ever have a, in name anyways, a common union like the Europeans have... but I believe that, incrementally, we will continue to integrate our economies... I think ... 10 years from now, or maybe 15 years from now we're gonna look back and we're gonna have a union in everything but name."

Mexican President Vicente Fox openly stated, prior to the launch of the SPP, that the "long-range objective is to establish an ensemble of connections and institutions similar to those created by the European Union."

In their 2003 book *The Great Deception*, British authors Christopher Booker and Richard North describe the decades-long process of creating the European Union as "a slow-motion coup d'etat, the most spectacular coup d'etat in history." Booker and North show that the EU has become the greatest concentration of political power in the history of mankind.

That is precisely what the EU's architects intended it to become; but they didn't tell that

to the people of Europe when they first began promoting what they called "the project" after World War II. It was launched as the European Coal and Steel Community, and soon after expanded into the European Economic Community (EEC), better known as the Common Market, to promote trade and ease of travel. Gradually, as more political integration took place, the EEC became the European Community, or EC. Finally, it changed names once again, from EC to EU. The NAFTA/SPP architects are copying the EU slow-motion coup d'etat blueprint but on an accelerated schedule.

Our elected representatives in the Canadian Parliament and the U.S. Congress have the constitutional authority — and duty — to stop this usurpation of power and this planned transformation of our three countries. A rapidly growing grass-roots movement of Canadian and American citizens is becoming aware of the SPP threat, and they are making their voices heard. But, as these recent battles have shown, members of Congress and Parliament are not likely to take appropriate action on these urgent matters until a significant number of determined constituents become active and light fires underneath.

The "Michael" Journal has made a special 8-page offprint on the North American Union (see our July-August, 2007 issue), that you can order for free distribution around you. Take action before it is too late!

Fr. Georges-Henri Levesque, O.P., Professor of Economics, Laval and Montreal Universities, wrote in 1936 in his booklet *Social Credit and Catholicism*: "And if you want neither Socialism nor Communism, bring Social Credit in array against them. It will be in your hands a powerful weapon with which to fight these enemies."

Here are excerpts from the amazing testimony given by Mrs. Gloria Constanza Polo, given on Radio Maria of Columbia (www.gloriapolo.com). Mrs. Polo, a dentist of Bogotá, was struck by a lightning on May 5, 1995, and declared clinically dead. She then came back to life, a new and transformed life, thanks to God's infinite mercy. However before returning to her body on earth God gave her a mission:

"You will repeat your testimony not only 1,000 times, but also 1,000 times 1,000! And woe to those who don't change their ways despite having heard you, because they will be judged much more severely, just like you will when you come back here again, even their anointed or their priests, or any of them, because the worst deafness is that of a man who refuses to hear."

by Gloria Polo

Brothers and sisters! It's beautiful for me to be with you sharing this precious gift my Lord gave me more than ten years ago. (This was at the National University of Colombia in Bogotá, in May of 1995.) I was attending graduate school, along with my nephew, who was also a dentist. My husband was with us that day. We had to pick up some books at the School of Dentistry on a Friday afternoon. It was raining very hard and my nephew and I were sharing a small umbrella. My husband was wearing his raincoat and he approached the outside wall of the General Library. Meanwhile, my nephew and I approached the trees without noticing, while skipping puddles. As we were about to skip to avoid a huge puddle, we were struck by lightning.

We were charred. My nephew died there. He was a young man who, despite his young age, had given himself over to the Lord and was very devout to the Infant Jesus. He always carried the Infant Jesus' image inside a quartz crystal next to his chest. According to the coroner, lightning entered him through the image, ran through his heart, burned him on the inside and exited through his foot. But on the outside, he was not charred or burnt.

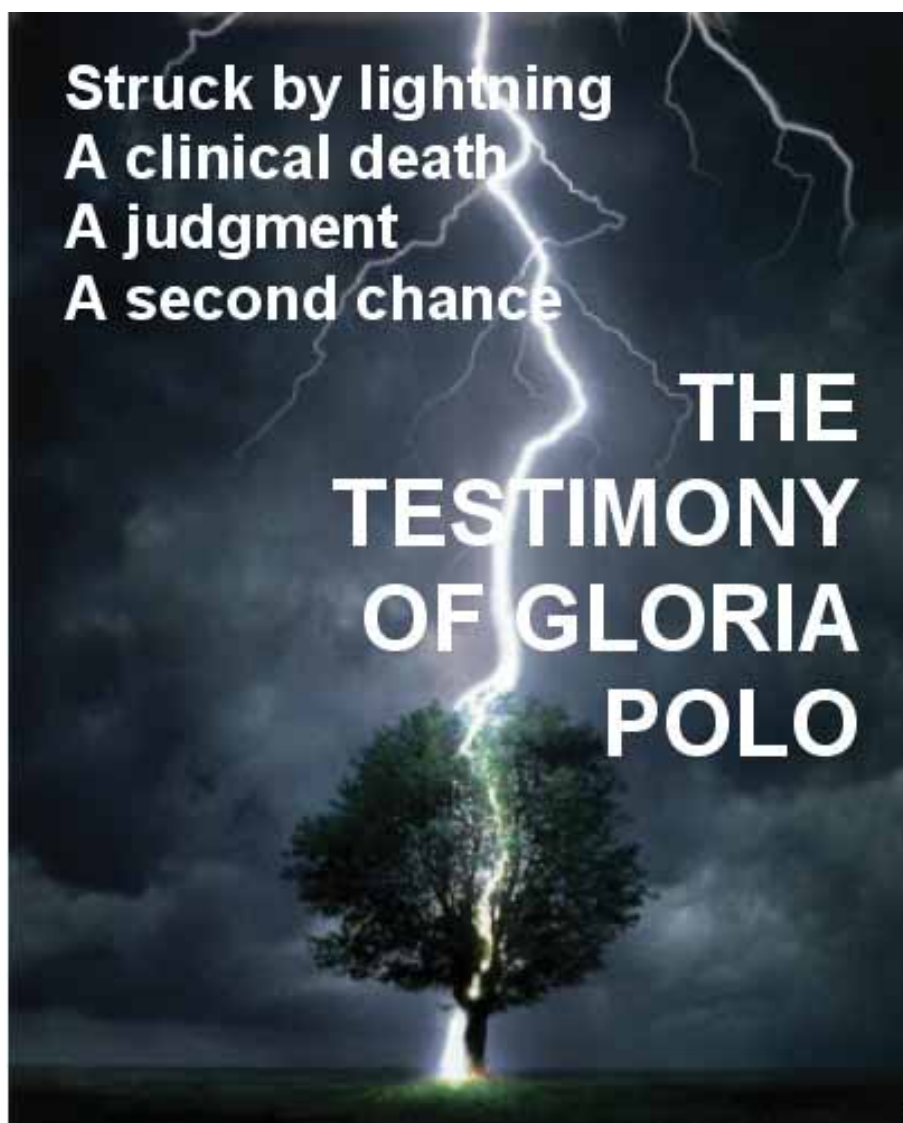
In my case, instead, lightning came in this way and burned my body in a horrifying way, on the inside and outside. This body you see here, this reconstructed body, is through the mercy of our Lord. Lightning charred me, left me without breasts, practically made my whole flesh and ribs vanish. My stomach, my legs; lightning went out my right foot, my liver was charred, my kidneys were burned, just like my lungs.

I did family planning using the copper-T intra-uterine device. Therefore copper, an excellent electrical conductor, charred me, it pulverized my ovaries. I was left in cardiac arrest, lifeless, my body jumping from the electricity that remained in it. But look: that's the physical part.

The most beautiful part is that while my flesh was there charred, at that instant I found myself inside a beautiful white tunnel full of joy and peace, a happiness for which there are no human words that can describe the grandeur of the moment. The climax of the moment was immense. I was happy and joyful, nothing weighed me down inside that tunnel. At the bottom of that tunnel I saw like a sun, a most beautiful light. I call it white to name a color because no color on earth is comparable with that most beautiful light. I felt the source of all that love, all that peace.

As I was going up I realized I had died. At that instant I thought about my kids and I said "Oh, my God, my kids! What will they say? This very busy mom never had time for them!" That's when I saw my life truthfully and I became sad. I left home to transform the world, and I couldn't handle my kids and my home.

And in that instant of emptiness for my children, I looked and saw something beautiful: my flesh was not in this time or space. I saw everybody in a single instant, at the same time, both the living and the dead. I embraced my great-



grandparents and my parents, who had passed away. I hugged everyone; it was a full and beautiful moment. That's when I realized I had been cheated into believing in reincarnation, which I even defended. I used to "see" my grandfather and my great-grandfather everywhere. But they hugged me here, I met with them in an instant, we embraced and I embraced all the people I had anything to do with in my life, everywhere, at the same instant.

At that moment, I heard my husband's voice. My husband was crying and with a deep cry, with deep feeling, he called out to me and said "Gloria, please don't go!" And the Lord allowed me to come back, although I didn't want to. I started descending slowly to find my body, where I found myself lifeless. My body was on a gurney at the medical center on campus. I saw how the doctors gave me electric shocks to pull me out of cardiac arrest.

My flesh hurt, it was burned. It hurt a lot. Smoke and vapor came out of it. And the most horrible pain was that of my vanity. I was a woman of the world, an executive woman; an intellectual, a student, enslaved by my body, beauty, and fashion. I would work out four hours each day. I would slave to have a beautiful body: massage therapies, diets... And I would say "if I have beautiful breasts, I might as well show them off. The same was true for my legs, because I thought I had great legs..."

That was the center of my life: my love toward my body. But now, there was no body and no breasts; just some horrible holes. In particular my left breast had practically vanished. My legs were the worst: empty gaps with no flesh, completely charred and blackened.

From there, we were transported to a hospital, where they quickly moved me to the operating room and began scraping all my burned tissue. When I was under anesthesia, I came out of my body again.

All of a sudden I went through a moment of horror. My relationship with the Lord was down to Sunday Eucharist, no longer than 25 minutes, wherever the priest's homily was shortest, because I couldn't stand anything longer. That was my relationship with the Lord.

I once heard a priest say that hell didn't exist and neither did demons. That was the only thing that had kept me in the Church. When I was told the devil didn't exist, I just thought we were all going to heaven regardless of who we were. That

distanced me completely from the Lord. My conversations became bad, because sin was not contained inside of me. I started telling everyone that demons didn't exist, that they had been invented by the priests, that they were manipulations. Hanging out with college friends I started to say that God didn't exist and that we were the sole product of evolution.

But back to that instant in the operating room, I was really terrified! I saw demons coming for me and I was their prey. At that moment I saw many people coming out of the walls of the operating room. At first sight they looked normal, but with a look of hatred on their faces, a horrible look. At that point through some special insight given to me, I realized I owed each one of them. I realized sin was not for free and that the main infamy and lie of the devil was to state that he didn't exist.

I went into some tunnels heading downward. At first, they had light and looked like bee hives. There were lots of people. But I started descending and light became scarce and I started roaming some tunnels in pitch darkness. That darkness has no comparison. The darkest darkness on earth is like noontime sunlight compared to it.

I finished descending down those tunnels and landed desperately on a flat spot. I used to claim I had an iron will, that nothing was too much for me. But that was useless now, because I wanted to climb up and I couldn't. At that point I saw a huge mouth opening up on the floor and I felt immense emptiness in my body, a bottomless abyss. The most horrifying thing about that hole was that not even a bit of God's love was felt in it, not a drop of hope. The hole sucked me in and I felt terrified.

At the gates of hell

I knew that if I went in there, my soul would die. In the midst of that horror, as I was being pulled in, I was grabbed by my feet. My body was inside that hole, but my feet were being pulled from the top. It was a very painful and horrifying moment. My atheism fell to the wayside. I started clamoring for the souls in purgatory to help me out of there. As I was shouting I felt intense pain because I realized that thousands and thousands of people are there, mostly young people.

Very painfully, I heard the gnashing of teeth, horrible screams and moans that shook me to the core. It took me several years to assimilate this because I would cry every time that I remembered their suffering. I realized that's where people who commit suicide in an instant of desperation end, finding themselves surrounded by those horrors. But the most terrible torment there is the absence of God. God couldn't be felt there.

In the midst of all that pain, I started screaming "Who made this mistake? I'm practically a saint! I've never stolen, I've never killed, I gave food to the poor, I gave free dental treatments to those who couldn't afford them. What am I doing here? I went to Mass on Sundays, I always went even though I considered myself an atheist. I didn't miss more than five Sundays my entire life. I always went to Mass, what am I doing here? I'm a Catholic, please, I'm a Catholic, take me out of here!"

While I was screaming about being a Catholic I saw a tiny light. I need to tell you that any light in that darkness is the best gift anyone can get. I saw some stairs over that hole and I saw my dad, who had died five years before, next to the hole, lit by a faint light, and four steps higher I saw my Mom, with plenty more light and in a prayerful posture.

When I saw them I was very happy. I started

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The testimony of Gloria Polo

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yelling: "Daddy, mommy, please take me out of here, I beg you, take me out of here!" When they lowered their eyes, and my dad saw me there, you should have seen the immense pain they felt. In that place, you feel people's feelings, you can see pain. My dad started crying, holding his head with his two hands and shaking: "My daughter, my daughter!" My mom was praying and I noticed they could not take me out and that my pain was compounded noticing they were sharing that pain with me there.

Tell me the Commandments

So I started screaming again, "Please, take me out of here, I'm a Catholic! Who made this mistake? Please, take me out of here!" As I was shouting this second time, a voice was heard, a sweet voice, a voice that makes my soul shake when I hear it. Everything was inundated with love and peace and all those creatures ran away in horror because they don't stand love or peace. And there was peace for me when that precious voice called out to me: **"All right, if you are a Catholic, tell me the Commandments of God's law."**



Gloria Polo

What a failed attempt! I knew there were ten, but nothing beyond that. What was I going to do? My mom always talked to me about the first commandment of love. Finally it paid out. Finally my mom's "chatter" became useful. I had to repeat mom's "chatter" here. I thought I could wing this one so the others wouldn't show too much. I thought I could handle things here the way I used to on earth, always with a perfect excuse, always justifying and defending myself so no one would notice what I didn't know.

But this was the real thing, so I started to say, "Love God above all and your neighbor as yourself." **"Very well,"** I heard, **"have you loved them?"** And I said "I have, I have, I have!" When I heard **"No!"** for an answer, that's when I really felt the shock of lightning run through me even though I hadn't noticed where the bolt had hit me.

"No, you haven't loved your Lord above all things, and much less your neighbor as yourself! You made a god that you adjusted to your life only when in moments of desperate need! Whenever you were in need and wanted money, you would say a rosary. Lord, please send me some money! That was your relationship with your Lord!"

I was shown how, as soon as I got my degree and made a name for myself, the Lord became too small for me and I started thinking myself better. Not even the smallest expression of love with my Lord. Being thankful? Never!

"And besides, you placed your Lord so low that even Mercury and Venus you entrusted more with your luck. You were blindsided by astrology, claiming the stars ran your life! You

started walking in all the doctrines of the world. You started to believe that you would die and would start again! And you forgot grace! You forgot that you had been ransomed by your Lord's blood!"

They gave me a test on the Ten Commandments. They showed me that I claimed I adored and loved God with my words, but in reality, I adored Satan. A woman would come to my dentist's office to offer her services as a sorcerer and I would say "I don't believe in that, but put those charms right there, just in case, for good luck". I had set in a corner, where patients did not know, a horseshoe and a cactus plant, supposedly to scare away bad energies.

They made an analysis of all my life based on the Ten Commandments. They showed me how with the same tongue with which I blessed the Lord, I would lash out against all of mankind. I used to criticize everyone. And they showed me how I was full of envy and always ungrateful. I never recognized all my parents' love and selfless effort, to see me through college, to raise me.

When they talked to me about **the Second Commandment**, I saw full of sadness that, as a little girl, I learned that lies were excellent ways of avoiding my mom's severe punishments. I started walking with the father of lies (Satan) and I became a liar. As my sins grew, my lies also grew. I noticed my mom's respect for the Lord and how his name was Holy to her, so I took that as a weapon and I started swearing in vain. I would say "Mom, I swear to God...", and that's how I would avoid punishments. Imagine my lies, placing the Most Holy name of the Lord in my rottenness, because at that point I was full of dirt and sin.

And look, brothers and sisters, I learned that words do not go away empty. When my mom was giving me a hard time I would say, "Mom, if I'm lying to you, let a lightning bolt strike me!" And although the words faded in time, it is through the mercy of God that I'm here, because in reality lightning hit me, practically cutting me in half and burning me.

I saw the Blessed Virgin Mary prostrated at the Lord's feet, praying for me in supplication, while I, a sinner deep in filth, kept my exchange with the Lord going.

On **keeping holy the Lord's day**, it was horrible and I felt intense pain; the voice would tell me how I would dedicate four or five hours to my body every day, but not even ten minutes of deep love to my Lord in thanksgiving or a simple prayer. I would start the rosary very quickly and I would say to myself, "I can finish the rosary while the commercials are on for my soap opera."

They showed me how I was never grateful toward the Lord. They also showed me what I used to say when I didn't feel like going to Mass: **"But mom, God is everywhere, why do I need to go there?"** Of course it was very convenient for me to say that. The voice would remind me how the Lord was watching over me 24 hours a day but I never prayed a little, or on Sunday to thank him, to show him any gratefulness or love; that going to church was the feeding of my soul. But I took care of my body instead. I was enslaved to my body and I forgot a tiny detail: I had a soul and I never took care of it. I never fed it with the word of God because I would rationalize that whoever read the word of God would go crazy.

Never, with the exception of my first communion, did I make a good confession. From that point on, I received my Lord unworthily. I never fed my soul, but to make matters worse, I would criticize priests constantly. You should have seen what a hard time I had on that one!

On the **Fourth Commandment, honor thy Father and thy Mother**, as I already told you the Lord showed me how ungrateful I was to them. I would curse against and complain about them because they could not give me everything my friends had. I never appreciated anything they did for me, to the point of saying I didn't know my Mom because I thought she was not up to my standards.

The abominable crime of abortion

When we came to the **Fifth Commandment**, the Lord showed me I was a horrible assassin and that I had committed **the worst and most abominable in front of his eyes: an abortion**. Money empowered me to pay for several abortions because I claimed women had a right to choose when they wanted to become pregnant or not. I saw in the book of life and it hurt me deeply when I saw a fourteen-year old girl aborting because I had taught her. When one is poisoned nothing good remains. Everything that comes close to you is also spoiled.

There were these girls, three of them my nieces and the other one, my nephew's girlfriend. Their parents would let them come to my house because I had money and talked to them about fashion, glamour, how to show their bodies, and so on. My sister would send them to me. **I corrupted them**. I corrupted minors, that was a horrible sin, compounding abortion. I would tell them not to be innocent: "Your mothers talk to you about virginity and chastity because they're outdated. They talk about a 2000 year old Bible but priests have refused to come to terms with the modern world. Your mothers talk about what the Pope says, but the Pope is outdated."

Imagine how poisonous! I taught these girls they had to enjoy their bodies but that they had to use contraceptives. I taught them the "perfect woman" method. That 14 year old, my nephew's girlfriend, came to my office one day (I saw this in the book of life) and in tears told me "Gloria, I'm just a baby and I'm pregnant!" I scolded her and told her, "Didn't I teach you about contraception?" She replied, "Yes, but it didn't work!"



Then I saw how the Lord had put that girl there so she wouldn't sink in the abyss, so she wouldn't abort. Abortion is a heavy chain that drags and tramples, it is a hurt that never ends. It's the emptiness of being a murderer. It's the worst thing one can do to a child. As to that girl, instead of talking to her about the Lord, I gave her money to have an abortion at a 'good' place so she wouldn't have any complications later on in life.

Just like that one, I sponsored several abortions. **Each time the blood of a baby is spilled, it's like a holocaust to Satan**. It is a holocaust which hurts and shakes the Lord. In the book of life I saw how our soul is formed the moment the sperm and the egg touch. A beautiful spark is formed, a light beaming from the sun of God the Father. As soon as the womb of a mother is impregnated, it lights up with the brightness of that soul. When there is an abortion, that soul screams and moans in pain even if it has no eyes or flesh. When it is being murdered, that cry is heard and heaven shakes

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and an equally strong cry is heard in hell, but this time of joy. Immediately after that happens, some seals break loose in hell and larvae come out to continue prowling around humankind, keeping it enslaved to the flesh and to all those bad things we see and the worse that will come.

How could I say I hadn't killed? How about every person I disliked, hated, or simply couldn't put up with? I was being a murderer there too. Because people don't only die from a gunshot. It's enough to hate them, to do bad things to them, to be envious of them. You kill with that.

As far as the **Sixth Commandment** is concerned I thought, "They can't find any dirt here; I didn't have any affairs and I've only had one man, my husband, my entire life". Then they showed me that each time my chest was showing and I was wearing leotards I was inciting other men to look at me and have impure thoughts and I would make them sin. That's how I fell into adultery.

On the **Seventh Commandment**, regarding not stealing, I considered myself very honest. The Lord showed me that while food was being wasted in my house, the rest of the world was going hungry. He told me: "I was hungry and look what you did with what I gave you and how you would squander it. I was cold and see how you became enslaved to fashion and appearance, wasting lots of money in treatments to look thinner. In other words, you made a god out of your body."

He showed how every time I gossiped about someone I stole his honor. It would have been easier to steal money from someone, because at least I could have returned it, **but not so a person's reputation**. I stole from my children the grace of having a mother at home, tender and loving, and not the mother out in the world leaving them with the TV, the computer, or the video games for baby sitters.

When they gave me the test on the Ten Commandments, **all my evils came from covetousness**, that mad desire. I always thought I would be happy if only I had lots of money. And it became an obsession. How sad! The worst moment for my soul was when I had the most money. I even thought of killing myself. With so much money and alone, empty! Sour. Frustrated. That greed for money was the path that led me astray and away from my Lord's hand.

The Book of Life

After my test on the Ten Commandments they showed me the Book of Life. I wish I had words to describe it. My book of life started at conception, when my parents' cells united.

I have to give you an example of how beautiful the Book of Life is. I was very hypocritical. I would tell someone, "You look beautiful in that dress, it looks great on you", but inside of me I would think, "What a disgusting outfit and she thinks herself the queen!" On the Book of Life, it would show up exactly as I had thought about it, even though my words also appeared, as well as the inside of my soul. All my lies were uncovered for everyone to see. I would often play hooky on my mom because she wouldn't let me go anywhere. I would lie to her about going to the library with some friends to work on a school project and my mom would believe me. And I would head off to watch a pornographic movie or to a bar to drink beer with my friends. But my mom saw my life, nothing escaped her.

Where are your spiritual treasures?

The Lord asked me: "**What spiritual treasures do you bring?**" Spiritual treasures! And my hands were empty! That's when he told me:

"What was the point in your owning two condos, houses, and office buildings? You thought yourself a successful professional. You couldn't even bring the dust off of one of those bricks here. What did you do with the talents I gave you?"

"Talents?" I thought. "You had a mission. The mission to defend the kingdom of love, the Kingdom of God." I had forgotten I had a soul so I could hardly remember I had talents, that I was the merciful hands of God. Much less that all the

good I didn't do hurt the Lord.

Do you want to know what the Lord kept on asking me? **About lack of love and charity**. That's when He told me about my spiritual death: "Your spiritual death began when you stopped feeling for your brothers! I was warning you by showing you their plight everywhere. When you saw media coverage on murders, abductions, refugee situations, and with your tongue you said, on the outside, 'poor people, how sad', but you didn't really hurt for them. You felt nothing in your heart. Sin made your heart into a heart of stone."

You can imagine my deep sorrow when my book closed. I had deep sorrow with God my Father for having behaved like that because, despite all my sins, despite all my filth and all my indifference and all my horrible feelings, the Lord always, up until the last instant, searched for me. He would always send me instruments, people, He would talk to me, He would yell at me, He would take things away from me to seek me. He looked for me up until the very end. God is always "begging" at each one of us to convert.



Who do you serve? God or Satan?

I couldn't accuse Him of condemning me! Of course not. Out of my free will, I chose my father, and my father was not God. I chose Satan, he was my father. When that book closed I noticed I was heading down into a pit with a door at its bottom.

I lifted my eyes and they met the eyes of my mom. With intense pain I cried out to her, "Mommy, how ashamed I am! I was condemned, mommy! Where I'm going I'll never get to see you again!" At that moment, they granted her a beautiful grace. She was still but her fingers moved and pointed upward. A couple of very painful scales fell from my eyes, that spiritual blindness. I saw a beautiful moment, when one of my patients told me:

"Doctor, you are very materialistic and some day you'll need this. When you find yourself in imminent danger, ask Jesus Christ to cover you with His Blood, because He will never abandon you. He paid the price of blood for you."

With that immense shame and pain I started to cry: "Jesus Christ, Lord, have compassion on me! Forgive me, Lord, give me a second chance!" And that was the most beautiful moment. I have no words to describe that moment. He came and pulled me out of that pit, and told me with all His love: "**You will go back, you will have a second chance (...)**", but He told me it wasn't because of my family's prayer.

Saved by the prayers of a stranger

"It's normal for them to pray and cry out for you. It's because of the intercession of all those foreign to your body and blood who have cried, have prayed, and have raised their heart with immense love for you."

I began to see many little lights lighting up, as little flames of love. I saw the people who were praying for me. But there was a big flame, it was

the one that gave out the most light. It was the one that gave out the most love. I tried to see who that person was. The Lord told me:

"That person you see right there loves you so much that he doesn't even know you." He showed me how this man had seen an old newspaper clipping from the previous day. He was a poor peasant who lived in the foothills of the "Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta" (in northeastern Colombia). That poor man went into town and bought some processed sugar cane. They wrapped it for him in an old newspaper from the previous day.

My picture was there, all burned. When that man saw the news, without even reading it in full, he fell to the ground and started crying with the deepest love. And he said, "Father, Lord, have compassion on my little sister. Lord, save her. Look, Lord, if you save my little sister, I promise you I will go on pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lord in Buga (in southwestern Colombia), but please save her."

Imagine a very poor man, he wasn't complaining or cursing because he was hungry, but instead he had this capacity to love that he could offer to cross an entire country for someone he didn't even know. And the Lord told me: "That is love for your fellowman" (...)

And then He told me: "**You will go back, but you won't repeat this 1,000 times. You will repeat it 1,000 times 1,000. And woe to those who don't change their ways despite having heard you, because they will be judged much more severely, just like you will when you come back here again, even their anointed or their priests, or any of them, because the worst deafness is that of a man who refuses to hear.**"

And this, my brothers and sisters, is not a threat. The Lord doesn't need to threaten us. This is the second chance you have and that, thanks be to God, I lived through what I did. When each one of you gets his Book of Life opened in front of you, when each one of you dies, you will see that moment just as I saw it. And we will see each other just as we are... the only difference being we will see our thoughts in the presence of God, and the most beautiful part, with the Lord in front of each one of us, once again, "begging" us to convert and to become a new creation with Him, since we cannot do it without Him.

May the Lord bless each one of you abundantly. All glory be to our God! All glory be to our Lord Jesus Christ!

Toronto monthly meetings

February 10, 2008

Lithuanian Hall, 2573 Bloor St. W.
One block west Dundas Subway Station
Rosary at 2:00 p.m. – Meeting at 2:30 p.m.
Information: (416) 749-5297

Rougemont monthly meetings

House of the Immaculate
1101 Principale St.

December 30, January 27

Simultaneous translation into English

10:00 a.m. Opening. Rosary. Lectures
1:30 p.m. Rosary. Lectures
5:00 p.m. Holy Mass

Moving?

Make sure "Michael" moves with you

If you are about to move, or have just moved, it is very important to give your new address to your post office, so that they can inform us about it. Otherwise, Canada Post returns your "Michael" Journal to our office with the notation "moved, address unknown," and charges 95 cents for each paper thus returned.

The weight of Holy Mass



The following TRUE STORY was related to Sr.M. Veronica Murphy by an elderly nun who heard it from the lips of the late Reverend Father Stanislaus SS.CC.

One day many years ago, in a little town in Luxembourg, a Captain of the Forest Guards was in deep conversation with the butcher when an elderly woman entered the shop. The butcher broke off the conversation to ask the old woman what she wanted. She had come to beg for a little meat but had no money. The Captain was amused at the woman and the butcher. "Only a little meat, but how much

are you going to give her?" he wondered.

"I am sorry I have no money but I'll hear Mass for you," the woman told the butcher. Both the butcher and the Captain were indifferent about religion, so they at once began to scoff at the old woman's idea.

"All right then," said the butcher. "You go and hear Mass for me and when you come back I'll give you as much as the Mass is worth".

The woman left the shop and returned later. She approached the counter and the butcher said. "All right then we'll see."

He took a slip of paper and wrote on it "I heard a Mass for you." He placed the paper on the scales and a tiny bone on the other side, but nothing happened. Next he placed a piece of meat instead of the bone, but still the paper proved heavier.

Both men were beginning to feel ashamed of their mockery but continued their game. A large piece of meat was placed on the balance, but still the paper held its own. The butcher, exasperated, examined the scales but found they were alright.

"What do you want my good woman? Must I give you a whole leg of mutton?"

At this he placed the leg of mutton on the balance, but the paper outweighed the meat. A larger piece of meat was put on, but again the weight remained on the side of the paper. This so impressed the butcher that he was converted and promised to give the woman her daily ration of meat.

As for the Captain, he left the shop a changed man and became an ardent lover of daily Mass.

Two of his sons became priests, one a Jesuit and the other a Father of the Sacred Heart.

Father Stanislaus finished the story by saying, "I am from the Religious of the Sacred Heart and the Captain was my father." From the incident the Captain became a daily Mass attendant and his children were trained to follow his example.

Later, when his sons became priests, he advised them to say Mass well every day and never miss the Sacrifice of the Mass through any fault of their own.

If you like the story, share it with someone. Remember too that "A Holy Mass a Day keeps the Devil away".

(From the Catholic Society of Evangelists Newsletter, August, 1999)

Cardinal Bertone urges Christians to stand out

against those who, on behalf of a tolerant and respectful society, "impose as a single common value the negation of any real and permanent value"

Here are some excerpts from a homily of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican's Secretary of State, given in Portuguese on October 13, 2007 on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the last apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima.

The cardinal first underlined that the principal sacrifice for the conversion of sinners is the accomplishment of the duties of one's station in life.

"Unfortunately, he said, a great number of people think that the victory essentially depends on the talent, ability, and value of those who write in the news media, of those who speak at meetings, of those who have a visible role, and that it is sufficient to encourage and applaud these leaders as we would encourage and applaud players at a stadium. With God, it does not work that way... Heaven asks an effort, even that which is insignificant from



the most humble servants; servants that have only one talent."

Cardinal Bertone admonished with energy those who "impose as a common value the negation of any value that is real and permanent. They are the lords of our times — in the world of culture and art, economy and politics, science and information — who require and are ready to buy, if not impose, the silence of Christians while invoking the imperatives of an open society, whereas in truth, they close every entrance and exit towards the Transcendent."

In front of these claims, added the Cardinal, "the least we can do is to rebel with the same daring as the Apostles in front of the similar claim of the lords of their times. If you are wrongly accused, offended and scoffed at, pray for your persecutors and forgive them. Keep an unshakable faith in God's merciful love."