

# *Triumph of the Heart*

TRUST

*Family of Mary*

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*“Trust in the Lord  
is the key to success in life.  
Let us entrust ourselves to the Lord!  
Jesus never lets us down.”*

*Pope Francis*

*Trust God at All Times,  
My People!*

*“Now the snake was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He asked the woman, ‘Did God really say, “You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden”?’” Indeed, the satanic tempter succeeded in sowing mistrust in the hearts of the first human couple, the doubt as to whether God really wanted their happiness or if he was truly keeping something from them. As a result, man gave up his unconditional, childlike trust in his Creator and Father, destroyed the intimate company with him and thereby forfeited paradise. Can this wound, which has scarred all mankind ever since and under which we suffer so gravely, ever be healed?*

*J*esus himself revealed to mystic souls in the last centuries the significance and power of trusting in God. One such mystic is a venerable Italian Capuchin nun, Consolata Betrone (1903-1946). The Lord said of her vocation, *“At the heart of the Church, you will be trust.”* It was her task to perfectly trust in Jesus like a little child in all situations in the name of many indifferent souls. He encouraged her, *“Trust in me, trust always! If you only knew how happy that makes me.”* On another occasion he said, *“Glorify God*

*with your trust!”* What Adam and Eve ruined by mistrust, namely the intimate companionship with God as their father which is paradise, can only be repaired by trusting in his love. When someone finds his way back to a confidential father-child relationship, the consequences of original sin are healed in part, a piece of paradise comes to earth and at the end of his earthly life, heaven is open for him. On the contrary, *“mistrust wounds me in the depths of my heart,”* Jesus confided to Consolata.

It is easy to understand the Lord's suffering because we too know the pain when sincere love and affection is opposed with mistrust or even betrayed through infidelity. Just think of all the wounds that married couples cause one another because they do not place God in the center of their lives and then, understandably, are unable to overcome their pride or ask for forgiveness.

The more someone is united to God, the more grace makes him capable of being faithful, keeping his word and giving the other what they need. Yet even the best of us can disappoint or hurt others because we all have our limits; only God loves perfectly. That is why David wrote in Psalm 40, "*Blessed the man who places his trust in the Lord*". It is essential to be aware to whom we give our trust and just how much of it we give to him.

The great philosopher and Carmelite saint Edith Stein (1891-1942), whose religious name

was Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, came to the conclusion:

*"If God tells me through the prophets that he stands by me more faithfully than a father or mother; that he is love itself, then I see why it is so 'reasonable' to trust in the arm that is holding me. I know that I am held and that gives me peace and security — not the self-confidence of a man who stands on solid ground by his own strength, but the sweet and blessed certainty of a child who is carried by a strong arm. Or would it be 'reasonable' for a child to live in constant fear that his mother might drop him?"*

One thing is certain—whoever surrenders himself to God will never regret it because Jesus said to St. Faustina, "*Oh, how I love those souls who have complete confidence in me. I will do everything for them.*"

## *Trust is the key to God's heart*

*"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you,"* the Lord promises in the Gospel. This childlike, trusting disposition of the soul is not always easy for us. Yet, Jesus encouraged St. Faustina,

*"My daughter, imagine that you are the sovereign of all the world and have the power to dispose of all things according to your good pleasure. You have the power to do all the good you want, and suddenly a little child knocks on your door, all trembling and in tears and, trusting in your kindness, asks for a piece of bread lest he die of starvation. What would you do for this child?' And I said, 'Jesus, I would give the child all it asked and a thousand times more.' And the Lord said to me, 'That is how I am treating your soul.'" (Divine Mercy in My Soul #229)*

*"If their trust is great, there is no limit to My generosity."* (1602)

Those especially who suffer under the weight of their own weaknesses or mistakes should not be discouraged because Jesus promises his

forgiveness and merciful love, "*Let the weak, sinful soul have no fear to approach Me, for even if it had more sins than there are grains of sand in the world, all would be drowned in the unmeasurable depths of My mercy.*" (1059)

A convincing proof can be seen in the Good Thief. The Lord confirmed this to Sr. Consolata Betrone, "*Dismas on the cross had only one single act of faith in me, but many, many sins; he was pardoned in an instant, however, and on the very day of his repentance he entered into my kingdom and is a saint. Behold the triumph of my mercy and of faith in me.*" Is there more beautiful good news?

The life of St. John Bosco (1815-1888), the founder of the Salesians, impressively demonstrates how trust is the gateway to all the treasures of grace in God's heart. Relying solely on divine providence, he built and opened 250 houses with oratories in Europe and South America in which approximately 130,000 youth found a home. During his lifetime, 6,000 of these young men decided to become priests. The fruits produced by

the youth apostle's trust in God are truly amazing!

A particularly beautiful fruit of Don Bosco's educational charisma was St. Dominic Savio (1842-1857), a blacksmith's son, who came to the Salesians in Turin, Italy at the age of twelve. His zeal to become a saint motivated several of his comrades to join with him in this endeavor. Yet weak and of sickly constitution, he died of tuberculosis when he was only fourteen.

On December 6, 1876, nearly twenty years after Dominic's death, his spiritual father, Don Bosco, had a vision-like dream about him with a very important lesson. Don Bosco found himself in the "place of beatitude" where he met his

beloved Dominic Savio. He spoke to Don Bosco about heaven and especially about the community. Don Bosco saw a huge group of young people, the Salesian youth, and St. Dominic explained to him, "*They have been saved through you, through the priests, clerics and laity of your religious order. Count them, if you can! There could have been a thousand times more, however, had you had a greater faith and firmer trust in God!*"

"*This admonition,*" Don Bosco admitted, "*touched me deeply. I immediately made the quiet decision to live and work in the future with greater trust.*"

## *Trust works miracles*

*T*rust is therefore not merely a reparation for mistrust in God; but it makes man capable of partaking in the almightiness of God, his Creator—the ability to work miracles, in other words. All saints became people of great trust, starting with Abraham, who trusting in God's word, was ready to sacrifice his promised son; to Moses, who in obedient trust in Yahweh's command, parted the waters of the Red Sea and so led his people out of the Egyptian slavery; or recalling the prophetess and judge Deborah through whose trust Barak, the commander of Israel's army, had the courage to go into battle in a seemingly hopeless situation. The victory over the Canaanite enemies saved the people of Israel from their demise, not because the Hebrews were such valiant soldiers, but because Deborah had an unconditional trust in God.

All the prophets, up to and including St. John the Baptist, proclaimed Yahweh's word, whether opportune or not, trusting in him and even paying for it with their lives. We could also consider St. Peter, who trusting in a single word "*Come!*" walked on water, thereby defying the laws of nature; or the centurion from Capernaum who had such a trust in Jesus that the Lord miraculously healed his servant from a distance and spoke an incomparable praise of the pagan petitioner declaring, "*Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith.*"

Yet nobody trusted more than the Holy Family. At the Annunciation, Mary had to trust that

God, who worked the miracle of the Incarnation, would also explain it to her spouse. Together with St. Joseph, she trusted in God when there was no room at the inn. With next to nothing, the Holy Family fled to Egypt at the word of an angel who commanded Joseph to do so in a dream. Ultimately, Mary had to trust at the foot of the Cross that the promise of the resurrection would be fulfilled. She united herself to the perfect trust with which the crucified Redeemer, feeling abandoned by God, commended his spirit into the Father's hands.

Our Lady's trust played a decisive role in helping the Apostles overcome their doubts and, finally, experience the great healing and fortification through the working of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost which turned them into courageous witnesses who were willing to give their lives for the Lord.

The Acts of the Apostles reports about the wonderful scene on Pentecost in which a cripple from birth begs alms from Peter and John. "*Peter said, 'I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, walk.'*" The cripple had St. Peter's trust in the power of the Lord to thank for his healing.

The whole history of Christianity is full of extraordinary proofs of grace which God worked through the trust of his children. Yes, trust heals the greatest wound of humanity, our fractured rela-

tionship with God, and returns man to his intimate relationship with his Father and access to all the treasures of his kingdom. May the examples in

this issue, dear reader, help you to cope with daily life and all it demands and to experience God as your loving and almighty Father.

“Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one “Go,” and he goes; and to another, “Come here,” and he comes; and to my slave, “Do this,” and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, ‘Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith.’” Mt 8:8-10

## “Do Not Be Afraid”

*“Non abbiate paura”, “Do not be afraid!” were Pope St. John Paul II’s first words following his election. He announced them to the world from the balcony in St. Peter’s Square on October 16, 1978. Yet who does not know feelings of fear and anxiety in threatening situations, whether they are founded or not? The saints were also afraid at times, despite their deep unity with God. With two examples, we would like to demonstrate how differently God can work in souls even though they have great trust in him.*

St. Rose of Lima (1586-1617) is among those saints who were gifted in their childhood with extraordinary mystical graces. She lived like a hermit, withdrawn in a little hut in her parent’s garden, and helped countless people seeking advice with her prayers and expiatory suffering. Bishop St. Turibio, St. Martin de Porres and St. Francis Solanus were among her closest friends. Now patroness of the Americas, the Philippines and the West Indies, Rose “inherited” her mother’s overly fretful fear of the dark. Yet since Rose so loved to pray in solitude, she overcame herself so that she could meditate alone at night in the garden.

One evening, she saw her parents, arm in arm, looking for her. Going over to them, she thought to herself, *“My mother is walking through the garden unafraid only because my father is with her. She has such trust in him, a mortal being, that in his presence she forgets all danger. And should I be afraid of the shadows of night when my heavenly spouse is always with*

*me? Perhaps not by my side, but rather in my heart.”* In that moment the Lord freed little Rose of all her fears, and filled her with such a rock-solid trust in his protecting presence that she was never again frightened by anything.

Contrary to St. Rose, it was much different for the not yet canonized Italian religious and mystic Eugenia Ravasio (1907-1990). The Bishop of Grenoble, Alexandre Caillot, following a ten year examination, judged her unique revelations from the Divine Father to be a “supernatural and divine intervention”. The gift that Eugenia received of living in such a trusting relationship with the Divine Father is something he desires for each one of us. She was allowed to see him as Father, experience his love and hear his words, *“I live with them more intimately than a mother with her children... She may later on forget him or think of him rarely, especially when because of his age he is no longer in her care, but I will never forget him. I will always love him ...*

*“I will let a ray of peace fall upon anyone who honors me and trusts in me, so that he will be relieved in all his troubles, all his worries, sufferings and afflictions, especially if he calls me and loves me as his Father... Come to me, come with confidence and love!”*

Although the Divine Father rewarded Sr. Eugenia’s extraordinary trust by working miracles through her intercession, and she was a notably courageous woman, he nevertheless did not free her from her fears. She wrote, *“I was always afraid of being alone at night. ... This fear remained with me throughout my life whenever I was alone in a room. ... I suffered so*

*much because of this fear despite wanting to do anything for the Lord!”*

Was the expiation so valuable to him that he left his beloved child with this hardship? May this be a consolation for us because we see in this example that fear is not necessarily a lack of trust in God. It can be a suffering which one accepts, like Jesus in the Garden of Olives, and may be offered as a sacrifice. Then every sort of fear will become a blessing because it unites the soul with the mortal fear of the suffering Lord and produces grace for people who do not yet know the love of the Divine Father and therefore cannot yet trust him.

As mother superior, Mother Eugenia renewed her whole religious order with her charisma of goodness. She opened novitiates in eight African countries, discovered through divine inspiration the medicinal plant which is used to this day to cure leprosy and built the city of lepers, Adzope, in the Ivory Coast. She also built Catholic schools in Egypt to help young people of all denominations to receive a good education and led Catholics and Druzes in Lebanon to love the Divine Father, thereby laying the foundation for healthy families who have the vocation of being a living reflection of the Most Holy Trinity here on earth.

## *Snow White in Sixty Days*

*St. Pascal Baylon (1540-1592) from Spain spent sixteen years of his youth tending sheep. He learned to read and write in the pasture by asking each person who passed by to explain one letter of the alphabet. From his childhood on, Pascal loved to adore in silence before the tabernacle. At the age of twenty-three, he became a Franciscan brother and, soon thereafter, an inspired advisor and miracle worker. When he was entrusted with a mission which could have been fatal, his Eucharistic love gave him heroic trust.*

*I*n 1570, the Franciscan provincial superior in Spain had to send important documents to the superior in northern France. The choice for this long walking journey was the exemplary porter, Pascal from the Almansa Monastery in southern Spain. At that time in France, however, a terribly gruesome war with the Huguenots was raging, in which Calvinistic revolutionaries were hunting down Catholic priests and religious and massacring them by the hundreds. One of their

leaders, Briquemont, reportedly wore a necklace of ears cut off of murdered priests.

For Br. Pascal, the long march along the west coast of France—alone, and in his habit besides—clearly meant risking his life. He was well aware that the Calvinists persecuted, with particular bitterness, the belief in the Lord’s Eucharistic presence. The prospect of spilling his blood for his beloved Blessed Sacrament filled him with great consolation, and so the holy porter readily

accepted the assignment. The thirty-year-old set out barefoot and without any money, but with the blessing of his superior and an unshakable trust that God would guide everything.

The Franciscan had barely crossed the Pyrenees and reached the first French town before a mob surrounded him. “*Death to the Papists!*” cried the rowdy crowd, but other than yelling and throwing stones, they let him continue. He consistently met such threats and mistreatment; they swore at him and beat him, locked him up or threw filth at him.

As a Catholic monk, he was always exposed to an imminent death, but God’s hand was over him. Since he was a man of ardent adoration, he suffered even more when he heard about the terrible sacrileges the Calvinists were making against the Blessed Sacrament in churches. In Orleans, a mob surrounded Pascal anew, shoved him to the ground and started punching and kicking him. They dragged him to his feet and began to press him with questions, “*Do you believe, Papist, that God is really present in the Sacrament, in this bread that you consecrate?*”

Loud and clear Pascal professed, “*Yes, I believe that God is really and truly present in what appears to be ordinary bread.*” He calmly listened to their objections like, “*Christ is in heaven, nowhere else.*” Then he would begin clearly and passionately to counter them point by point until his attackers in their blind rage found no better way to ward him off as to throw cobblestones at him. It was only through God’s intervention that the fist-sized blocks flew past his head left and right. One stone did hit him in the shoulder though, and it caused the brother continuous pain for the rest of his life.

Exhausted from the tremendous effort, the Franciscan finally reached his goal in northern France. He happily handed the provincial superior the letter and then—trusting again only in God’s protection—started out on the no less dangerous trip back to Spain. Amazingly, Pascal made it back to his monastery alive. Although he was not martyred by the Huguenots, courageously living two months in the continual danger of death caused all his black hair to turn snow white. He seemed to have aged ten years.

Translated from: P. Mansuy Vaubourg /P. Gerhard Zoll, *Paschal Baylon, ein Heiliger der Eucharistie*, Hausen, 1913

Pope Leo XIII was convinced that, among all the saints who venerated the Blessed Sacrament with a particular love, Pascal “took first prize”, and declared him the patron saint of all Eucharistic associations.

# Straw and Thread

*Fighters for the Islamic State are terrorizing with brutal violence not only the nations of the Middle East and North Africa, but they have their sights set on Europe. Their goal, as they openly admit, is “to conquer Rome, to destroy our crosses” and convert the western world to Islam.*

*Not even the super powers have a concrete solution. Yet the example of the little French Carmelite St. Margareta of the Blessed Sacrament teaches us even today not to give up in hopeless situations but, all the more, to place our whole trust in God.*

*I*n the seventeenth century, all of Europe was a battlefield of the Thirty Years War—pillage, starvation and the plague, economically bled and completely depopulated tracks of countryside. In southern Germany, for example, only one-third of the population survived. Some parts of Europe needed more than a century to recover from the consequences of this terror.

In 1636, the French region of Burgundy also saw itself threatened by enemy troops. There, in the city of Beaune, the young, stigmatized Sr. Margareta of the Blessed Sacrament (1619-1648), had already lived in the Carmelite cloister for six years. Jesus so lovingly called her “*the little bride of my manger*”. In fact, she physically remained small as a child, being just 4’ 3” (130 cm) tall, and so she was similar to the Child Jesus even in appearance. “*My whole life is enclosed in his holy childhood as in a fortress. The Child Jesus constantly keeps my whole attention focused on his life between his birth and his twelfth year; it is like the wall of a fortress which I may not climb over.*” God intentionally wanted to reveal the power of his divine childhood through the fidelity of this “weak child”.

In the aforementioned year during the war, seventeen-year-old Sr. Margareta, in light of the enemy threat, once implored Jesus for peace after receiving Holy Communion. “*You are asking a lot of me,*” the Lord let her understand. At the same time, however, he entrusted her the vocation of praying to save them from the approaching

enemy. Before the Blessed Sacrament, Margareta was to plead for mercy for France, her region and her town Beaune and to offer her life for the people’s conversion. For this, Jesus showed her their sins and vices, the growing degeneration resulting from them and the subsequent war. “*My bride, suffer for this people. ... Do not be afraid because I will suffer with you. Draw from the treasures of my childhood. Through the merits of my being a child, you will overcome every difficulty.*”

From that moment on, Margareta suffered for months and meditated in prayer on Jesus as a child from the first moment of his Incarnation in the womb of Mary until being found as a twelve-year-old in the temple. She was even allowed to erect a simple oratory in the convent garden, a little chapel which she called “*my Nazareth*”. “*The Holy Child does not refuse me anything in Nazareth,*” she often said. “*We must not look upon our worries; rather, the Divine Child wants us to look to him.*”

As the army drew always closer and finally invaded Burgundy with terror, Margareta’s trust remained nevertheless unshaken. She never grew tired of repeating the promise of the Divine Child that the enemy will not advance on them.

One evening, however, sheer fear reigned in the hearts of Beaune’s citizens. Margareta encouraged them all, “*Do not be afraid! The Divine Child assured me that the enemy will not enter this town, will not set it on fire nor deliver a*

*single blow to it. They will retreat along the same path with which they arrived. The Divine Spouse will put this place under his protection through the merits of his adorable childhood.”*

Then she pointed to the Blessed Sacrament, which was exposed day and night, and spoke the decisive words about the power of Eucharistic Adoration:

*“We can achieve anything praying like a child before the tabernacle. ... There is my good Jesus. He promised me that this city would suffer no harm and that the enemy army will disperse. Fear nothing, the Child Jesus will protect us; we have only to continue our prayers! Or do you doubt in the power of the Divine Child?”*

Then, pointing to a piece of straw in her hand, she continued, *“A piece of straw from his manger, a thread from his swaddling clothes, namely the slightest shadow of the Eternal Word who became a Child can drive away the enemy. Be not afraid! The Child, who can do anything, promised to maintain the region.”* Jesus encouraged her again and again, *“Continue in prayer because, in union with me, you will make the army retreat which has caused the whole country to fear. ... I am giving you this grace ... because I have inspired you in order to protect my people.”*

Jesus even revealed to the young Carmelite the day and hour in which the enemy would depart. Naturally, she immediately shared this with her superior and the other sisters. They were still astounded though when everything came to pass

precisely as she had predicted.

During Advent 1636, the enemy approached anew. All women and girls had already left Beaune for fear of besiegement. They were also pushing the Carmelites to go somewhere safe as quickly as possible. Yet Sr. Margareta called once again for a storm of prayer and assured all the sisters with great confidence that the town was not in danger. Nobody had to leave Beaune because the Child Jesus had promised her that the city would not be occupied. On the contrary! In a matter of days, still during Advent, the enemy disseminated, *“One will see the power of the Child Jesus. In this season we honor him in the womb of his most pure mother. Oh how beautifully will be shown his power in his littleness and his strength in the weakness of his childhood!”* Against all human expectations, the army did, in fact, withdraw a few days later and the whole encampment dissolved.

*T*he miraculous preservation of the city of Beaune was so amazing that it was even recorded in writing and preserved in the city’s archives. In addition, the coat of arms for the city to this day is a depiction of Our Lady with the Child. Back then, a priest appropriately expressed, *“This ‘Child’ could do more alone than a whole regiment of soldiers. Margareta’s hands raised in prayer were the secret power which scared off the enemy.”* St. Margareta of the Blessed Sacrament invites us all to trust, whether before the Blessed Sacrament in the parish or at home with daily prayer in the family.

Translated from: P. Amelotte, *Leben der gottseligen Schwester Margareta vom Heiligsten Sakrament*, Druck und Verlag Georg Joseph Manz

Margareta’s love of the Divine Child and a great devotion to him soon spread throughout the country and later well beyond, as far as South America, bringing many blessings. Rich and poor, people from all walks of life were convinced and formed the so-called “Family of the Child Jesus”, which still exists to this day. Three years after Beaune’s liberation, a large chapel dedicated to the Child Jesus was built next to the Carmelite’s convent. People made pilgrimages from all over France to ask the Divine Child for his help. Great miracles took place and prayers were answered. Sr. Margareta was buried in this chapel when she died at the age of twenty-nine.

# Secretary of My Heart

*“Trust, and nothing but trust, leads us to love,”*  
taught St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus (1873-1897). The young French saint,  
whom Pope St. John Paul II raised to a Doctor of the Church, discovered her  
so-called “Little Way” through the Holy Scriptures. Servant of God  
Benigna Consolata Ferrero (1885-1916) was led in a very different way.  
Jesus spoke to her personally in order to awaken in everyone a new,  
unlimited trust in his love and mercy.

“*Apostle of my mercy*” and “*Secretary of my heart*” is what Jesus called Benigna Consolata, who spent her short but intense religious life as a sister of the Order of the Visitation in Como, Italy. Other than her superior, nobody knew about the graces to which she was privy.

It was only after her death that her interior life became known through a little booklet, “*Vademecum (go with me) for Consecrated Souls*”. Even St. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1939), the Herald of Mercy from Poland, heard about the writings of the Italian Visitation sister and fell in love with her description of religious life, and this had a big influence on her spiritual life.

At her baptism on August 6, 1885, one day after her birth, she was given the name Consolata, which means “*Consoled*”. Her family lived very devoutly, and she was fully immersed in the faith as a child. Gifted artistically, she had a clear intellect and learned the value of sacrifice early on in life. She was never disobedient towards her parents, and fought any form of reluctance with determination.

She felt irresistibly drawn to a life in the convent during her youth. After a failed attempt to join a religious order, Jesus showed her where he wanted her—with the Visitation sisters—who accepted her on December 30, 1907, at the age of twenty-two. Benigna made such rapid interior progress in the first years that nobody found any weaknesses in her. The slightest imperfections gave her such a bad conscience, however, that she suffered a true interior martyrdom.

That is why Jesus instructed her with words

that should be consoling for us as well.

*“There are few souls who reach great sanctity because there are few who remain calm in light of their own misery. Their uneasiness is like a moth that eats a piece of cloth. It only gnaws little holes, but it still ruins the piece. The easiest means to grow quickly in holiness is to profoundly humble ourselves after our mistakes, but then not dwell on it any longer. One should repent, but at the same time trust in my goodness. A soul suffers no injury when, after committing an imperfection, it is enriched with grace through an act of humility, trust and love. With humility you stand up again, with trust you run to me and with love you unite yourself to me.”*

*“I take care of everything for you. Think only of loving me.”*

*“If I had two souls before me, one who was more pure and with fewer imperfections but who had a narrow heart and avoided imperfections only out of fear, and a second soul who had more imperfections but trusted more in me, then I would prefer the second soul. That is how much trust is pleasing to me.”*

No sacrifice was too great for Benigna when it came to making Jesus happy. Yet, he explained to her what pleased him most, “*If you want to make me happy, trust in me; if you want to make me even happier, trust more in me; if you want to make me happiest, trust me without limit.*”

Jesus revealed himself to his bride with such tenderness and love, that she took advan-

tage of every opportunity to thank him and give something back to him. He opened her eyes to his love, *“Read the words ‘I love you’ on the bread you eat, in the water you drink, on the bed in which you sleep. I have prepared it all for you because I love you. In everything that falls into your hands read, ‘I LOVE YOU!’”*

*A*s a sign of her reciprocal love, Sr. Benigna decided to make a vow to always choose what is better. Even before she joined the community, she had promised Jesus to do everything out of pure love. From that point on, she wanted to be more attentive and even more ready to make sacrifices in order to help her divine spouse win souls. When World War I broke out in 1914, Sr. Benigna offered herself to God in expiation for the sins of the world and begged for mercy for humanity. Jesus assured her with consoling words, however, that the war was not a punishment of divine justice since the whole world already would have been destroyed had it been punished for its many sins. Rather, it was an act of mercy, to rescue many souls who otherwise would have been lost. *“The Heavenly Father needs only an instant,”* explained the Lord, *“to save a soul. And as for those who do not convert, it is again a proof*

*of divine mercy when their life is shortened so that their pains in eternity are reduced.”*

These words should console us also today when, after a disaster or massacre, we ask ourselves why God allows such sorrows. Sr. Benigna did not weary of interceding for soldiers and those who were suffering; she helped them especially through her trust. The Lord inspired her with his words, *“How pleased I am with souls who trust in me. A soul which trusts in me has all power over my heart. I do not limit my graces when their trust in me is without limit.”*

*E*specially in the last years of her life, the demons pestered ever more frequently this soul who was inflamed with love. Yet through perseverance and prayer, and particularly through trust, Sr. Benigna Consolata defeated all their attacks. On September 1, 1916, a First Friday of the month, around 3 p.m., she was able to go home to her Spouse at the age of thirty-one.

The Lord chose Sr. Benigna Consolata to teach his infinite mercy to a humanity grown cold. *“Compensate my mercy by trusting me. Do not be discouraged. Discouragement never made anyone holy, and a discouraged soul is defeated immediately.”*

Translated from: Sr. Benigna Consolata Ferrero, *Bleibt in meiner Liebe*, Como, 1978

# The Jungle's Four Rains

*It would be an altogether unbelievable story, had not Madre Laura de Jesus Montoya Upegui (1874-1949), the first canonized Colombian, personally experienced and written it down. In her autobiography, composed at the request of her bishop and sponsor Maximiliano Crepo Rivera, the loving Mother of the Indians tells about a great miracle of nature which the Lord granted her in order to help an Indian girl trust in God and in the missionaries.*

“*D*uring a walk through the jungle from one mission station to another, I was accompanied by an Indian girl. We had not been walking long and were following a river which snaked along the foot of the Andes Mountains, when dark rain clouds drew up before us. A powerful storm announced its coming with lightning and thunder. As we turned back in the direction from which we came, we saw that a huge storm was forming there too. To our left and right dark clouds were quickly building as well.

“The Indian girl called out in fear, ‘*Look Madre, these “four rains” are going to wash us away!*’

“‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘*there’s nothing we can do. We will just have to accept it out of love for God.*’

“Scared, the girl pressed, ‘*Are you not God’s friend? Why do you allow the rains to soak us? Do you not like me, Madre?*’

“‘Oh, I love you very much, little daughter;’  
“‘I responded, ‘*but if God sends the rain that soak us, what can we do?*’

“She retorted, ‘*It’s your fault if the rain soaks me because you could ask your God not to send any rain. He would certainly be good to you and not allow it to rain.*’

These words touched me because they clearly demonstrated that the Indian girl really expected a miracle. She truly trusted that God could preserve us from these ‘*four rains*’—as she called the storms before us and behind us, to the left and right, and right above where we were standing. Now we just waited to see which of the ‘*four*

*rains*’ would reach us first. The violent roar of the approaching downpour sounded like mountains crumbling and tons of boulders tumbling into the depths. Lightning struck to the left and right of us. I was also anxious and afraid. Crazy with fear, the girl screamed, ‘*It’s your fault! It’s your fault!*’

At that moment, I prayed to God, ‘*Lord, for the glory of your name and for the conversion of this Indian girl, I ask you, full of trust, to show the power of your mercy!*’ Just as I had finished the Our Father, the rains reached us from all four sides.

Yet we continued our march undeterred for another forty-five minutes—completely dry! The rain which poured down before us yielded constantly before our next step. The rain behind us remained constantly at a distance of five to ten feet, and the rains to our left and right held a distance of ten to fifteen feet.

When we finally reached the mission station, the sisters waiting there naturally expected us to be drenched. They came out of the house very worried, but were amazed to see us arrive completely dry. Just as perplexing was the dry circle around us which had arrived at the doorway of the house, as if not a single drop of rain had fallen. “Only our feet and shoes were wet because the ground in front of us had been drenched by the rain. Otherwise, not a drop of rain had touched us. Then the Indian girl said to those standing speechless around us, ‘*God is very good to this Madre!*’

“After what we experienced, my heart was full of thankfulness to God who worked this great miracle for a poor, disregarded Indian girl.”

# With Only One Yen

*Few saints had such a living Faith that Our Lady's mediatory power could achieve anything as the Polish Franciscan Fr. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941), the martyr from Auschwitz. He called her the "omnipotent intercessor".*  
*"Unlimited trust in the goodness and power of the Immaculata,"*  
*is what he asked of his brothers and what he himself lived*  
*with unprecedented consistency.*

Already in 1927, the brilliant apostle and strategist, who desired to conquer the world for the Immaculata, erected "Niepokalanow" close to Warsaw. "The City of the Immaculate" consisted of a huge monastery with a radio station, printing press, train station and plans for a runway. In 1939, more than seven hundred Franciscans lived and worked there while the sole proprietor of the city was the Immaculata. Since the order could not come up with the finances needed for Fr. Maximilian's apostolate, Our Lady herself had to care of the giant operation—and she did!

At the beginning of 1930, Fr. Kolbe received permission to build a "Niepokalanow" in Japan as well. He landed with four brothers in Nagasaki at the end of April, without any money and not speaking a word of Japanese. In the diocesan seminary, where Fr. Kolbe taught Philosophy in Latin, he met a Korean seminarian named Oh Ki Sun, who accompanied him from then on wherever he went. As a faithful translator, he witnessed Fr. Maximilian's heroic trust.

During a hike one day close to Nagasaki, the two of them stopped on the hillside for a rest. Fr. Maximilian pulled out a Miraculous Medal, reverently buried it in the dirt and prayed, "*Mother of God, build a house and a workshop on this spot, if you wish. We will support your work however we can.*"

Ki Sun wrote, "Ten days later, Father confided to me that he wanted to obtain the property. ... As a matter of fact, there was somebody in the sitting area who wanted to sell his property. I blushed as I translated Father's words into Japanese, that he wanted to sign the sales contract with just one

Yen. Bewildered, the owner's eyes popped open, '*For a piece of property worth 100,000 Yen, you want to make a deposit of one Yen?*'

"The friar smiled, '*For man it is impossible, but Our Lady can do it with God's strength. I will pay the full sum by the due date. Do not worry.*'

"'Good,' the owner said reluctantly, '*let us finalize the contract. You owe me the full sum in three days.*'

"Father happily agreed. I followed him into his room. He placed the sales contract before a statue of Mary and said, '*Mother of God! I signed the contract according to your wish. I have to pay for it in three days. Blessed Mother, do not forget!*' ...

"*I* felt uneasy during the next few days. 100,000 Yen – an astronomical amount. The friar looked kindly at me and said, '*Why do you look so concerned? You do not have real trust in the Mother of God. Hurry, kneel down and tell her you are sorry!*'

"I knelt down immediately and promised sincerely, '*I will never doubt again in the works you do, Mary. Although only a human, you became God's mother. There is nothing on earth which would be impossible for you! Forgive me!*' On the day the 100,000 Yen was due, the priest called me. '*Go to the reception area. A woman is waiting there. Without saying anything, accept what she gives you.*' Then he knelt down before the statue of Our Lady, folded his hands and bowed his head. I went into the reception area without a word.

“There was, in fact, a woman sitting there whom I had never seen before. She had a large bag resting on her knees. Calmly she stood up, handed me the bag in silence and disappeared. I brought it into the friar’s room. Without a word, he took the bag and laid it reverently at the foot of the statue. *‘Mother of God! Thank you! Let us cooperate in the work that you want to begin.’*”

“On this piece of property ‘Our Lady’s Workshop’ was built, namely a place to print and

a house in which we were to live. Of course, there was no money to start construction, but in this also, anonymous benefactors helped us.

When I asked Father if he knew them, he pointed as usual to the statue of Our Lady and said, *‘I do not know them either, but the Mother of God knows them.’* The most amazing thing was, we never received a single Yen too much, but we were never one short when we had to pay a bill either.”

A converted Buddhist doctor in Japan determined that Fr. Kolbe’s tuberculosis, which was never cured, reduced the capacity of his lungs by three-fourths, meaning he should not have been able to live. Nevertheless, the saint made enormous accomplishments and was always convinced in view of the Immaculata, “If the Mother of God wants it, nothing is impossible.”

## *Look at the Birds in the Sky ...*

*Michael As, from Holland, who freelances for Radio Maria and the weekly Catholic newspaper, “Katholiek Nieuwsblad”, and translates our “Triumph of the Heart” into Dutch, knows what it means to put his life in God’s hands. He looks back at his life with gratitude.*

When I was a teenager, I always prayed before falling asleep that one day I would find a good Catholic girl; I do not need money, I told the Lord. He gave me what I asked for—the best girl in the world, my Trudy. We have been happily married for thirty years now, and we do not have a cent to our name.

I remember like it was yesterday: While on a pilgrimage to the Marian shrine of Kevelaer, Germany it started to rain. I ran down the street and took refuge at the entrance to a small religious goods shop. Trudy came stumbling in dripping wet, tripped and fell directly into my arms. That is how Mary led us together!

“*That’s no Gospel for a wedding,*” the priest objected, but Trudy and I would not change our minds. We deliberately choose the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says, *“No one can serve two masters ... God and mammon. ... Look at the birds in the sky; ... your heavenly Father*

*feeds them. ... Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. ... So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘What are we to drink?’ ... Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.”*

With this Gospel in mind, we made our vows; and we had twelve children in less than fourteen years. Some of our relatives, though faithful and devout, were ashamed of us. We were told bluntly that society simply no longer wants families such as ours. And it was really true!

The government of the Netherlands promotes working and jobs, but it does not consider a mother at home to be someone who works. One government minister said that raising children was the competency of the state. A leader of one of the political parties has even proposed taking measures to stop large families.

Many Catholics left us hanging as well, thinking that having three or four children was okay but not twelve! Thanks be to God we received so much support and strength from our holy confessor, Fr. Jacobus. After Holy Mass on Sunday, the Capuchin priest was always waiting for us out on the square in front of the church, and he always had something for the little ones.

 Our children grew older, however, and moved on to high school. What they learned there and the morality, or lack thereof, to which they were exposed, was terrible. It is impossible to describe. The Netherlands, which once had been praised by Pope Paul VI for its missionaries, has really gone astray. We could only look on as our children threatened to derail and headed for the coffee shops with their schoolmates, not to drink coffee but to buy drugs.

One day we were talking about this with a Protestant friend, and he asked us, *“Why do you even stay here?”* This started to “ferment” in us. At the time, I had a good job running a publishing company, and I was even promised, *“If you stay, worrying about money will be a thing of the past.”* Still, the thought that just one of our children might be lost forever was not worth all the money in the world to me.

We reflected anew on our wedding Gospel, *“So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘What are we to drink?’”* And looking confidently to God, we sold our house, I quit my job and in January 2002, emigrated to Ireland, to the little town of Elton on the southwest side of the island.

Maria, our oldest, was fourteen and Paul, our youngest, just five months. The children could not speak English. I did not have any work, just a little plot of land.

 We built a barn, raised some goats and sold cheese at the market. It was a failure. So I started a shipping business. Everything was going

well; there was plenty of work and many orders. Yet soon we had one setback after another, cars that broke down and companies that paid poorly or not at all. Yet, it was not on a whim or because of money that we left Holland, but for the sake of our children.

You could see in our son Thomas, now twenty-six, how much God was with us and how our trust paid off. When he came home from school on the weekends, he always went to church with us; but otherwise he never went to Holy Mass. Worse yet, he became involved in drugs, even to the point of dealing them himself.

The Franciscans of the Renewal, who work in Limerick, generously offered to fund a pilgrimage to Medjugorje for three of our children because they knew we did not have the money for it. Thomas was excited about a “free trip”, but was only intent on partying in Medjugorje. On the last day, our daughter Anna said to him,

*“Thomas, you cannot go home without going to confession; you cannot do that to the Franciscans.”* And miraculously, the young man went into the church to prepare himself. *“The Blessed Sacrament was exposed,”* he told us later, *“and in the back of the church, where many were standing, I suddenly fell to my knees and realized how bad I really was.”* Then he went to confession and made peace with Jesus. Since then, Thomas saves up so that his brothers and sisters can go to the annual youth festival in Medjugorje.

 Trudy and I consecrated ourselves with the whole family to Mary, and we experience every day how she takes care of us. Our business did not survive, I still do not have a steady income and we do not know if we will even be able to remain in our house next year, but our children live the faith, go on retreats and go to confession regularly. So, I thank Jesus and Mary at the end of each day when we pray the Rosary together as a family; and I often think, *“How rich we really are!”*

On May 29, 2015, Maria (27), our oldest, married Paudie O'Donnell (28), a truly faithful Irishman. Three others of our large flock have also moved out and have jobs. They enjoy their freedom, but say themselves, “Often, we cannot wait to come home.”

# *It's the Way It was Meant to Be*

*God gave a reliable, joyful disposition as well as a birthright of vivacity and spirit to Simone Bianco, a young Austrian mother of seven. She needs all this, plus a large portion of trust, for the path which she purposely has chosen to go with Mary. That had not been always the case, though ...*

Growing up, we neither prayed nor spoke about the faith in my family. We went to Holy Mass only on the biggest feasts of the year. Still, both my parents and two siblings, with time, found their way to God. The hour of my conversion struck in 1998, at the age of twenty-one, while I was studying speech therapy in Innsbruck.

Actually, I did not want to know anything about Medjugorje. Yet the idea of taking an “outing” with my mother appealed to me. The week before was the worst of my life, with great temptations and worldly ambitions. On the bus to Medjugorje, the spiritual battle continued to rage. I wanted to escape, but the closer we came to our destination, the calmer I became.

After riding in the bus for twenty hours and praying I do not know how many Rosaries, we arrived; and as my feet touched the ground in Medjugorje, I was certain, “*There is a God, and he has a plan for me.*” Though I did not deserve it, I was able to open myself to God, “*Good, then I want to know what he wants of me.*” The week turned into a beautiful catechism for me. I learned how to pray the Rosary and discovered the liberating side of the Sacrament of Confession. When I received Holy Communion for the first time in many years, my soul was deeply touched. I simply understood, “*Jesus truly lives, even in me. He never left me.*”

Back home, all my friends agreed, “*Something has changed in you.*” It was true. I promised Jesus seven minutes a day; and I faithfully gave it to him: one decade of the Rosary and a

few minutes reading the Bible. I soon became so comfortable with it and valued it so much, that I began to include the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. I also found time almost every day, despite my studies, to go to Holy Mass.

One year later, on my second trip to Medjugorje, I entrusted myself entirely to Our Lady through the consecration; and again many things noticeably changed in me. I wanted God to reveal his will for me more clearly, so I went to several conferences by Fr. Paul Maria from the Family of Mary. One day, during a personal talk with him about my vocation, he said to me with a smile, “*Simone, I know some very nice young men, but we are better off leaving it to our loving God as to which way you should go.*”

So, in 2002, trusting that God would give me clarity, I set out for a six week walk on the Way of St. James in Spain. Beforehand, I gave away many of my things, moved out of my apartment and quit my job as a speech therapist. It was a bold undertaking with two pairs of pants and two t-shirts in my backpack. On top of that, I was neither athletic nor interested in nature, and, at the same time, afraid of what might go wrong. Nevertheless, I could almost feel my inner certainty growing with each step, “*God loves me. He is taking care of me. Everything happens as it is supposed to—at the right time, in the right place, the right people with the right answers.*” I prayed the Rosary a lot along the way, and I tried to attend Holy Mass every day.

If it did not work out, I just sat down in a chapel or a church to be with Jesus.

One sunny day, though, I felt pushed, “*Today you have to hurry.*” So, in spite of my sore knee, I moved quickly along, as if I was chasing after somebody. Then, in the middle of a field, I met Naomi from the USA, my future sister-in-law; I spent the last three weeks of my pilgrimage with her. In Santiago de Compostela, I went to the adoration chapel. With a great inner peace, I felt like I was holding two golden plates before God: “*I say yes to motherhood but also yes to religious life. They both have the same value; both are beautiful. Your will be done!*”

Then it was as if Jesus asked me with a smile, “*And, what do you think?*”

“*Marriage!*” sprang forth, and I was very sure, “*It is good before God.*”

A half year later, in the summer of 2003, I flew to America and visited Naomi at her parents’ house. That is where I met Joseph, her little brother. We fell in love, and in no time I was convinced, “*This is my future husband!*” It did not take long before we had the classic “talk” about how to live our relationship before marriage; and the challenge for both of us began. Yet throughout our whole long-distance relationship, I could feel how trust always carried me and how my prayers were answered so that I earned enough money for all the trips and the long months until we could see each other again.

One year later, Joseph’s parents were shocked when we told them that we wanted to marry. “*It won’t work. Joseph is too young and not responsible enough yet. He has not even finished his schooling as a graphic designer.*” In response, Joseph and I went to adoration and entrusted everything to God. Back at his place, I told his parents about a priest in Austria. I wanted to ask him if he, despite his worldwide apostolate, had time to marry us, which would be a clear sign

for us from God. And Fr. Paul had time! That finally convinced my in-laws. Joseph and I gave our joyful “*I do*” to one another on August 14, 2004.

We spent the first four years of our marriage in America. We had to make important decisions early on because in the first month after our wedding I became pregnant, something we had not planned. We really had to surrender ourselves, because I actually wanted to earn some money so that Joseph could finish studying. The financial pressure for us as a young couple was huge. Our weekly hour of adoration at the parish is what often saved Joseph and me. There, with Jesus, we kept drawing strength and also experienced some “little miracles”. Once, for example, we were asked by the parish office how much money we earned, since in the United States the believers financially support the diocese. I had to tell them, “*I’m sorry, but I’m expecting my second child. My husband has no work. We save, but still do not have enough money even for groceries.*” Two days later, there was a four hundred dollar gift from an anonymous donor in our mailbox.

When I was pregnant with our third child, Joseph purposely went to silent adoration two hours every week to pray before the Blessed Sacrament about whether it would be better to move to Austria. It did not take long before he understood, “*It’s meant to be!*” and within four weeks we landed in my homeland. My family had a furnished apartment ready for us and even a job lined up for Joseph. We were very thankful, but helping at a construction site was not easy for my husband since he did not know much German. We began to wonder, should Joseph go and study something completely different? Could we support such a move financially? To find answers to these questions, we turned again to prayer. During this trial of our trust, we discovered the “treasure” of novenas and started one to St. Joseph right away. The response was that Joseph should start training as nurse.

## God has entrusted this to us

Philomena, our third daughter, had just turned three months when I became pregnant

again. When the doctor told me, “*You’re having twins,*” I took a big gulp. Overwhelmed,

I drove directly from the doctor's office to the adoration chapel. I will never forget that hour of adoration where I could only say, "*Jesus, your will be done.*" Then suddenly I thought, "*How would that be if they were both boys and later became 'twin priests'?*" I made the firm resolution, "*During this pregnancy, I will offer up everything for priests.*"

Marana and Gabriella, two girls, were born. Ten months later, when our Gabriella was diagnosed with a kidney tumor, I remembered the promise I had made in adoration, and I knew, "*This illness is entrusted to Gabriella and to us her parents to be offered up for priests.*"

I have to admit, my first reaction was, "*No, that wasn't part of the deal. I have already said yes to five children, but a life-threatening illness, no. I did not see anything about that in the fine print.*" I never asked, however, "*Why? Why does it have to be me?*" even when I was overwhelmed by the idea that my child might die. This concern gnawed at my soul so much that I felt I would drown in an ocean of worry.

What a blessing that I received some physical help at home and was now able to go to Holy Mass every day. It was the only thing that kept me afloat. Only after receiving Jesus in Holy Communion did peace return to me and I could draw new trust. "*We will persevere! God has entrusted this to us. He will take care of everything! Everything will turn out the way it is meant to be. Our children are a gift as long as we are permitted to accompany them here on earth. And should he, the Lord over life and death, call one of them 'home' to him, it would also be a gift because then we would have an intercessor in heaven.*"

We received a lot of spiritual support through several conferences by priests and through many

friends in faith who carried our sufferings with us in their prayers. We were so consoled when some of the families reported their "little miracles" and told us, for example, "*Since your Gabriella became sick, we have been able to pray a Rosary together every week.*"

*F*rom my own daily life with many children, I know that sometimes only short ejaculatory prayers are possible to send up to heaven. When the children do not listen, something breaks at the wrong time, everything is chaotic and I do not know how to go on, it can happen to me that tears well up. To disarm the situation, I often simply play a nice Rosary CD, and sometimes God's love consoles me when one of my girls makes a little sign of the cross on my forehead or says, "*Mommy, let's pray a Hail Mary.*" Especially at the end of the day when I have experienced my failures, the consoling knowledge remains, "*Mary can make everything good and glue the pieces back together again.*"

In our eleven years together, I have often experienced how important it is for me to trust in St. Joseph, especially when there are differences of opinion. In those moments, talking and complaining is useless. We women are just different than men. If I succeed in remaining silent and entrusting everything to St. Joseph, then my prayers are answered so quickly.

I am lucky to have such a humble husband who always finds new ways to communicate and reconcile, even when I am the one at fault. That is his greatest strength. I learn from his humility so that I can also ask for forgiveness. That is not so easy. Joseph is always the first one who says, "*Now let's pray together!*" Just today I said to my husband, "*We were made for one another and we are made for one another!*"

The birth of our youngest was, by the way, also a test of our trust. The night before, I gave this interview on the telephone for the article about "Trust". Then during the long contractions and especially since there were complications during the birth, it was my husband who had to remind me again and again that it was now time to put into practice the trust I had spoken about.