

Triumph of the Heart

PUT ON THE ARMOR OF GOD

Ephesians 6:13

Family of Mary

2016 (IV) / No. 78

Several times in the last three years, Pope Francis has repeated:

“ It is my personal opinion, but I am convinced that World War III has already begun, in a piecemeal fashion, everywhere!”

November 30, 2014

The Final Victory is God's

Threatened by natural disasters and wars, always more people fear for the future. Hundreds of thousands of refugees and immigrants pose a danger to peace in Europe and around the world. The Christian culture of the West is being infiltrated by Muslims whose goal is its very annihilation. At the same time, we find ourselves in the middle of a huge spiritual battle where confusion and division, even among Catholics, is becoming always more visible.

Our Pope St. John Paul II, two years before his election as Successor of Peter, summarized the present and future with a sharp, prophetic view. During his visit to the United States in 1976, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła openly spoke before the bishops and believers—forty years ago!

The fact that on November 11, 2013, the Papal Nuncio to America, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, cited Karol Wojtyła's words shows how relevant they are today:

“ We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has ever experienced. I do not think that the wide circle of the American Society, or the whole wide circle of the Christian Community realize this fully.

We are now facing the final confrontation

between the Church and the anti-church, between the Gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the antichrist. The confrontation lies within the plans of Divine Providence. It is, therefore, in God's Plan, and it must be a trial which the Church must take up, and face courageously... ”

Cardinal Ivan Dias, in his homily in Lourdes on December 8, 2007, also cited Karol Wojtyła regarding the final battle and added consolingly,

“ One thing remains certain: the final victory belongs to God and that will happen thanks to Mary, the Woman of Genesis and of the Apocalypse, who will fight at the head of the army of her sons and daughters against the enemy forces of Satan and will crush the head of the serpent. ” Therefore, dear readers, in

this issue and the next of “Triumph of the Heart”, we would like to consider with you the **spiritual weapons** that God offers us, beginning with the

Rosary up to the Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, through Holy Confession and the infinitely powerful grace of Holy Mass.

St. Michael the Archangel, Defend Us in Battle

The name Michael is first mentioned in the Bible in the Book of Daniel: “At that time there shall arise Michael, the great prince, guardian of your people; it shall be a time unsurpassed in distress since the nation began.” (Dan 12:1) That this time has dawned is confirmed by what the great Marian Pope Leo XIII (1810 – 1903) experienced a good 2,400 years later. On October 13, 1884, exactly 33 years to the day before the miracle of the sun in Fatima, the otherwise levelheaded Holy Father had a vision which he entrusted to his confessor. The confessor in turn passed it on as a spiritual heritage to Cardinal Pietro Boetto, who published it after World War II.

The supernatural vision took place after Pope Leo XIII had celebrated Holy Mass and was present at another Holy Mass for his thanksgiving. Suddenly he saw an event, which only he seemed to be witnessing. His face revealed shock and amazement, and he turned white as a ghost. Afterwards, he went directly to his office and immediately wrote down two prayers: “*O God, Our Refuge and Our Strength*” and “*Saint Michael the Archangel, Defend Us in Battle*” What did the Pope see?

He saw the earth break open like a pomegranate. Myriads of demons climbed out of the abyss and flooded over the earth, where they incited error, rebellion, war and revolution everywhere. A hazy fog of immense proportions spread over the earth, and there were so many dead that the earth seemed to drown in blood.

In this moment, the Pope saw a band of demons racing towards the Church, symbolized by St. Peter’s Basilica. The jolt to the Church was so great that it seemed to collapse. That was the mo-

ment during the vision in which the Holy Father cried out, “*Is there no hope for the Church to be saved?*” Behold, Michael the Archangel came down from Heaven, began to fight against the demons and defeated them. The demons returned into the abyss, which then closed. The blood soaked into the earth, the hazy fog disappeared and a radiant day dawned. Then a voice spoke, “*All this will begin during the papacy of one of the next popes—and Russia will be the cause.*”

One might doubt whether or not this really happened, but even the world famous exorcist Fr. Gabriele Amorth, whom we recently visited in Rome, reported this event in his book, “*An Exorcist Tells His Story*”. In order to support the credibility of the vision, he cited the 1946 Lenten pastoral letter of Cardinal Nasalli Rocca, former Archbishop of Bologna:

“Leo XIII himself wrote that prayer. The sentence, ‘*evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls,*’ has a historical

explanation that was many times repeated by his private secretary, Monsignor Rinaldo Angeli. Leo XIII truly saw, in a vision, demonic spirits who were congregating on the Eternal City (Rome). The prayer that he asked all the Church to recite was the fruit of that experience. He would recite that prayer with a strong, powerful voice: we heard it many a time in the Vatican Basilica.”

In 1886, a letter was sent to all the dioceses of the world in which Pope Leo XIII ordained that this prayer be prayed kneeling after each Holy Mass.

During the liturgical reforms in 1969-1970, however, this powerful prayer was no longer considered.

Already as a cardinal, Pope John Paul II lived in the awareness of the reality that we

are “*now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has ever experienced*”. As we mentioned in the introduction, St. John Paul II believed in the authenticity of this vision because on April 24, 1994, in St. Peter’s Square he said, “May prayer strengthen us for the spiritual battle. ... The Book of Revelation refers to this same battle, recalling before our eyes the image of St. Michael the Archangel (Rev 12:7). Pope Leo XIII certainly had a very vivid recollection of this scene when, at the end of the last century, he introduced a special prayer to St. Michael throughout the Church:

“Although today this prayer is no longer recited at the end of Mass, I ask everyone not to forget it, and to recite it to obtain help in the battle against the forces of darkness and against the spirit of this world.

The Two Saving Columns

Twenty-three years before Pope Leo XIII’s vision, Don Bosco, one of the most important prophets in the history of the Church, had surely the most well-known of his so called “dreams”. Through a sea battle, he was shown the heavy persecution of the Church and even the assassination of the Pope, but also the saving victory through the Holy Eucharist and Our Lady.

On May 30, 1862, Don Bosco recounted to his assistants and the boys, who had assembled at the Oratory chapel in Turin, Italy, a vision which he had a short time before:

“Imagine yourselves to be with me on the seashore. On the whole of that vast sheet of water you see an innumerable fleet of ships in battle array. The prows of the ships are formed into sharp, spearlike points. These ships are armed with cannons, with lots of rifles, with incendiary materials, with other arms of all kinds, and also with books, and they advance against a ship much bigger and higher than themselves and try to dash against it with the prows or to burn it or in some way to do it every possible harm. As escorts to that majestic

fully equipped ship (the Church), there are many smaller ships, which receive commands by signal from it and carry out movements to defend themselves from the opposing fleet.

“In the midst of the immense expanse of sea, two mighty columns of great height arise a little distance the one from the other. On the top of one, there is the statue of the Immaculate Virgin, from whose feet hangs a large placard with this inscription: *Auxilium Christianorum* - ‘Help of Christians’; on the other, which is much higher and bigger, stands a Host of great size proportionate to the column and beneath is another placard with the words: *Salus Credentium* - ‘Salvation of the Faithful’.

“The supreme commander on the big ship is the Sovereign Pontiff. He, on seeing the fury of the enemies and the evils among which his faithful find themselves, determines to summon around himself the captains of the smaller ships to hold a council. Meanwhile the wind and the waves gather in storm, so they are sent back to control their own ships. There comes a short lull; for a second time the Pope gathers the captains together around him. But the frightful storm returns. The Pope stands at the helm and all his energies are directed to steering the ship towards those two columns, from the top of which and from every side of which are hanging numerous anchors and big hooks, fastened to chains.

“All the enemy ships move to attack it, and they try in every way to stop it and to sink it: some with writings or books or flammable materials, of which they are full; others with guns, with rifles and with rams. The battle rages ever more relentlessly. The enemy prow thrust violently, but their efforts and impact prove useless. They make attempts in vain; the big ship goes safely and smoothly on its way. Sometimes it happens that, struck by formidable blows, it gets large, deep gaps in its sides; but no sooner is the harm done than a gentle breeze blows from the two columns and the cracks close up and the gaps are stopped immediately. Meanwhile, the guns of the assailants are blown up, the rifles and other arms and prows are broken; many ships are shattered and sink into the sea.

“All at once the Pope falls gravely wounded. Immediately, those who are with him run to help him and they lift him up. A second time the Pope is struck, he falls again and dies. A shout of victory and of joy rings out amongst the enemies; from their ships an unspeakable mockery arises.

“But hardly is the Pontiff dead than another Pope takes his place. The pilots, having met together, have elected the Pope so promptly that the news of the death of the Pope coincides with the news of the election of the successor. The adversaries begin to lose courage. The new Pope, putting the enemy to rout and overcoming every obstacle, guides the ship right up to the two columns and comes to rest between them; he makes it fast with a light chain that hangs from the bow

to an anchor of the column on which stands the Host; and with another light chain which hangs from the stern, he fastens it at the opposite end to another anchor hanging from the column on which stands the Immaculate Virgin.

“All the ships that until then had fought against the Pope’s ship are scattered; they flee away, collide and break to pieces one against another. Many other ships, having retreated through fear of the battle, cautiously watch from far away; the wrecks of the broken ships having been scattered in the whirlpools of the sea, they in their turn sail in good earnest to those two columns, and, having reached them, they make themselves fast to the hooks hanging down from them and there they remain safe, together with the principal ship, on which is the Pope. Over the sea there reigns a great calm.”

At this point Don Bosco asked Don Rua, his future successor as superior of the Salesians whom Pope Paul VI beatified in 1972, “What do you think of the story?” Don Rua answered: “It seems to me that the Pope’s ship might mean the Church, of which he is the head: the ships, men; the sea, this world. Those who defend the big ship are the good, lovingly attached to the Holy See; the others are her enemies, who try with every kind of weapon to annihilate her. The two columns of salvation seem to be devotion to Mary Most Holy and to the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist.”

Don Bosco simply added: *“You are right! Only I ought to correct one expression. The enemy ships are persecutions. The most serious trials for the Church are near at hand. That which has been so far is almost nothing in the face of that which must befall. Her enemies are represented by the ships that tried to sink the principal ship if they could. Only two means are left to save her amidst so much confusion: devotion to Mary Most Holy and frequent Communion, making use of every means and doing our best to practice them and having them practiced everywhere and by everybody.”*

Source: Biographical Memoirs, Vol. VII, pg. 169 ff

Don Bosco sees in his prophetic vision two assassination attempts on the Pope. In the first attack he is “*gravely wounded,*” but, “*Immediately, those who are with him run to help him and they lift him up.*” Naturally, that calls to mind the attempt on Pope John Paul II’s life on May 13, 1981, which he survived. This dramatic event in St. Peter’s Square drew the Marian pope’s attention to the importance and relevance of the messages of Fatima. In the so-called “Third Secret of Fatima”, the murder of a Pope is described. He climbs a steep mountain at the top of which is a big cross. “*Having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big cross he was killed by a group of soldiers.*” The three little visionaries of Fatima were shown a persecution of the Church, the slaying of believers, religious, bishops and even the Pope’s murder, and yet Pope John Paul II did not equate this vision with the attempt on his life on May 13, 1981. He said at the general audience on May 17, 2000, “*Since the time seemed right to me, I thought it appropriate to make public the content of the so-called third part of the secret.*”

On May 13, 2010, his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, also emphasized in his homily in Fatima

before a half-million believers, “*We would be mistaken to think that Fatima’s prophetic mission is complete. ... Mankind has succeeded in unleashing a cycle of death and terror, but failed in bringing it to an end.*” Unfortunately, these words today, in 2016, are more relevant than ever. Yet through our conversion and our prayer, many things can be prevented, or at least mitigated. That is why the sorrowful content has been revealed! This has to be repeated again and again!

Finally, the battle will end in victory because Don Bosco saw how the new Pope at the helm, following the heavy fight, fastened the ship of the Church on the columns of Mary and the Eucharist! In due course, this chaining to the column of Mary will take place through the last Marian dogma which the Mother of All Nations requested in Amsterdam. Through this solemn crowning of Mary, Satan will lose his dominion here on earth, and those purified in the “great tribulation” will enter into a new time, a new epoch of the Holy Spirit.

In Amsterdam, Our Lady promised, “***The victory is ours!***” In Fatima, she said it in a similar way: “***In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph!***”

24 Hours for Mary

From his rich pastoral and educational experience, the youth apostle St. Don Bosco treasured the Rosary so much that he would not have replaced it with anything else. *“With the Rosary, we can strike, conquer and destroy all of hell’s demons,”* explained Jesus himself once to Don Bosco in a dream. In the difficult time we are facing, the Rosary is still one of the most valuable spiritual weapons. For example, you can see this so clearly during the Rosary Revolution in the Philippines.

In 1986, Cardinal Jaime Sin of Manila called the believers to a peaceful protest against the corrupt government of Ferdinand Marcos. Within a few hours, three to four million Filipinos had gathered on the streets of Manila, and they prayed the Rosary day and night without interruption. The children invited Marcos’ soldiers in armored tanks to pray with them, and they were successful.

February 25, 1986, the Feast of Our Lady of Victory became a touching Marian victory for millions. Corazon Aquino was sworn in as the new president, and, as a result, Dictator Ferdinand Marcos, having been deprived of power, fled into exile that same day. Cardinal Sin wrote later in a pastoral letter:

“Trusting prayer is more powerful than weapons. Fasting and sacrifices are more effective than strategic planning. The silent power of the nation that holds night vigils is more powerful than military force.”

Would it not be possible today as well, in any country and at any time, to bring a change, even at a worldwide political level, through a storm of prayer?

Two Austrians, Alexandra Eberharter, an elementary school teacher, and her boyfriend Michael Allram, who is currently studying Theology and Information Technology, are convinced it is.

Alexandra: In October 2015, we attended a retreat of Fr. Paul Maria and the Family of Mary

in Feldkirchen, Austria. “Refugees” was a big topic in the media there at the time, because less than 50 miles away in Spielfeld (the border between Austria and Slovenia) thousands of people were passing each day with the hopes of reaching Germany as quickly as possible.

Back in our homeland, Tyrol, we had not yet noticed much, but here things were different. A friend who lives close to the Slovenian border told us that many of the inhabitants there are afraid and have bought weapons. It even happened that somebody had come to her in the sporting goods shop where she works and asked if they sold any weapons, since all the other places were sold out. This really bothered me. Unimaginable! And all of this was taking place just four hours away from our homes.

It became clearer to me during the retreat, what a difficult time we live in and that it is necessary to do something against the threat to peace and safety. Since my boyfriend Michael and I are neither involved in politics nor know anybody personally who would be able to do something politically, I felt helpless.

During the retreat, Fr. Paul showed a video from the Rosary Crusade of the Franciscan Fr. Peter Pavlicek. Then for the first time, I realized the power of prayer, especially the Rosary. At the same time I felt, in the face of the current difficult world situation, the strong desire to do something for peace, just like Fr. Peter Pavlicek. From 1946 on, he motivated tens of thousands of good-willed Christians in post-war Austria, which was occupied by the Red Army, to pray the Rosary untiringly day and night to be liberated from the occupation. In 1955, God granted Austria the desired and prayed for freedom. Fr. Peter had obeyed Our Lady who spoke to his heart before the altar at the Austrian national shrine, Maria Zell, *“If you do what I tell you, there will be peace.”*

Michael: I felt the same way that Alexandra did. It was above all a feeling of powerlessness,

which bothered me greatly in light of the current situation in the world. *“How can an ordinary man like me change anything though,”*

I often thought. I could not forget something that I had often heard repeated in the media, *“How are you going to answer your grandchildren some day when they ask you why you did not do anything in this difficult time?”* I did not know. Yet, I was also convinced that the Rosary had the power to prevent wars and work miracles, and so I was happy when Alexandra said the following to me on our way home from the retreat: *“There must be a way to motivate people to pray the Rosary twenty-four hours a day, around the clock. If we succeed, then nothing can happen to us because the perpetual protection of Our Lady will be over us and the world.”*

*I*t sounded logical, and I was certain that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. We knew what we should do, but not, however, how we should go about it. It would take a miracle to find enough people to pray the Rosary twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week! That meant, we had to find 336 people each week who would sign up to pray early morning, during the day, late evening and in the middle of the night for a half an hour.

To put such a prayer initiative into motion, there was only one consideration for me as an IT teacher and president of an IT company—a prayer list on the internet. *“And even if only one person signs up, it would be worth it,”* I thought to myself.

Alexandra: After returning home and brainstorming, we told Fr. Maximilian Maria Schwarzbauer of the Family of Mary about our idea. Thanks to his support, Michael started programming the website. One month later, we went online with “24 Hours for Mary” for the first time. We were pleasantly surprised to find out later that November 27th, the day that we started the prayer chain, is the Feast of the Miraculous Medal.

Alexandra and Michael: Then everything went quickly. We started with one day a week, hoping that at least a couple of people would sign up to pray on the designated Friday. To our great joy, however, the list filled up the first day, and people, one after the other, picked out their times

and signed themselves up, so that the Rosary would be prayed continuously for twenty-four hours. People were excited about it, and it did not take long before we were able to add more days. It is just unbelievable; thanks to our heavenly Mother the “Rosary Week” has been full for months. Since Holy Thursday 2016, seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, the Rosary is prayed continuously for peace and for the intentions of the “Lady of All Nations”.

The prayer chain “24 Hours for Mary” has been translated into seven languages. People have been praying from twenty countries around the world: Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, Slovakia, Belgium, Great Britain, Sweden, Spain, the United States, Canada, Uruguay, Argentina, Australia, Kazakhstan, Mauritius and Burkina Faso in Africa, the Philippines and even the United Arab Emirates.

We are convinced, that united in praying the Rosary, we can prevent bad things from happening and comfort many in need. Again and again we hear from individuals that they experience their usefulness being part of the prayer chain and no longer feel so helpless in the face of the world’s problems. Also knowing that others are praying for peace twenty-four hours a day is very consoling and gives people new courage. Perhaps one day we will all be able to answer our grandchildren that we at least unceasingly prayed for peace in Europe and in the world. Sr. Lucia of Fatima did not say in vain, *“Since the most Holy Virgin gave such power to the Holy Rosary, there is no material or spiritual, national or international problem that she cannot solve with the Holy Rosary and with our sacrifices.”*

We pray that many more people decide to faithfully pray the Rosary. Please sign up in the “24 Hours for Mary” internet prayer list to create a worldwide network in which we pray together for peace and the intentions of the “Mother of All Nations”. You can sign up one day at a time or pick a set time each week where you promise to pray. You can find out how to sign up at:

24hoursformary.org

Those of you who do not have internet but would like to sign up for a specific time slot each day or each week for the “Rosary Chain for Peace”

or know others without internet who would like to participate—family members, friends, weekly prayer groups, monks or nuns, sick or elderly, etc.—also have a possibility. Please call or send

us a fax and we can enter the name permanently in the weekly internet lists.

Thank you for helping Our Lady through your prayer to help us in this difficult time!

Shrine of the Lady of All Nations: Tel. +49 2131 40 51 58 31
Fax +49 2131 40 51 58 39

Give Me the Weapon!

Padre Pio, who was often called “*a living Rosary*”, wrote to his spiritual father, “*The power of the devil fighting me is terrible.*” In this fight, the Rosary, which he prayed incessantly, was his most effective “*weapon*”.

Padre Pio told about a dream once, in relation to this. “One evening, I was praying in the choir loft when I was disturbed by a loud yell. It came from the church square. I went over to the window and saw a howling, reckless crowd crying, ‘*Down with Jesus! Down with Padre Pio!*’

“I withdrew and spoke to Our Lady about the situation. She gave me a little weapon, very little, so little you could have hid it in your hair. I returned to the window and showed my weapon, dangling it back and forth. They all fell to the ground, as if unconscious.

“Later, I went to the window again and saw a tremendous crowd of people. I called out loudly,

‘*Who are you?*’ And they shouted back, ‘*Long live Jesus! Long live Our Lady! Long live Padre Pio!*’

“I responded, ‘*Oh, you are my spiritual children. Pray the Rosary always and nobody will touch a hair on your head.*’”

Upon going to bed, if Padre Pio did not immediately find one of his Rosaries which he had placed under his pillow, on the nightstand or somewhere else, he always turned humorously to his confrere Fr. Onorato Marcucci, who assisted him during the last four years of his life, with the words, “*Give me the weapon ... which wins the fights!*”

On the eve of his death, Padre Pio charged his spiritual children, as if a last testament, “*Love Our Lady and see to it that she is loved. Pray the Rosary always!*”

Translated from: P. Marcellino Iasenzaniro, Padre Pio parla della Madonna, San Giovanni Rotondo, 2006

Our Skype Rosary in the morning

Sisters Petra, Andrea and Christine Frank, from the beautiful Black Forest area of Germany, have understood the power of the Rosary. “It is not always easy to remain faithful to praying the

Rosary daily. There are a thousand things that try to keep us from it—appointments, errands to run or simply being too tired. No sooner has one decided to take the Rosary in hand than the phone

rings or there is something important that has to be taken care of right away. It is a huge help to have someone else who likes to pray along. In the last few years, because of our jobs and studies, we three sisters live several hours apart, but we found a new way to pray the Rosary together every day, namely with Skype.”

Petra: Inspired by a good friend who told me he prays the Rosary every morning at six o’clock with his wife, Andrea and I decided eight years ago to do the same thing. At the time, we were sharing an apartment, and in order to be on time for school and work, we started praying together at 5:30 a.m.

Andrea: One year later, when Petra moved away for school, we had the idea to continue our Rosary on the computer via Skype, so that we would not have to pay expensive phone bills.

Petra: I drew a lot of strength and consolation from our morning prayer. It was also a good opportunity to include the various intentions that other people had entrusted to us.

Christine: Four years ago, I joined the Skype conference calls of my two older sisters. This “three person prayer meeting” gives me so much each day! Especially when it comes to dealing with people, I notice very clearly that I more readily maintain the love, without getting upset or losing my patience.

Through the Rosary, I feel Mary’s mother-

ly protection, and I have a better attitude in the morning and more drive for the tasks at hand. If I cannot pray along in the morning, then whole day working at the gold smith is much more tiring and difficult.

Andrea: It is not unusual that, when it is time to pray the Rosary, something unexplainable malfunctions with the technology. Suddenly the internet does not work, or you cannot really hear the two on the other end due to noise in the line or because the computer starts—in the middle of prayer of all times—to install updates. We just keep at it and do not give up!

We pray our Rosary together even on Sundays and holidays; we simply pick a time that fits for all three of us. Even if we do not make long meditations in the morning, we still vary our prayer. On Wednesdays, for example, we always pray for St. Joseph’s intentions.

Christine: It seems to me that the graces we receive from our Rosary are that all of us, in the world we live in, are able to remain faithful to our beliefs, and that we may live such a unity with one another. If a tense situation arises, we realize it was almost always because we had not prayed together that day.

Andrea: There is no doubt that because we pray together, we get along so well, also with regards to our beliefs. We are one heart and one soul—and that was not always the case!

They have to see us praying

Andrea: During a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in September 2015, I found out that there is not only great civil unrest on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, but also in my hometown Donaueschingen, Germany.

At home, the police were called repeatedly to a refugee camp in which, at the time, around two thousand refugees, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, were living. This bothered me and, like many Christians, I asked myself in the face of puzzled politicians and an unending stream of refugees coming into Europe, “*What can I possibly do to bring peace?*”

The day after I returned home, I drove to

Switzerland for a Day of Prayer in honor of the Lady of All Nations. There, Fr. Paul Maria Sigl, full of hope and yet with a rare earnestness, spoke about what is going on in the world and about the danger of Christian Europe being converted to Islam through the refugees and migrants. “*Will they see us Christians praying?*” After this question, it was clear to me, “*It is now or never! Only one thing can help—Eucharistic adoration!*” Together with Sr. Birgitta from the Family of Mary, we put together a plan to have a day of Eucharistic adoration every week. We presented it to our pastor, Fr. Erich Loks, on October 7, 2015, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. He

supported us immediately because it was also his great intention to pray for peace. So following the terrorist attack in Paris on November 13, as if in response to it, “Adoration for Peace” was started.

Sr. Birgitta: Since our adoration day takes place in the beautiful baroque church St. Johann, which is located directly at the much visited Donau spring, many tourists also step into the church, where we have adoration every Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Surprised, at least a few people kneel down for a couple minutes.

Others entrust their intentions to us, like the official in charge of the refugees who earnestly asked, “*Pray for us.*”

From the beginning, some of the refugees also came often to adoration, like a young mother who always spends a half hour with her two children before the Blessed Sacrament.

Recently, a tourist wandered past the monstrance in the sanctuary, looking at the high altar. Naturally, I respectfully told him we are having adoration. Yet since he and his wife are Protestant and have no relation to the Blessed Sacrament, I briefly explained to them that we Catholics, due to the situation in the world and the many refugees in Germany, are adoring God in the white Host for

many others. We trade off each hour asking Jesus for peace in our town and in the world.

The man replied humbly, “*Ah, that is what you are doing. Thank you for explaining that to us; we are happy to learn about it.*”

He continued, “*The situation with the refugees worries me too.*” I responded, “*You see why adoration is so important!*”

He nodded and inquired, “*Why do we not do that as well, right away, in every town?*”

Andrea: Since adoration has begun, you no longer hear about police deployment in our town and a good 1,100 refugees have been relocated.

Every now and then refugees check out our church; not long ago a young boy came in and stopped in front of the First Station of the Cross. He was interested; so I explained to him the best I could in English, “*This is Jesus Christ, God’s Son, who died out of love for us on the Cross.*” I further explained to him, pointing to the tabernacle, “*Our Lord Jesus lives there.*” And I slowly genuflected.

He looked at me puzzled whether he should genuflect. When I nodded, he genuflected as well. I understood, once again, “*They have to see us praying!*”

The Decisive Holy Hour

Jesus promised St. Faustina, “At the hour of their death, I defend as My own glory every soul that will say this chaplet; or when others say it for a dying person ... unfathomable mercy envelops the soul.” How often a sudden and unexpected accident or a terminal illness vanquishes our life’s plans! No matter what tragedy we must painfully face in life, there is always a wonderful opportunity hidden in it—seen from the point of view of a living faith—to gather spiritual treasures for ourselves and others. At least that is how Ray Gierlinski, an electrician from the United States, experienced it. His daughter Mary Ann tells his story. Jesus promised St. Faustina, “At the hour of their death, I defend as My own glory every soul that will say this chaplet; or when others say it for a dying person ... unfathomable mercy envelops the soul.”

*M*y husband Tony and I returned home from Rome after the Consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by St. John Paul II on October 8, 2000. We had not been home even one week when my mother called to tell me that my father had fallen off a ladder changing a light bulb and had to be brought to the hospital with a head injury. It was the beginning of a long eight years of suffering and sacrifice.

We found out he had a massive brain injury and would need hospitalization and rehab, which went on for about three months. At that point, we brought him home to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where my mother and a caregiver named Chris

lovingly looked after him. He could not talk, move or care for himself in any way. He had to be fed, have his clothes changed and be moved from time to time to prevent bed sores. Shortly thereafter, his whole body became rigid and like stone, and he had to use a feeding tube. He remained without expression and his eyes never really looked at you. Through it all, my mother was always at his side talking to him, and they still said their Rosary every night, as they always had throughout their lives. How? My mother would lock her hands in his and pray the Rosary “with” him. Even though he could not vocalize his prayer, she believed he prayed with her.

In this hour you can obtain everything

*A*fter about six years like this, I received a call from my dear friend, Suzy White. She told me that she was sending me a tape on Divine Mercy that the Family of Mary had just finished, and she believed “*my father is supposed to hear it.*” I called my mom and asked if Chris could get dad up in the wheelchair so we could all listen to it together.

I arrived in the afternoon and, as I pulled up

with the car, I saw my mother outside waiting for me all excited. She said that dad’s eyes were open and bright, his cheeks all rosy and she kept saying “*He’s back!!!*”

I walked in and could not stop hugging him because he was looking at me with a little grin and twinkly blue eyes. During the Holy Hour, from three to four o’clock, we listened to the beautiful music and the consoling words of Jesus to St.

Faustina, and we prayed along with the Chaplet of Mercy.

About half way through, I paused it because seeing my dad so animated and with deep concentration, I knew he was there. He could not speak, but had focused eye contact. I slowly asked him, *“Dad, you know your suffering has a purpose?”*

Moved, I watched as he slowly and clearly nodded his head, and then little tears ran down his face. *“Dad, will you give Our Lady your suffering and offer it all up for priests?”* I continued. He had this radiant look and little smile, and nodded again. What a moment of grace!

My deeply faithful parents both knew the value of offering up suffering. We calmly listened to the end of the tape and then brought my father in for a nap. My mom and I remained dumbfounded and full of joy in the kitchen, euphoric with happiness because we felt it was a miracle.

Although we thought that my father’s condition had improved, that very night he returned to his previous state: eyes open but lifeless with no reaction, and the color drained from his face. He remained that way for another two years before he died peacefully in 2008, at the age of 87.

We often played the tape at his bedside, but he never reacted to anything again. God allowed him to “wake up” only for those few precious hours. That was enough, though, and meaningful for his whole eternal life. He became a “spiritual helper” for the priests and seminarians.

My father was not healed physically, but for my mother and me, the gift we received was more than a miraculous healing, for it was the realization that all his suffering was truly coredeemptive. That day, that “Holy Hour”, was life-altering for me because looking to my courageous father who made his “years of dying” so fruitful made it possible for me to peacefully accept his departure.

Who Fasts Fears No Evil

In our Western world, fasting has become a fad — fasting cures and therapeutic fasting to lose weight, purify the body or strengthen the immune system. Only those who carefully read the Gospel know that fasting in the imitation of Christ is one of the most powerful weapons in the spiritual fight. After Jesus healed a boy possessed by a demon, his disciples were amazed and asked, “Why could we not drive it out?” The Lord answered them, “This kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting.” (Mt 17:21)

*N*obody understood Jesus as well as his mother, the Woman who crushes the head of the serpent. Therefore, she encourages us in Medjugorje to fast. We do not mean, in any way, to anticipate the final judgement of the Church, and yet we did not want to leave out this place where millions of pilgrims have received help for body and soul. In the message from January 25, 2001, the Queen of Peace explains the importance of the

sacrifice of fasting out of love for Jesus: “*Today I call you to renew prayer and fasting with even greater enthusiasm ...*

Little children, the one who prays is not afraid of the future and the one who fasts is not afraid of evil. Once again, I repeat to you: only through prayer and fasting also wars can be stopped – wars of your unbelief and fear for the future.”

Fasting saved my life

*L*uca, from Italy, had an impressive experience about how true these words are. “For many years, I was a slave to thoughts of suicide, haunted by the constant desire to end my life. I had parents who had separated, emotional insecurities, difficulties at work and financial problems... and on top of that, major spiritual deviance. I touched on many New Age disciplines, all based on the principles of spiritualism, occultism and magic. I had opened the door of my life to darkness, which kept inspiring me with the thought that I was not made to live, and that everything I did was doomed to fail. In my childhood, I had heard about Medjugorje and I knew that the Holy Virgin asked people to pray the Rosary and to fast in order to have peace of heart. Peace of heart? Was this possible for me, too? I searched the Internet to find out more, and I came across a CD entitled ‘Healing

and deliverance through fasting’. I immediately bought it. I listened to this CD with great interest, in a single session. Why not try fasting on bread and water for 24 hours? So I did it, sort of as a challenge and also to try to experience a day that would be different, because I had been plunged into an abyss of grief and anguish. The next day, a Wednesday, I bought a beautiful loaf of bread, and I decided to eat only that, and drink only water.

“That day, something powerful came in me, and from morning to evening I felt I was coming alive, with a light and free heart! My obsession with suicide had disappeared and the morbid thoughts directed against life even seemed ridiculous and stupid. I had not prayed, I had only warned the Holy Virgin that if this did not work, I would find a way to kill myself. My life had completely changed in one day!

“Fasting has enormous spiritual power. Like a torch thrown into my inner darkness, it made me see all the traps that Satan had placed in my mind and in my heart. I then realized that, for years, it was no longer I who was thinking, it was actually the evil one who inspired me with all these deadly

thoughts, against life, against love, against joy and especially against Jesus our Lord and Savior!

In a single day, I was given back the joy of being a ‘Dear child’, and am happily consecrated [to Mary].”

Imitating Jesus

Jesus did not prepare himself for his public life with fitness training or health spas; rather, he withdrew into the desert for forty days to pray and fast. In doing so, he shows us how meaningful fasting is in the fight against temptations. The Lord trusted so perfectly in the help of his Heavenly Father that he did not even work the miracle of turning stones into bread because he wanted to depend solely on the Father and await help from only him.

When we fast as Christians, we do it first and foremost to imitate the humility of Jesus in his complete dependency on the Father. One who fasts out of love like he did, will become always more receptive to God’s will, free of himself and filled with the Holy Spirit. And where the Holy Spirit dwells, there is no room for demons. One who frees himself in his heart from everything that is not God cannot be seduced and will be able to help others to become free from damaging dependencies.

Lynda from Scotland made a very touching experience with fasting. “My brother was obedient and quiet but at the same time, full of fun. When

he was 18, he went to college to train to be a medical doctor. He joined all the social groups and clubs, was drinking heavily and also got involved in gambling. He qualified as a doctor and started working, but his career was not progressing. He had become seriously addicted. We tried talking to him, but unfortunately it wasn’t working. My mother was very worried about him and so we both decided to go to Medjugorje in October of 2012. My mother asked Sr. Emmanuel to pray. She responded that *‘in order to win such a war, she should do her whole part and not just half, she should pray AND fast for her son and God would do the rest.’*

“When we returned home, we also started to fast on bread and water on Wednesdays and Fridays for him. Then we really saw a miracle happening. That was two years ago and my brother completely stopped gambling. He is totally debt free! He’s highly thought of as a doctor, and he very rarely drinks. He’s living a very good life, and has a lovely girlfriend. Fasting had the power to break something within him that my family and I couldn’t break through simple talking and prayer.”

Sr. Emmanuel Maillard published a booklet “Freed and Healed Through Fasting” through Queenship Publishing. For the Italian edition, the world famous exorcist Fr. Gabriele Amorth wrote the forward. In it, he wrote, “I knew how useful fasting could be, but I did not know all the aspects which you so carefully presented. Reading this book, one really discovers fasting. ... The arguments which you use, and especially the examples you mention, make it easy to understand why Our Lady insists on this method which is so valuable for body, soul and the apostolate, whether here on earth or for the Poor Souls in Purgatory. ... It was surely Our Lady who inspired you to write this book. I thank you and bless you!”

A fasting that pleases me

Not everybody can fast on bread and water, but everybody can find their own way to

fast. A great man of prayer and fasting John Maria Vianney, the Curé of Ars, spoke from his rich

experience: *“Any time we abstain from something that we would like to do, we practice a fast that is pleasing to God because fasting is not first and foremost abstaining from eating and drinking, but rather in renouncing something that in the moment would correspond to our tastes. The person who fights against his self-love, his pride, his resistance to do something he does not want to, who spends time with people who oppose his character and his way of doing things and patiently endures them, practices a great fast which is very pleasing to God. How I love these little acts of self-denial which nobody sees—waking up fifteen minutes earlier, renouncing to look at something which draws our gaze because it is attractive, especially along the streets in the big towns, etc. Oh what great graces the Lord has given me through fasting! I received everything I requested for myself and others.”*

St. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople and one of the greatest spiritual

teachers and ascetics of the fourth century, taught that simply renouncing food is in no way a perfect fast. *“It would be useless to withhold nourishment from the body but feed our heart with refuse, selfishness and comfort. You withhold nourishment, but you allow yourself to hear vain or worldly things. You have to fast with your ears in that you do not listen to things said about your brother, especially rumors and gossip. Fast also with your words in that you do not say what harmful things the others do, because what good does it do to eat no meat when you devour your brother?”*

Fasting can also mean keeping watch over our thoughts because every good deed, but also every misdeed, every virtue and every vice begin in our thoughts. When you fast, so says the Lord in the Gospel, *“do it in hiddenness,”* which means—do it only out of love for God. Then true love will grow in you, and as Isaiah says, *“Your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed”*. (Is 58:8)

Holy Confession

The first gift which the Risen Lord gave to his Apostles was his forgiveness and the peace that comes with it. In the same breath, he gave them the authority and the mandate to forgive sins. “Christ has willed that his whole Church should be the instrument of the forgiveness that he acquired for us at the price of his blood,” the Catechism tells us. (1442) “Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true ‘spiritual resurrection,’ restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God.” (1468)

Through sin, man turns away from God and loses the precious good of inner friendship with him. It is not that God withdraws his love for man, but our ego and the lack of self-offering to his will damage the childlike relationship of trust with our Heavenly Father. Just as our first parents did, we often choose Satan’s proposal and put ourselves—most of the time unknowingly—in his power.

We all know how it goes: The first time we give in to temptation, our conscience sounds the alarm. Yet when we do not repent this wrong decision nor make a decisive resolution not to commit the sin again, we soon fall into the same trap again and our lapse turns into habit, to vice, to dependency.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation, Confession, is one of the strongest weapons in this spiritual fight because as soon as we repent and ask God for forgiveness, the demons lose their right to rule in our hearts. With Jesus’ words through

the priest, “*I absolve you...*”, God liberates the soul from all false ties and snatches it away from the influence of evil. All the oppression and sadness which one carries as a consequence of his guilt, has to yield, because God’s forgiveness gives consolation, strength and sometimes even physical healing.

Therefore, the Curé of Ars, who spent as many as fourteen hours a day in the confessional, claimed,

“You cannot hide sins. They come again; at latest, in the hour of death. The best way to hide them is to eliminate them through a good confession. After a good confession, you’ve even put the devil in chains.”

God showed this spiritual reality to the charismatic teacher Don Bosco in a very descriptive dream, which not only made a strong impression on him but also deeply shook his pupils. On April 4, 1869, he related the following:

The three obstacles to a good confession

I dreamed that I walked out of my room and instantly found myself in church. It was packed full with the pupils of the Oratory. The boys were not praying aloud, but seemed to be preparing for Confession. I observed a very large number crowding around my confessional beneath the pulpit, and I began to wonder how

I could possibly hear them all. And so I began hearing Confessions. Soon, concerned about the number of boys, I got up to see if there were any other confessors, but there were none, so I made for the sacristy, hoping to find help. It was then that I noticed that some boys had a noose around their necks which nearly choked them.

“*What is that rope for?*’ I asked. *‘Take it off.’* In reply they just stared at me.

“*You,*’ I said to a youngster, *‘go to that boy and slip that noose off his neck.’*

“The boy went, but came back, saying: *‘I can’t get it off. Someone is holding it. Come and see.’*

“I scrutinized that huge crowd of boys more closely and thought I saw two very long horns jutting out behind many of them. I got closer to the one nearest me and, drawing up behind him, I saw a hideous cat tightly clinging to the noose. Surprised in the act, it tried to crouch lower and hide its snout between its paws. I asked this boy and the others their names, but they did not answer. I questioned that frightful beast, but it only crouched lower.

“*‘Go to the sacristy and ask Father Merlone for the holy water,’* I directed one of the boys.

“He soon returned with it, but meanwhile I discovered that behind each boy crouched a cat as hideous as the first one. Seizing the sprinkler, I turned to one of those large cats.

“*‘Tell me who you are,’* I ordered.

“Alternately opening and closing its jaws, the hideous animal broke into a growl and prepared to lunge.

“*‘Answer me!’* I insisted. *‘What are you doing here? I do not fear your rage. Do you see this holy water? I will thoroughly soak you with it.’*

“In dismay the monster began to writhe in unbelievable contortions and again seemed ready to leap at me. I kept my eye on it and noticed that it was holding several nooses in its paw.

“*‘What are you doing here?’* I asked again, while threatening it with the holy water. The then relaxed its taut position in order to run away.

“*‘Stop!’* I demanded. *‘You stay right here!’*

“*‘Look then,’* it growled and showed me its nooses.

“*‘What are they? What do you mean?’* I asked.

“*‘Don’t you understand? I rope these boys into making bad Confessions. With these nooses I drag nine-tenths of mankind into Hell.’*

“*‘Then in the name of Jesus Christ, speak!’*

“Writhing hideously, the monster answered: *‘With the **first noose** I make the boys conceal their sins in Confession.’*

“*‘And the **second?**’*

“*‘I make them confess without true sorrow.’*

“*‘And with the **third?**’*

“*‘I won’t tell you.’*

“*‘You had better tell, or you’ll be drenched with this holy water!’*

“*‘No, no, I will not! I’ve talked too much already!’* And it growled in fury.

“Flames and even a few drops of blood darted from the beast’s eyes as it grudgingly muttered: *‘With the **third noose** I keep them from making a firm resolution and carrying out their confessor’s advice.’*

“*‘You hideous beast,’* I exclaimed.

I wanted to question the monster further, and force it to tell how I could remedy this great evil and offset its diabolical efforts, but all those hideous cats, which until now had done their utmost to stay hidden, began to mutter and then broke out into loud shouts against the one which had spoken. Amid the general uproar, I realized that I could get nothing more from the monster. Therefore, lifting the sprinkler and flinging holy water upon the one who had spoken I commanded, *‘Go away,’* and it disappeared. Then I sprinkled holy water all about, and in the pandemonium which ensued, all those cats scurried away. The din awakened me, and I found myself in bed.

“Shortly before flying into rage, the monster told me: *‘See how much good boys draw from Confession! If you want to know whether or not I hold them in leash, see if they are becoming better.’*

“I also forced the devil to tell me why he was crouching behind your backs. *‘So that I can’t be seen,’* it replied. *‘That way it is easier for me to drag them down into Hell.’*

Those of you who had those monsters behind their backs were far more numerous than I would have believed.” After Don Bosco had related the vision, he concluded with some advice which is fitting for us as well in this Year of Mercy. *“Make what you will of this dream, but it is a fact that I did check on these things and found that what I had dreamed was quite true. Let us,*

therefore, take advantage of this opportunity of gaining a plenary indulgence by making a good Confession and Communion. Let us

do our utmost to free ourselves of the devil's nooses."

Don Bosco explained to the youth that you do not have to feel the true sorrow mentioned above. It is enough for the sinner to recognize the lack of love towards God and neighbor in the committed injustice, and that he is sincerely sorry.

What the enlightened teacher Don Bosco explained to his youth, is also valid for us Christians today. Each one of us experiences that, despite our sincere efforts, we fall over and over again. Although we go regularly to Holy Confession, we can only give up certain weaknesses and mistakes with great effort.

That is because, even though all our sins are forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, certain consequences, like dependencies and desensitization, remain. These negative consequences, for which we are guilty, are often mistakenly called "penalty of sin".

To heal them and to overcome our inclination to certain habitual sins and weaknesses, the Church gives us the indulgences from the treasures of Jesus Christ's grace and the merits of the saints. A Catholic can receive a plenary indulgence every day under the following conditions:

1. He must be in a state of grace. In other words, he must go to **Confession** two or three weeks before or after obtaining the indulgence.

2. Receive **Holy Communion**—Jesus, the fullness of grace.

3. **Pray for the intentions of the Holy Father**—an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory

Be, for example, or some other prayer.

4. Complete an **act of piety**, like a half an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, a half an hour reading Holy Scripture, praying five decades of the Rosary or meditating on the Fourteen Stations of the Cross.

5. The effectiveness of the indulgence depends on our **disposition**, because this great grace of inner healing and liberation from all "penalty of sin" can neither be bought nor automatically achieved through religious practices.

A sincere desire to be freed from all sinful dependencies, even of venial sins, is necessary. Only when we have the desire to fulfill the will of God in our life or, in other words, to make God happy, can our soul experience the sought-after healing and sanctification.

We will even experience how the plenary indulgence, when we receive it frequently, changes our character for the better, that it makes us capable of giving up selfish habits. This joy does not remain with one person alone, but radiates around him and over all of humanity. We can also apply all indulgences to the deceased who are still in purgatory.

The Victory in Forgiving

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” This is certainly the most difficult task that Jesus gives us! However, when a heart has been wounded and, as a result, walls rise up in it which we are unable to, or do not want to, break down ourselves, so even Christians rightly ask themselves, “Where should I find the strength to take the first step, to overcome myself and stretch out my hand for forgiveness?” Yes, even those who want to forgive have to admit, “I can do it only with God, from his strength.”

*W*e heard a fitting example from Fr. Patrick Cahill, our Irish priest who, since his ordination in 2009, has been working in his homeland primarily in the schools of Mitchelstown and is now working throughout the country in a parish evangelization program, something he considers to be a great privilege. When we asked him about our theme “the spiritual fight”, he immediately thought of Emma Sisk, whom he has known for

about seven years through the Youth 2000 prayer group. *“She was a nineteen-year-old student, full of life and enthusiasm with a keen eye for fashion and style. She now works for a pro-life group, traveling around the country speaking to high school students about the dignity of human life. During a pilgrimage to Medjugorje last year, she shared her testimony about forgiving and her subsequent healing.”*

Rough years as a teenager

I grew up in Ireland in a Catholic home with my parents, my two brothers and my sister. For most of my teenage years, I only went to Holy Mass to please my parents, and although I was physically present each week my mind was always elsewhere.

I was thirteen when I went to secondary school in a neighboring town. It was an exciting time and I enjoyed being a teenager and experiencing a new chapter of my life. To get to school I used to ride the school bus with the other children. When I was sixteen, some of the students on the bus started to bully me. It began after an incident at work in my home town of Ballyporeen where I witnessed a theft committed by a fellow em-

ployee. I felt I should report it to the boss, which I duly did. He then spoke to those involved and docked the money from their wages.

*T*he problem was that when school started again in September, we were on the same bus every morning. So as soon as I boarded, they would call me names or throw things at me, and curse at me when it was my turn to get off the bus. At first I tried to ignore them. I thought, *“if they can’t see that they upset me, then they will soon become bored and stop.”* But that did not happen. More and more people got involved and the bullying, which became aggressive and violent, continued for many months.

*O*ver time this had a devastating effect on my emotional and psychological health. Within a few months I was a different person. I no longer

enjoyed the things in life that made me happy, such as dancing and spending time with my friends and family. I began suffering from depres-

sion and always wanted to be alone. I reached the lowest point and felt, *"I cannot cope anymore."*

The way I was treated led me to truly believe there was nothing worthwhile about my existence. I was seventeen and absolutely broken. My self-confidence, well-being and personality were completely shattered and I was full of anger, shame, hurt and insecurity.

I thought, *"I will feel this way for the rest of my life."* I felt nothing and no one could help me. I started self-harming as a way of releasing the build-up of negative, inner emotions and I

drank a lot of alcohol to numb the pain. On Halloween 2007, I was attacked in my home town by a gang of 25-30 young people who I knew from the school bus. One girl was particularly vicious and began to hit me and pull my hair. Eventually I was pushed to the ground. I remember curling up there, seeing clumps of my own hair on the ground in front of me.

I was rescued that night by a man passing by in his car who saw what was happening. He stopped to break it up—like a real, modern day Good Samaritan.

Healing before the Blessed Sacrament

*T*owards the end of 2007, I decided to go to a Youth 2000 retreat for young Catholics in my area. The only reason I went was because I was desperate. I so wanted to be myself again and I was willing to try anything that might make this happen.

I had no idea this decision would completely change my life. During Holy Mass God allowed me, in a very simple and gentle way, to feel his presence and his love for me. Until this moment I always felt that God was very distant. I believed in God but I didn't know that he loved me deeply or that he longed to have a personal and intimate relationship with me. I was consoled by the fact that Jesus also suffered unjustly at the hands of others.

In what I can only describe as a moment of grace I made a decision to give God a chance. I wanted to get to know him more. I became part of a Youth 2000 prayer group in my parish and for the first time in my life I started to pray, sincere prayer that comes from the depths of the heart.

Healing did not come right away, but things started to change when I began praying. Each week at the Youth 2000 prayer group, we prayed the Rosary in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. This exposed me to a new depth of prayer and I began to experience the power of prayer in my heart.

One night there, I had an interesting expe-

rience in prayer. I imagined myself in the beauty of heaven with God and the saints. Then I saw the people who had hurt me coming towards the gates of heaven. God wasn't going to let them in and said to them, *"You may not enter because of what you did to Emma."*

Without even thinking, my reaction was to approach God and plead with him, *"Let them enter and do not punish them because of what they did to me. I forgive them."* After that I realized that deep down I had forgiven them because I cared more about their souls than I did about the pain they inflicted on me.

It is not easy to see those who bullied me, even though almost ten years have passed. We live in the same area, so I might see one of them in a shop or on the street. I know that I should say hello to them but it's really hard. Sometimes they will start the conversation which makes things a lot easier. I've made mistakes in my past too and done things that I am not proud of. I hope..., I presume they recognize that what they did wasn't right. But I try to renew my forgiveness every time our paths cross. The grace of God and his call to love strengthens me. It is easy to love our friends. The Lord's challenge is to love our enemies.

*T*hrough prayer, I was eventually able to forgive those who hurt me and Jesus set me free from the negative thoughts and feelings I carried

in my heart. Forgiveness is difficult to talk about today. It is often confused with weakness. But I have discovered that without forgiveness there cannot be true peace. We are engaged in spiritual combat whether we like it or not. Nobody can remain on neutral ground. The devil does not want to lose this battle. He wants hatred, indifference and war. He wants hardened hearts that are unforgiving and lacking peace. To prepare us for battle,

God has given us Our Lady. She is with us and for us because she is our mother. She cares so deeply about each one of us. If we turn to her she will defend us from all Satan's attacks. When we fall or are wounded in the warfare, she helps us to get up and continue to fight. Ultimately victory will come but not with guns or money. It will come when we allow God to change our hearts, when we learn to love and forgive.

After my studies I worked as a journalist for a few years, but I eventually decided to leave because I felt God was asking me to put him in the first place. So now I work for God's smallest creatures, the innocent, unborn children. I present to students, especially girls, the preciousness of life taking shape and encourage them to accept their children later on.

Holy Mass

*The climax of the spiritual battle,
which encompassed all times, took place on Calvary.*

Here, the Divine Redeemer, through his suffering and death carried in infinite love, united with the coredeeming Mother of Sorrows, conquered Hell with all its power and redeemed the whole creation. That is why he could say, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself." (Jn 12:32) The sacrifice of the Cross becomes present and effective with each Holy Mass. This sacrifice is the strongest weapon because Jesus, the God-man himself, fights and wins.

Jesus did not conquer the power of sin, death, and all of Hell in that he eliminated them and let them sink into nothingness, but rather on Calvary he redeemed sin, suffering and death from the inside out and transformed them through his divine love. Therefore, an infinite amount of grace streams forth from the sacrifice of the Cross, which becomes truly present in each Holy Mass. St. John Maria Vianney was rightly convinced, "*A single Holy Mass is infinitely more valuable than all prayers and sacrifices of all people of all times because it is the prayer and sacrifice of the God-man.*"

Inevitably one asks, if Jesus defeated **death**, why do we still have to die? If he has defeated **sin**, then why do we live in a world where so many sins are committed? If he defeated the demons and all of **Hell**, why does Satan have more power today

than ever before? Where is the victory of God's love? In order for the fruits of Redemption to be visible in and around us, we have to personally participate. We should not let ourselves be the least bit discouraged that we are so small and experience our incapacity. St. Faustina felt the same way, and yet Jesus taught her a different reality. She wrote in her diary, "*I intensified my prayers and sacrifices for our dear native land, but I see that I am a drop before the wave of evil. How can a drop stop a wave? O yes! A drop is nothing of itself, but with You, Jesus, I shall stand up bravely to the whole wave of evil and even to the whole of hell. Your omnipotence can do all things.*" (Divine Mercy in My Soul #686)

Jesus also taught her, however, to deeply unite herself to him in the Holy Mass and offer his Blood and his Wounds in expiation to the Di-

vine Father, *“One day Jesus told me that He would cause a chastisement to fall upon the most beautiful city in our country. This chastisement would be that with which God had punished Sodom and Gomorrah. ... A shudder pierced my heart. I prayed in silence. After a moment, Jesus said to me, ‘My child, unite yourself closely to Me during the Sacrifice and offer My Blood and My Wounds to My Father in expiation for the sins of that city. Repeat this without interruption throughout the entire Holy Mass. Do this for seven days.’ On the seventh day I saw Jesus in a bright cloud and began to beg Him to look upon the city and upon our whole country. Jesus looked [down] graciously. When I saw the kindness of Jesus, I began to beg His blessing. Immediately Jesus said, ‘For your sake I bless the entire country.’”* (Divine Mercy in My Soul #39)

St. Faustina was to write all this down because the ability to intercede for others is something not only for her, but for us as well. We can do the same thing the Lord instructed her to do. The grace of Redemption, which was suffered two thousand years ago, has an effect in the world today. In order to do this, one need not be rich or intelligent, nor young or healthy, but one has to have a living faith and the trust of a child. Surely for this reason, God chose the children from Fatima who could neither read nor write, and taught them to adore and make sacrifices for others for the conversion of sinners. Already in the spring of 1916, an angel appeared to six-year-old Jacinta, eight-year-old Francisco and nine-year-old Lucia. She recalls the angel as a fourteen or fifteen year old boy, “transparent as crystal when the sun shines through it. ... On reaching us, he said:

‘Do not be afraid! I am the Angel of Peace. Pray with me.’

“Kneeling on the ground, he bowed down until his forehead touched the ground, and made us repeat these words three times:

My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love You! I ask pardon of You for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love You.’ Having repeated these words three times, he rose and said, ‘Pray thus!’” That same summer, the angel appeared again and told the children, *“Make of everything you can a sacrifice ... as an act of reparation for sins ... and in supplication for the conversion of sinners. You will thus draw down peace upon your country. I am its Angel Guardian, the Angel of Portugal!”*

In the fall of 1916, the angel appeared for the third time. He held a chalice in his hand; above it, a Host was suspended from which drops of blood fell into the chalice. He left the chalice and the Host suspended in the air, knelt down on the ground and prayed three times a prayer of adoration *“in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference with which He Himself is offended.”*

Afterwards, the three children received their First Holy Communion from the angel’s hand. Lucia continued, “Then, rising, he took the chalice and the Host in his hands. He gave the Sacred Host to me, and shared the Blood from the chalice between Jacinta and Francisco, saying as he did so: *‘Take and drink the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, horribly outraged by ungrateful men! Make reparation for their crimes and console your God.’”*

The Five First Saturdays Devotion

Is it not impressive that God revealed to children the most important peace plan of the twentieth century in order to avoid World War II and make the conversion of Russia possible? For this, Our Lady gave us, along with the Rosary and the Consecration to her Immaculate

Heart—which we will write about in the next issue—another spiritual weapon: **Communion of Reparation**. Perhaps it is due to the simplicity of this powerful, divine method, that many bishops and priests have undervalued it, have not explained it to people and, therefore, it is seldom

practiced. On December 10, 1925, Our Lady, with the Child Jesus at her side, unexpectedly appeared to Sr. Lucia during evening prayer. The Divine Child said, *“Have compassion on the Heart of your most holy Mother, covered with thorns, with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment, and there is no one to make an act of reparation to remove them.”* Then Our Lady added, *“Look, my daughter, at my Heart, surrounded with thorns with which ungrateful men pierce me every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude. You at least try to console me.”*

Then she asked Lucia on **five consecutive first Saturdays** of the month to receive Holy Communion in reparation, to pray the Rosary and meditate on its mysteries for fifteen minutes, the-

reby making reparation. In order to be in a state of grace, the Queen of the Rosary asked that a Holy Confession be made some days before. She also promised that at the hour of their death she would stand by anybody who does the First Saturday Devotion and will grant them the graces needed for their salvation. Why does the Communion of Reparation have such a powerful effect? It is actually simple to understand. Sacrileges and people’s disrespect of the Blessed Sacrament gives power to Satan who, in his merciless hate, uses it to bring disasters and war upon us in every possible way. When one lovingly receives Holy Communion to make things good, then this power is torn away from him. In this way, every believer can help Our Lady so that the triumph of her Immaculate Heart is soon realized here on earth.

Source: Fatima – In Lucia’s Own Words