

Catholic Candle

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Words to Live by – from Catholic Tradition

The great value and advantage of suffering chastisements

St. Alphonsus de Liguori gives us these consoling words to encourage us to appreciate the Crosses we receive from the loving Hand of God:

“God”, say St. Augustine, “is angry when He does not scourge the sinner.” (In Ps., LXXXIX). When we see a sinner in tribulation in this life, we may infer that God wishes to have mercy on him in the next, and that He exchanges eternal for temporal chastisement. But miserable is the sinner whom the Lord does not punish in this life! For those whom He does not chastise here, He treasures up His wrath and for them He reserves eternal chastisement.

Quoted from St. Alphonsus de Liguori, Sermon #2, for the 2nd Sunday of Advent, first point, §10.



***Catholic Candle* note:** The article below is a reminder of the benefit we receive from the trials that God sends us.

This article is a “companion piece” to *Catholic Candle*’s prior article, *Strategies for Lightening the Crosses You Now Have*, which can be found here:

<https://catholiccandle.org/2020/04/01/77/>

As True Soldiers of Christ, Let Us Undergo the Trials that God Sends Us!

St. John Chrysostom gives five reasons why God permits us to undergo trials and tribulations, even very severe ones. Here are his words:

Whoever thou art then that after thy baptism sufferest grievous trials, be not troubled thereat; for this thou receivest arms, to fight, not to sit idle. God does not hold all trial from us:

- **firstly**, that we may feel that we are become stronger;
- **secondly**, that we may not be puffed up by the greatness of the gifts we have received;
- **thirdly**, that the Devil may have experience that we have entirely renounced him;
- **fourthly**, that by it we may be made stronger; and
- **fifthly**, that we may receive a sign of the treasure entrusted to us; for the Devil would not come upon us to tempt us, did he not see us advance to greater honors.¹

Let us examine each of these reasons why God permits us to suffer trials.

1. God permits us to undergo trials that we might feel that we become stronger.

We need encouragement and (reasonable) confidence in spiritual battles. If we never fight spiritual battles, we will be afraid to do so. We would wonder “how would I do?” Because of this insecurity, we would shrink back like cowards from future spiritual battles that God wishes us to fight, for His glory and for our reward.

An army’s general values his battle-tested and battle-hardened soldiers because they know from experience that they can succeed and they know what they must do in order to succeed. Those veteran soldiers gain in courage and confidence by fighting battles, so that they feel ready to fight future battles.

Similarly, Christ, our “General” in the Church Militant, gives us trials to help us *Soldiers of Christ* to be battle-tested and battle-hardened spiritual warriors. Through trials, we test our spiritual armaments, our (spiritual) combat skills, and our strength in the spiritual battles of this life. We learn by experience that the devil cannot conquer us

¹ *Catena Aurea on St. Matthew* ch.4, v.1. St. Thomas Aquinas, greatest Doctor of the Catholic Church, chooses and quotes these words of St. John Chrysostom, Doctor and Father of the Church, from St. John’s sermon #13 on *St. Matthew’s Gospel*.

provided that we do not let him do so (by consenting to sin). We know that, with God's help and if we do our part, we will conquer all demons.

For this reason, God sends us trials so that we might gain courage and (reasonable) confidence that we are able to fight life's spiritual battles for God's glory and for the salvation of souls.

2. God permits us to undergo trials that we may not be puffed up by the greatness of the gifts we have received.

When we are inside our home while a wild storm rages outside, we feel secure, like a sailor looking out from the security of a safe harbor at a storm raging at sea.² By contrast, when a sailor is caught out at sea, with his ship almost capsizing, fighting for survival amidst the buffeting waves, then he remembers that he needs God and that his own efforts are very weak and small.

Let us apply that principle to the spiritual life:

The angelic spirits are truly awesome – greatly exceeding our comprehension:

- ❖ The angelic nature is so great that it would be a greater thing for us to understand the nature of the lowest angel than it would be for us to know everything about all material creation combined.
- ❖ The lowest angel is so powerful that he could very easily destroy all of material creation, if God permitted him to do so.

The devils have such very high angelic natures. Their rebellion against God did not change the greatness of their natures.

Suppose we found all trials to be easy. Suppose that, for us, avoiding temptation was “child's play” and that when the devil tempted us, we could simply “snap our fingers in the devil's face” (as it were) and that we could prevail against his temptations without need to make any serious effort to resist him.

² Here is how the Roman philosopher Lucretius explained the comfortable security that a person has when he sees others, but not himself, undergoing great tribulations:

Pleasant it is, when on the great sea, the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another's great tribulation: Not because any man's troubles are a delectable joy, but because to perceive what ill you are free from yourself is pleasant.

Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book II, line 1.

If all trials were so easy for us, our pride would grow exceedingly. Thus, God lovingly sends us the precious gift of trials in order to deflate our pride by forcing us to fight hard for the life of our souls, in the spiritual storms that rage in this world.

It is during spiritual trials that we best know that we need God's help. At such times, we best remember that we are small and weak and that we are not the great spiritual champions that we would otherwise imagine ourselves to be. We remember then that we would be deluding ourselves to think that we can terrorize all devils and put them to flight because of our great holiness and spiritual power.

For this reason, God sends us trials – including severe trials – in order that these trials would remind us of our weakness so that we do not get puffed up by the magnificent spiritual gifts that God gives to us Catholics who follow the full traditions of the Church.

3. God permits us to undergo trials in order that the Devil may have experience that we have entirely renounced him.

It is appropriate that the devil should have discernable evidence that we belong to God and are soldiers in His army. It is fitting that the devil sees that the soldiers of Christ fight for Him and that the devil sees that we fulfill our baptismal vows to “renounce Satan and all of his works and pomps”.

It befits the Divine honor that we, who are Our Lord's servants and friends, do not render Him service which is so indiscernible that the devil is able to mock Our Lord that he can't even tell that we are serving the Divine Majesty.

God must not only triumph in us but must also be *seen* to triumph in us. This is good and fitting just as it is good and fitting that, at the end of the world, not only will justice be done at the General Judgment but also that it will be *seen* to have been done.

Thus, God sends us trials to make manifest that we belong to Him and not to the devil.

4. God sends us grievous trials in order that, by this spiritual combat, we can be made stronger.

A soldier is given weapons in order that he can fight. If he were not supposed to fight, he would not have been given weapons. If he were supposed to remain idle, he would have been given pillows instead of weapons.

Similarly, St. John Chrysostom teaches us that we *Soldiers of Christ* receive spiritual weapons for the very purpose of we fighting God's battles in the trials He sends us. St. John Chrysostom teaches us that God wants us “to fight, not sit idle”. *Id.*

Just as hard physical exercise causes our bodily muscles to gain strength, likewise grievous spiritual trials and tribulations strengthen our “spiritual muscles”. That is, our wills gain strength in virtue through hard spiritual work.

We should welcome the trials that God sends. We should generously enter into the penitential times (e.g., Lent, Ember Days, vigils of high feasts, Advent), valuing them as opportunities and as blessings, not as misfortunes which we must endure. We should not approach such times with a stingy heart, doing the minimum required, and making as little change in ourselves as possible.

We should look upon penitential times as occasions of great liberty, freeing ourselves from the burden of our lower nature which pulls us downward. We should also view the Great Apostasy in which we live as a blessing and as a trial meant for our good.³ For we know that such trials “work together unto the good, for those who love God”. *Romans*, 8:28.

Thus, God sends us trials in order to make us stronger in His service.

5. God permits us to undergo trials that we may receive a sign of the treasure entrusted to us; for the Devil would not come upon us to tempt us, did he not see us advanced to greater honors.

Suppose we inherited an old painting of little apparent value from a distant relative. As we receive it, suppose we also receive an offer from a rich art collector to purchase it for \$25 million. That offer would cause us to regard this painting much differently. We would keep it safe and not throw it away or otherwise disregard it.

Suppose we learned that an art thief planned to steal that painting. We would take great care to not allow this valuable possession to be stolen.

Analogously, we possess a far greater treasure: sanctifying grace (which is always accompanied by Charity and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost). That grace is infinitely valuable, although it can seem to people that it is like that old *worthless-seeming* painting we inherited.

However, when we know that the devil is trying to “steal” this priceless treasure from our souls, it helps us to remember the incomparable value of grace. Just as the art thief’s desire to steal our painting warns us of the value of that painting and reminds us to

³ This time of Great Apostasy is a glorious time to be Catholic and to live for Christ the King! <https://catholiccandle.neocities.org/faith/it-is-a-blessing-to-live-during-this-great-apostasy.html>

protect it from theft, likewise, the devil's desire to "steal" the grace in our soul reminds us to take all precautions to protect the life of grace.

Thus, we see that God permits the devil to tempt us through trials to remind us of the infinite value of the grace we have in our souls.

Conclusion

Let us appreciate the trials and tribulations that our Dear Lord generously gives us!

Let us value them more than all material goods and more than a life of ease, since those trials are a crucial means for our salvation.

Let us thank God for those trials and use them for God's greater honor and glory and for maximum merit!



The Traditional Catholic Faith – the Greatest⁴ of God's Gifts

A gift, yes indeed! But how many appreciate it and thank God daily for this greatest of gifts? God came to earth, suffered and died to establish the Faith and demonstrate how to live a happy life on earth and to be perfectly happy forever in heaven. Here are Our Lord's words, as set forth in the *Imitation of Christ*, beautifully echoing *St. John's Gospel*, 14:6:

Follow Me. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Without the Way, there is no going. Without the Truth, there is no knowing. Without the Life, there is no living. I am the Way which you must follow, the Truth which you must believe, the Life for which you must hope. I

⁴ In one way, Charity is the greatest of God's gifts and is the greatest of the Theological Virtues. As St. Paul teaches: "there remain Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three: but the greatest of these is Charity". 1 *Corinthians*, 13:13.

On the other hand, as St. Paul teaches: "without Faith it is impossible to please God." *Hebrews*, 11:6. Thus, although Charity is greatest absolutely, Faith is not only very great but is necessary for possessing Charity. That is, if a person does not have the Catholic Faith, he will not have Charity either. So, in that sense, Faith is greatest – because it is a necessary condition for possessing Charity.

am the inviolable Way, the infallible Truth, the unending Life.⁵

This gift of Faith comes with an obligation to do our part and to do our best to **keep liberalism and compromise out!** Here is Thomas à Kempis' exhortation to us:

Take courage, brethren, let us go forward together and Jesus will be with us. For Jesus' sake, let us persevere with it. He will be our help as He is also our leader and guide. Behold, our King goes before us and will fight for us. Let us follow like men! Let no man fear any terrors!⁶

Webster defines *compromise* as a “process or a result of settlement by arbitration, or by consent reached by mutual concessions – **surrender.**” There is no place for compromise or liberalism in God's perfect gift of Faith.

It is sad to say that, after the Second Vatican Council, the substance of this gift of Faith has been thrown away by 99% of those who describe themselves as Catholics. This includes the “lukewarms”, and the majority of people who thought of themselves as Catholics but didn't bother to notice that our leaders in Rome (and in every diocese) are heading in the opposite direction from Our Lord. With little thought they surrendered various Catholic principles and jumped on the conciliar bandwagon, encouraged by a Rome that has lost the Faith⁷ and is the driving force behind the anti-Catholic Conciliar church.

However much this makes life difficult for Traditionalists, who must fight endlessly to preserve the True Mass, valid Sacraments, and cherished traditions, be assured that Our Lord sees all and will reward those who fight the good fight and do not surrender their principles. Here are Our Lord's words, as set forth in the *Imitation of Christ*:

My child, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to Me than much consolation and devotion when things are going well.⁸

⁵ *Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis; Book III, Ch. 56.

⁶ *Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis; Book III, Ch. 56.

⁷ Our Lady of La Salette predicted in 1846: “Rome will lose the Faith and become the seat of the Antichrist.”

⁸ *Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis; Book III, Ch. 57.

In order for us Traditional Catholics to avoid all compromise, we must stand our ground and not give in to criticism for the stand we take for Christ the King. We must be willing to forgo the compromise Sacraments and parish life. Christ suffered daily for 33 years to establish a perfect Faith. We can certainly suffer some to do our little part to keep the Faith as pure and holy as He intended.

God knows what we need and is sure to provide the necessary help and strength as required to carry on in the current drive by political forces to stamp out God and traditional Catholicism, e.g., Latin Mass Catholics (now designated “violent extremists” by the FBI.)⁹



Catholic Candle note: The so-called Covid “vaccine” is not really a vaccine but is really gene therapy.¹⁰ This “vaccine” is a mortal sin to accept just like all vaccines developed through abortion. <https://catholiccandle.org/2021/01/01/reject-the-covid-vaccines/>

The SSPX used to uphold this Traditional Catholic position that vaccines developed through abortion are always mortally sinful to receive. But the now-liberal SSPX has completely reversed itself and now accepts the conciliar position. To read the SSPX’s prior prohibition and its current permissive words, read part 3 of this article: <https://catholiccandle.org/2021/01/01/reject-the-covid-vaccines/> (citing to the SSPX’s own sources). The “new” SSPX’s current liberal position includes permitting not only receiving abortion-related vaccines but also the Covid so-called “vaccine”.

Further, this Covid “vaccine” is very harmful in many ways, especially harming the immune system¹¹ and causing grave cardiac problems.¹² As explained below, the

⁹ <https://www.heritage.org/religious-liberty/commentary/the-fbis-targeting-radical-traditional-catholics-bodes-ill>

¹⁰ <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/the-covid-19-injection-is-not-a-vaccine-heres-why/>

¹¹ Here are a couple (of many) recent reports:

❖ <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/new-study-shows-mrna-shots-destroy-natural-immunity-to-covid/>

❖ <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/medical-study-shows-unvaccinated-have-stronger-immunity-than-vaccinated-after-six-months/>

¹² Here are a couple (of many) recent reports:

➤ <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/covid-boosters-linked-to-cancer-heart-issues-and-astounding-decline-in-average-lifespans-research-suggests/>

“vaccine” offers negative protection even for Covid itself nor does it “stop the spread” as the leftists lied that it would.

The short article below is merely a reminder to avoid the Covid “vaccine” for all of these reasons.

More Information to Remind Us to Avoid the Covid “Vaccine”

We hope and pray that *Catholic Candle*’s readers had the good judgment and firmness of principles to not get the Covid jab(s). Our lives should be a principled stance against all of the evils of our time, including this “vaccine”.

However, to help our readers to inform others, we report to you an interesting risk-benefit analysis performed recently which examined the impact of Covid booster mandates for university students. The test group was people in the age bracket of 18-29.

As shown in the study discussed below, this risk-benefit analysis shows that the Covid gene therapy (the so-called “vaccine”) does more harm than good. Of course, the more important point is that receiving these Covid boosters constitutes mortal sins since they are cooperating in the murders of innocent babies in abortion, and the further evil of the vivisection of those babies without anesthesia to enhance their “cell lines” for research purposes.

But this summary of the recent interesting study reminds us to avoid this evil “vaccine” and also to not trust the leftists who control the mainstream channels of information.

The recent risk-benefit analysis on young adults

This risk-benefit analysis which was recently conducted examines the impact of booster mandates for North American university students. It concludes that:

- ❖ Between 22,000 and 30,000 previously uninfected adults (aged 18 to 29) must be boosted with an mRNA “vaccine” to prevent one COVID-19 hospitalization.
- ❖ For each hospitalization prevented, the jab will cause 18 to 98 serious adverse events, including 1.7 to 3 “booster-associated myocarditis cases in males, and 1,373

➤ <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/swiss-study-shows-heart-injury-in-all-mrna-covid-jab-recipients-myocarditis-in-3/>

to 3,234 cases of grade ≥ 3 reactogenicity which interferes with daily activities”.

- ❖ That means mandating a third COVID shot for university students will result in “a net expected harm”.
- ❖ The study emphasizes that the results are actually worse than that because “Given the high prevalence of post-infection immunity, this risk-benefit profile is even less favorable.”¹³

The study concludes that university booster mandates are unethical for five reasons:

1. There has been no formal risk-benefit assessment pertaining to this age group;
2. The vaccine mandates may result in a net expected harm to individual young people;
3. The mandates are not proportionate: the expected harms are not outweighed by public health benefits – given the modest and transient effectiveness of vaccines against transmission;
4. U.S. mandates violate the reciprocity principle because rare serious vaccine-related harms will not be reliably compensated due to gaps in current vaccine injury schemes; and
5. The mandates create wider social harms. The study’s authors consider counter-arguments such as a desire for socialization and safety and show that such arguments lack scientific and/or ethical support.

This interesting risk-benefit analysis was financed by the leftist Wellcome Trust. The study is currently in “preprint” advanced publication. The study’s principal author is Dr. Kevin Bardosh, from the *School of Public Health, University of Washington*, USA, and the *Division of Infection Medicine, Edinburgh Medical School*, University of Edinburgh, UK.¹⁴

¹³ You can find the entire study here:
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4206070

¹⁴ You can find the entire study here:
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4206070

Dear Readers, if anyone wonders why/how this study “came out of the blue”, then he is not keeping himself informed. This study is merely one of many.

There is a constant trickle of new studies – mostly ignored by the mainstream media – showing how harmful the Covid “vaccine” is. Each study comes from a different “angle”. The studies are not all exactly the same but they all show, in their own way, that the Covid “vaccine” is dangerous and is harmful to the recipients. (We also know that it is an additional mortal sin since it causes the recipients to share culpability for the murder of those innocent babies).

Another recent news report concerns a new study from researchers in the Netherlands which shows area-by-area of that country, the close correlation between Covid “vaccine” rates and the *all-cause mortality* rates in those same areas.¹⁵ In other words, wherever, in the Netherlands, the Covid “vaccine” rate is higher, the all-cause mortality rate is higher. Wherever one rate is lower so too is the other rate. It makes sense to look at the all-cause mortality rates in relation to the Covid jab because it causes so many serious health problems of so many types.

Yet another recent study showed that, in college and professional athletes, there is close correlation between Covid “vaccine” uptake and career-ending heart inflammation, especially in previously-healthy young men.¹⁶

A different study showed that the rate of professional athletes who are dropping dead without warning, is many times higher than the annual averages “pre-Covid-vaccine”. As our readers might know, the professional sports leagues require Covid “vaccination” for all of their players.¹⁷

¹⁵ <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/new-study-discovers-sharp-mortality-increase-following-covid-injections-in-the-netherlands/>

¹⁶ Here are a few, of many recent reports:

- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/nothing-to-see-here-three-more-top-soccer-players-fall-ill-as-speculation-about-covid-jabs-grows/>
- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/a-staggering-number-of-athletes-collapsed-during-games-this-past-year/>
- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/florida-surgeon-general-highlights-new-studies-warning-of-covid-jab-dangers/>

¹⁷ Here are a few, of many recent reports:

A further study showed a higher rate of catching Covid for those who are “vaccinated”. These studies show a very short protective benefit, followed by “negative protection”.¹⁸

Another study showed a higher rate of hospitalization and a higher rate of death from Covid for those who are “vaccinated”.¹⁹

The “experts” are supposedly puzzled by the onset of “sudden adult death syndrome”.²⁰ But people who do not gullibly believe the mainstream media lies and spin are able to “put two and two together”.

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- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/sudden-death-of-pro-vax-bodybuilder-highlights-epidemic-of-dying-athletes-since-jab-rollout/>
 - <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/former-soccer-star-wants-to-know-why-young-athletes-are-dying-and-no-one-seems-to-notice/>
 - <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/five-professional-soccer-players-die-from-heart-attacks-fueling-speculation-of-vaccine-side-effects/>

¹⁸ Here are a few, of many recent reports:

- <https://www.trialsitenews.com/a/large-studys-disturbing-results-questionable-bivalent-booster-performance-the-greater-the-previous-mrna-doses-the-greater-the-risk-for-infection-b468bbce>
- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/new-study-finds-two-mrna-shots-provide-negative-immunity-against-covid/>
- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/fully-vaccinated-people-at-44-higher-risk-of-covid-infection-than-unvaccinated-uk-study/>

¹⁹ https://www.theepochtimes.com/health/severe-covid-rare-in-people-who-didnt-get-vaccine-survey-reveals_4528365.html

²⁰ Here are a few, of many recent reports:

- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/mainstream-media-reports-on-sudden-adult-death-syndrome-ignore-covid-jab-correlation/>
- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/doctors-baffled-by-a-mysterious-new-sudden-death-syndrome-killing-healthy-young-people/>
- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/ireland-sees-42-more-deaths-in-past-two-months-compared-to-pre-covid-levels/>

There are so many other studies. They show, each in its own way, that the Covid “vaccine” is harmful.

A person might naively wonder why our leaders don’t know about these studies. The answer is: they **DO** know! There are several reasons why they are acting the way they are – and all of those reasons are evil, *e.g.*, to reduce the world’s population to make it easier for the globalist to achieve control.

This is a good reminder, too, that we should not rely on the public health “experts” and mainstream media concerning the harm of accepting that booster.



Mary’s School of Sanctity

Lesson #20 – The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius – SECOND WEEK – FIRST DAY AND FIRST CONTEMPLATION – THE INCARNATION

Now at this point of the *Spiritual Exercises* St. Ignatius changes the method in which he sets up his meditations because he wants us to do our meditations in a slightly different manner. Because St. Ignatius wants to encourage us to imitate Our Lord, he sets forth a series of meditations which will be an in-depth study of Our Lord’s Life and virtues. He will take us through the key mysteries of the life of Christ and have us spend some time in pondering each of them. However, in these meditations he wants us to paint a scene with our imagination and focus on what we *see*, *hear*, and *observe actions* in the given particular scene. He has us do this so we can draw lessons for our souls which will bring with them many fruits. One of these fruits is a greater dedication to Our Lord in our service of Him.

First, we will give the text of what St. Ignatius calls the *First Contemplation of the Second Week* which is on the *Incarnation*. Then we will give some further ideas for the present considerations we are making. Here we are going to study the circumstances

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- <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/covid-boosters-linked-to-cancer-heart-issues-and-astounding-decline-in-average-lifespans-research-suggests/>
 - <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/sudden-death-epidemic-excess-mortality-among-young-middle-aged-americans-skyrockets/>
 - <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/nbc-acknowledges-myocarditis-link-to-covid-19-vaccines-after-sudden-deaths-of-young-adults/>

surrounding this very important aspect of Our Catholic Faith, the Incarnation— Our Lord becoming Man through the Hypostatic Union, namely, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity uniting to human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The *preparatory prayer* is the same as usual, *I ask God Our Lord the grace that all my intentions, actions, and works may be directed purely to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty.*

The FIRST PRELUDE: is to recall to mind the history of the subject I am about to contemplate. Here it is how the Three Divine Persons were looking upon the whole extent and space of the earth, filled with human beings. They see that all were going down into hell, and They decreed, in Their eternity, that the Second Person should become man to save the human race. When the fullness of time had come, They sent the Angel Gabriel to Our Lady.

The SECOND PRELUDE: is a mental representation of the place. I will see, in imagination the great extent and space of the world, where dwell so many different nations and peoples. I will then see particularly the city of Nazareth in the province of Galilee, and the house and room where Our Lady dwells.

The THIRD PRELUDE: is to ask for what I desire. Here I will ask for an intimate knowledge of Our Lord, Who has become man for me, that I may love and follow Him better.

The FIRST POINT: First, I will SEE all the different people on the face of the earth, so varied in dress and in behavior. Some are white and others black; some at peace and others at war; some weeping and others laughing; some well and others sick; some being born and others dying, etc.

Second, I will SEE and CONSIDER the Three Divine Persons seated on the royal throne of the Divine Majesty. They behold the entire face and extent of the earth and They behold all nations in such great blindness, dying, and going down into hell.

Third, I will SEE Our Lady and the angel who greets her. I will reflect that I may draw profit from this scene.

The SECOND POINT: I will HEAR what the people throughout the world are saying, how they converse with one another, how they swear and blaspheme, etc. I will also listen to what the Three Divine Persons are saying, that is, “Let us work the redemption of mankind,” etc. I shall then listen to what the angel and Our Lady are saying. I will then reflect upon what I hear to draw profit from these words.

The THIRD POINT: I will CONSIDER what the people throughout the world ARE DOING; how they are wounding, killing, and going to hell, etc. I will also consider what the Three Divine Persons are doing, namely, accomplishing the most Holy Incarnation, etc., also what the angel and Our Lady are doing, as the angel fulfills his office of ambassador, and Our Lady humbles herself and gives thanks to the Divine Majesty. I will then reflect to derive some profit from each of these things.

The COLLOQUY: I will now think of what I should say to the Three Divine Persons, or the eternal Word Incarnate, or to His Mother, Our Lady. I will ask help according to the need that I feel within myself, so that I may more closely follow and imitate Our Lord Who has just become Incarnate. Close with the “Our Father”.

Considerations for the FIRST POINT: TO USE THE SENSE OF SIGHT

- **SEE the world before and at the time of the Incarnation;**

Let us bring to our minds, dear reader, what the world was like before the Incarnation. Paganism was everywhere. The Israelites were sorely tempted by idolatry and often fell into the worship of false gods. Very few of the Israelites were faithful to the Commandments of God and the belief in the Redeemer to come, both of which were required for salvation in the Old Testament. We can think about the few *just* people waiting in anticipation for the promised Redeemer. Mary and St. Joseph were among them.

The Roman Empire had conquered most of the known world at that time. The Romans occupied all of the land around the Mediterranean Sea including the entire coastline of northern Africa. They owned all of Spain, France, the Netherlands and all along the English Channel in the north. In fact, they owned most of the island we now know as Britain. Also, in the northeast, they owned up to the Black Sea and of course they occupied the Holy Land in the east. In this we can see God’s Providence because when Our Redeemer would set up the one true Church, He could establish His Church on the foundation of the Roman civil order. Yet, consider how the majority of people were living in the darkness of Paganism. On the other continents of the world where people migrated, there was the even greater emptiness of ignorance and sin. Worldwide unhappiness prevailed.

- **SEE the Trinity overseeing the world before the Incarnation;**

Behold in your mind’s eye, dear reader, how God, in His infinite mercy pitied mankind. Try to picture the great Council of the Trinity looking down on the entire world.

Remember, Jesus is called the *Angel of the Great Council*.²¹

- **SEE the scene of the Annunciation:**

Picture Our Lady praying in her small home in Nazareth. The Angel Gabriel appeared to her. Scripture tells us that she was troubled by his voice and his message. Does this mean that she was not looking at the vision of the angel? She, no doubt, had perfect custody of her eyes, so we can imagine that she wasn't looking at the angel. Or was it that she already had such a life of contemplation that the visitation of angels was a common occurrence and that it was not the vision of an angel which troubled her soul?

Considerations for the SECOND POINT: TO USE THE SENSE OF HEARING

- **HEAR the world in the period before Christ.**

Picture the pagan and confused world as St. Ignatius speaks of it in his words given above; let us hear the tumult of the world. Let us listen to the crowds of the entire world. The people are going through life completely ignorant regarding the purpose for which they were created.

As St. Ignatius describes for us in his text above, we can imagine the people as they scream and shout. They laugh at all types of crude and banal things. They chatter unceasingly about worthless things. What a mass of confusing babble!

- **HEAR the Trinity conversing about working out the Incarnation;**

As in Genesis God promised to send a Redeemer saying, "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" [Gen. 3:15]. God is about to fulfill His promise. The Trinity, in our imagination, is setting out that now is the time to work the crushing of the head of Satan. Imagine God the Father saying, "Now let us work the redemption of mankind. Thou, My Only Begotten Son, Oh Word, shalt take flesh. Behold Thy Mother, Our Masterpiece, will be told of Our Divine Plan. We know that she will humbly accept the Plan and will be the Cause of Joy to Our adopted sons and daughters."

²¹ Taken from the *Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus*

- **HEAR what is occurring between Gabriel and Mary.**

The actual Scriptural text is given here: St. Luke 1: 26-56

And in the sixth month, [of St. Elizabeth's expectancy] the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

Who having heard, was troubled at his saying and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end.

And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man?

And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore, also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren. Because no word shall be impossible with God.

And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda.

And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she cried out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.

And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty

hath done great things to me: and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him. He hath shewed might in his arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy. As He spoke to our fathers: to Abraham and to his seed forever.

And Mary abode with her about three months. And she returned to her own house.

Considerations for the THIRD POINT: to consider actions

CONSIDER THE ACTIONS of the people in the world before and at the time of the Incarnation:

In the above sections, we have brought out the sights and sounds of the pagan world before Christ and at the time of the Incarnation; we need now to consider the actions of the people more.

They are living a banal existence. They do not have any eternal perspective and therefore have no goal or purpose for living. The people war against each other and the victor enslaves the defeated. What poor people! Think of the overall fear that the majority of people are feeling! They have to fight for survival every day. Not only do they have to provide for themselves from day to day, but they live in constant fear of being invaded by thieves or some foreign army. What a terrifying existence for those who do not know God! The people of most of the nations have no Mosaic Law for guidance and likewise they have no God-given orders about the sacrifices that God wants. These peoples live for sensual pleasures, riches, pursuit of power. What an empty existence they must have! Most of them were working out their damnation and live without any hope of happiness!

They try to tell themselves that they are happy; yet, they know in their hearts that they are not convinced of this. They commit murders and steal. They cheat each other and gossip. They do not trust one another. The Roman soldiers are patrolling the towns and villages. These soldiers are watching to keep some kind of order.

CONSIDER THE ACTIONS of the Holy Trinity-- the loving providence and compassion that God has for mankind:

As we heard the Council of the Trinity above, we now consider the fulfillment of God's promise. Even though the human race was living unmindful of God, He is ever mindful of the human race. As He said in Jeremiah, "*I have loved thee with an everlasting love*".

[*Jeremias*, 31:3] God shows that He wants the Redemption of the world. “*God so loved the world that He sent His Only Begotten Son.*” [*St. John’s Gospel*, 3:16]

From all eternity God knew that He would work the Redemption by sending His Son. He also knew *when* He would accomplish this task. God now sends St. Gabriel with the joyful task of conveying to Our Lady the special mission God has for her, namely, to be the Mother of God.

Let us consider how we have not appreciated His loving care of us as we ought. We could never be thankful enough for the gifts that God has given us. The Incarnation alone is a wonderful gift to mankind and we must not forget that the purpose of the Incarnation was in order to atone for the sins of man and to open the gates of heaven which had been closed to man ever since the fall of Adam. Indeed, where would we be without this Great Act of Love?

The beautiful reality of the Hypostatic Union of God the Son to human flesh is awe-inspiring in Itself. God the Son became man and will remain so for all eternity. What condescension! What a humiliation! He wanted to give us a chance to save our souls and He wants to be our friend. He also wanted to be a model for us to follow.

CONSIDER THE ACTIONS: of St. Gabriel and Our Lady

Let us now take some time to consider this beautiful scene of the messenger of God announcing to the Blessed Virgin, God’s Plan for her, and asking for her consent.

The entire text of this scene is given above as well as the wondrous scene of the Visitation and the Sanctification of St. John the Baptist in his mother’s womb. We include the entire interchange between Mary and St. Elizabeth because we want to get an intimate understanding of Mary, as well as Our Lord. Mary’s response to St. Elizabeth, which is known as her *Magnificat*, shows her very profound humility.

So, the Angel Gabriel comes to Mary and tells her she is found special in the Eyes of God. Why is she special? It is precisely because she is full of grace. She was full of grace ever since the moment she was conceived because the merits of the Redemption were applied to her long before Our Lord suffered His Passion and Death. God can make an exception to His decree that all humans contract original sin. Since He is not limited by the bounds of time, He chose to prevent original sin from ever sullyng the soul of the Virgin Mary.

Thus, Mary is a pure vessel of honor and God willed her to be the place where the Hypostatic Union would occur. Mary has ever been God’s willing handmaid. Her parents presented her in the Temple when she was three years old. She was taught in the Temple. Therefore, she knew the Scriptures very well.

What did she think when Gabriel announced that she would conceive a son and He would be called Jesus and He would be the Son of the Most High? And of His kingdom there would be no end? Her humility was being tested. She would have known the passage from Isaiah, “*Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel.*”

She wondered if Isaiah’s prophesy applied to her. She was cautious lest the Angel Gabriel’s words were a trap of the devil in order to tempt her to pride. Her response shows that she did not trust the praise she had been given. She tests the apparition to see if it is indeed from God. She knows that she made a vow of perpetual virginity and this vow was done purely out of love for God. God had showed her that He accepted her vow. So now, how can this be that she could conceive since she is a virgin and not at all interested in breaking that vow? So, she inquires of the angel how this conception can take place and indicates to him that she is a consecrated virgin.

The angel tells her that the Holy Ghost will cause the Conception and therefore the Child so conceived will be called the Son of God. He also reveals to her the remarkable news that her elderly cousin Elizabeth had conceived a son even though she had been considered barren. The angel tells her this as his way of proving to her that nothing is impossible with God.

When Mary hears of this extraordinary expectancy of her aged cousin, she is convinced that this apparition is from God. Therefore, she readily submits her will to God saying, “*Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.*” She only wants to do the Will of God. For her His Will ***is the only thing*** that matters. Then, at that moment, the “Word became Flesh.” Wisdom became incarnate; hence Wisdom became man.

We must remember that Mary was well-schooled in the Scriptures. She knew that the Messiah was to be the Savior and Redeemer. She knew that He would suffer a miserable death and be the “Man of Sorrows and the outcast of His people.”

As a mother she would suffer from this future suffering of her Son, and yet, she does not worry about her own future suffering, she only is concerned about doing what God wants. Again, for her, His Will ***is the only thing*** that matters.

She humbles herself and immediately goes to be of assistance to her cousin Elizabeth who must be in need being so old and with child. Mary’s generosity is “***with haste.***”

Then we see and hear Mary’s humility again when she sees her cousin and her cousin praises her. She recites her beautiful canticle giving God all the glory of making her the Mother of God.

We have few words of Mary in the Gospels. The *Magnificat* is a masterpiece of eloquent praise of God and giving Him all the credit for the glory and fame which is and will be

associated with her. *“He that is mighty hath done great things to me.”*

Concluding thoughts:

Let us be astonished about how God is so loving and merciful to men as to become like unto them. Ponder the humiliation of the Son of God at His Incarnation. As St. Paul says, *“Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal to God; emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.”* [Phil. 2:6-8]

Think about how Our Lord wanted to become our model so we could imitate His virtues and His love. *“No greater love hath a man than to lay down his life for his friend.”* What priceless love to not only become man, but to die for the sake of the salvation of men! When Adam rejected the goodness of God in favor of Eve, Our Lord, the new Adam, reverses this dastardly act by embracing a life of suffering and the most shameful death on the Cross. He wants us to learn humility, for His whole life was one continuous act of humility.

Think also with wonder about how Mary, the new Eve, rejected anything to do with the serpent – the evil one. Instead, she exclaims that she owes everything to God. She proclaims that she wants only to serve God and not act like Eve who wanted to become as a god.

COLLOQUY: How do I begin to thank Thee, O my Supreme Good for Thy mercies in becoming man to save us from hell fire? O Holy Trinity, how sweet and how loving of Thee to give us an opportunity to share Thy divinity with us! O, God the Father, how Thou dost provide in the extreme for us by sending Thy beloved Son to be butchered for us wretched sinners! O, Thou Incarnate Wisdom, our words cannot praise Thee enough for Thine example of a most holy life! Thou didst become man to be our Model, our Hope, our Savior, our Redeemer, our Friend, and our Beloved Spouse. What more could we ask for? Thou hast given all! O, Holy Ghost, can our lips utter sufficient words to thank Thee for overshadowing Our dear precious Mother Mary and making her the true singular vessel of honor? Help us, O most Holy Trinity, to love Thee with an ardent love and serve Thee ever more faithfully. We do not deserve all Thy tender mercies shown towards us. Help us to humble ourselves ever more and more in Thy Presence and pour forth our hearts in tearful gratitude of love.

O dear tender Mother Mary, guide us in our homage and love of God. Help us to imitate Thy virtues, o sweet Virgin Mary. We, like thee, want to be generous to God and give ourselves completely in His service. Teach us, O Mary, the countless ways we can sacrifice ourselves for God.

The possibilities for our colloquy are numerous. The above is only a sample of what could be said.

Now that we have begun our intimate study of Our Lord, we hunger to increase our knowledge of Our Beloved Lord and Redeemer. We have laid a foundation of desire to imitate the virtues and love of Our Lord. Hence, in our next lesson we will continue our study of Christ by doing what St. Ignatius refers to as the ***Contemplation on the Nativity***.

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