

Catholic Candle

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What We Hold

Let us make this resolution

We should always strive to make sure that everything we do, say, and think is what, at our Particular Judgment, we would *wish* we had done, said, or thought.

Cf., Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, Section: How to make a good choice, Second Way, Fourth Rule.

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Are You Faithful to Your State of Life? God Knows.

Your state of life is the position in life in which God has placed you, at least for now. There are four states of life: marriage, the single state, the priesthood, and the religious state. It goes without saying that our state of life is God's plan for how we should live right now to reach our goal: happiness on earth and eternal much-greater happiness with God in heaven. If you faithfully follow the state of life in which God has placed you, your life will not only be happy but meaningful and satisfying. He will also give special graces needed for your state of life.

God gave us free will, so answering God's call to your vocation is going to be a matter of much prayer and study. Let's lay out each state of life, starting with marriage.

Marriage

As a *Catholic Candle* reader and an uncompromising traditional Catholic, you understand that it is a state of life in which the husband as head of the family, and the wife as his helpmate, work together for a higher place in heaven. The married couple will receive extra graces to bring into existence a God-fearing and loving family, a family

steeped in virtue and love of the traditional Catholic Faith. If the family does not meet these goals, the husband as head of the family is most responsible and will suffer for it.

Q. What are the chief ends of the Sacrament of Matrimony?

A. The chief ends of the Sacrament of Matrimony are:

1. To propagate or keep up the existence of the human race by bringing children into the world to serve God;
2. To enable the husband and wife to aid each other in securing the salvation of their souls; and
3. To prevent sins against the holy virtue of purity by faithfully obeying the laws of the marriage state.

What are the duties of the husband? Here is what the *Council of Trent Catechism* teaches us:

It is the duty of the husband to treat his wife generously and honorably. It should not be forgotten that Eve was called by Adam his companion. The woman, he says, whom thou gavest me as a companion. Hence it was, according to the opinion of some of the holy Fathers, that she was formed not from the feet but from the side of man; as, on the other hand, she was not formed from his head, in order to give her to understand that it was not hers to command but to obey her husband.

The husband should also be constantly occupied in some honest pursuit with a view to provide necessities for the support of his family and to avoid idleness, the root of almost every vice. He is also to keep all his family in order, to correct their morals, and see that they faithfully discharge their duties.¹

Now let's consider the duties of wives. Here is what the *Council of Trent Catechism* teaches us:

To train their children in the practice of virtue and to pay particular attention to their domestic concerns should also be especial objects of their attention. The wife should love to remain at home, unless compelled by necessity to go out; and she should never presume to leave home without her husband's consent. Again, and in this the conjugal union chiefly consists, let wives never forget that next to God they are to love their husbands, to esteem them above all others, yielding to them in all

¹ *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, section and subsections: *Sacraments, Matrimony, Duties of Married People, Duties of a Husband*, Joseph F. Wagner, New York, 1923, p. 352.

things not inconsistent with Christian piety, a willing and ready obedience.²

The Single State

This is a wonderful state of life important in God's plan for the human race. Everyone starts in this situation. But not everyone is strong or healthy enough to provide for the needs of a family. If a person chooses to remain single, he or she would be able to serve God better without the pressing daily demands of a family. An unmarried woman is more intent on being holy, both body (*i.e.*, virgin) and soul, making this state permanent by means of a vow.³

² Catechism of the Council of Trent, section and subsections: *Sacraments, Matrimony, Duties of Married People, Duties of a Wife*, Joseph F. Wagner, New York, 1923, p, 352.

³ The single state is clearly a "state" and everyone enters the world in this situation from the beginning of his life. Undoubtedly, God intends some persons to remain single all of their lives. One clear example (out of many) is a man who lives his entire life paralyzed. Further, cognitive or other incapacities, dramatic societal upheavals, and perhaps other situations might prevent a person from answering a call of a religious, sacerdotal, or matrimonial vocation.

There is a provisional character to the unmarried state unless it is fixed by a vow answering a religious or priestly vocation. The single state is the condition of not having responded to God's calling (*i.e.*, a vocation) to the religious life, to the priesthood or to matrimony.

One can see the provisional character of the single state by the fact that a person can change his mind over the years, thinking that he is called to be a monk and begin searching for an uncompromising monastery to enter. Later, he can believe that he is instead called to the priesthood and begin looking for an uncompromising seminary and bishop. Then after that, he can come to believe God Wills him to be married. Only when his vocation is fixed by a vow does it become clear in what vocation he will serve God during the remainder of his life. (Of course, the analogous circumstances can apply to a woman considering God's Will for her in the convent or marriage.)

This single state is better in its opportunity, *i.e.*, better in its potential, as compared to matrimony, because it affords the opportunity to serve God more full-time and more directly than is possible by someone in a married vocation out in the world, through an unmarried person's living life under a vow of consecrated virginity.

As to whether the single state is a separate vocation apart from vocations to the priesthood and religious life, that question is beyond the scope of this article. We note, however, that the Church provides particular rites and vows for those entering a priestly vocation, a religious vocation or a married vocation but not for laymen who simply remain in the single state by pursuing none of those vocations.

In *The Catechism Explained*⁴, the author explains regarding the unmarried state:

The unmarried state is better than the married because those who do not marry have far more opportunity⁵ for attending to their spiritual welfare, and can attain a higher degree of glory hereafter.

The Priesthood

God calls a young man to the priesthood to dedicate himself wholly to caring for the spiritual life of the members of His Mystical Body, especially by offering Holy Mass. He is a mediator between God and man. He brings great gifts to man *via* the seven Sacraments for salvation. The greatest gift he brings is Christ Himself in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist.

The Religious State

God calls men and women to enter the religious state as brothers and sisters, and to consecrate themselves to Him by vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They more directly live for God. Christ said: “If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow Me.” *St. Matthew’s Gospel*, 19:126-130.

A priest can combine his priestly vocation with a religious state to combine the advantages of both states of life.

The Sacred Heart, the Help, Perfection, and Goal of All States in Life

It is obvious each state of life will have problems and challenges, but regardless of their state in life, Our Lord has made 12 Promises to St. Margaret Mary for souls devoted to Him and His Sacred Heart:

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state in life.

⁴ *The Catechism Explained*, Spirago, Benziger, 1921, Section II, *The Sacraments*, subsection 7, *Matrimony*, subheading: *The Unmarried State*, p. 667.

⁵ This single state is better in its opportunity, *i.e.*, better in its potential, as compared to matrimony, because it affords the opportunity to serve God more full-time and more directly than is possible by someone in a married vocation out in the world, through an unmarried person’s living life under a vow of consecrated virginity.

2. I will establish peace in their families.
3. I will console them in all their difficulties.
4. I will be their secure refuge during life, and more especially at the hour of death.
5. I will shower down abundant blessings on all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in My Heart a Source and Boundless Ocean of Mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection.
9. I will bless every place in which the picture of my Sacred Heart shall be exposed and honored.
10. I will give to priests the power of touching the most hardened hearts.
11. Persons who propagate this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, and they shall never be effaced therefrom.
12. I will grant the grace of final repentance to all those who shall communicate (*i.e.*, receive Communion)⁶ on the first Friday nine months consecutively. They shall not die in mortal sin, nor without having received the last Sacraments, for My Divine Heart will become their secure refuge at that last moment.

⁶ Most people in the world, including the members of the *Catholic Candle* Team, do not currently have access to an uncompromising priest from whom to receive the Sacraments. But we should all be at peace about that, for as long as that is God's Will for us.

Even if we don't "feel" content with our feelings, nonetheless with our will and intellect (the important faculties) we should be perfectly content without the Mass and Sacraments when they are not available without compromise. <https://catholiccandle.neocities.org/faith/complete-contentment-without-the-mass-when-it-is-not-available-without-compromise.html>

We urge all Catholics to not compromise by attending any compromise group to get the Sacraments, even where the group has valid Sacraments. The Sacraments of compromise groups do not please God. <https://catholiccandle.org/2020/04/02/a-compromise-groups-masses-and-sacraments-do-not-give-grace-because-the-end-does-not-justify-the-means/>

We encourage our readers to do what we do: we sanctify the Sunday at home using this method: <https://catholiccandle.neocities.org/faith/sanctifying-sunday-no-mass.html>

God will not place you to your state of life without much help to fulfill it for His greater honor and glory. He wants very much for you to succeed in His vineyard, and you can depend on Him to help you, as He indicated in these words:

“Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”⁷

With strong and serene hearts, let us strive to live perfectly the state in life in which God has placed us!



Words to Live by – from Catholic Tradition

Let us pray for things that are appropriate for us

St. Thomas Aquinas, Greatest Doctor of the Catholic Church, teaches us how to ask for what we should:

St. Augustine speaks against those who ask God for worldly honor, as follows:

When you ask for the things that God praises and promises to give, ask him with confidence, because God grants those things to us. Yet if you ask for temporal things, ask with discretion, for God knows better than man whether things are good or bad for us.

Still, many ask God more freely for temporal than for eternal goods. All such people ask in an indiscreet way, because it does not befit God to give such a small gift, just as it does not befit the King of France to give a dime.

Or, God prefers not to listen to such people, because what they ask for is not salutary for them, just as he did not listen to St. Paul [when he asked God to be delivered from the sting of the flesh, 2 Cor. 12.7], and just as he does not listen to boys in schools asking that they not be flogged, because it is of no avail to them.

St. Thomas Aquinas, sermon *Petite et Accipietis*, preached to the faculty and students of the University of Paris, on the 5th Sunday after Easter.



⁷ *Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis; Bk. IV, Ch. 1.

***Catholic Candle* note:** The globalists are seeking to grab power by frightening gullible people that there is a climate emergency that requires the globalists to save us by wielding totalitarian power for our own good. <https://catholiccandle.org/2019/12/22/the-baseless-climate-change/>

These globalists falsify and deceptively use climate data as part of their scheme to alarm people with a supposed global-warming emergency. In roughly the 1970s, the globalists tried (and largely succeeded) in alarming people by the scare of global cooling and the (supposed) coming of a “new ice age”. <https://catholiccandle.org/2022/10/25/recalling-a-1970s-climate-change-hoax/>

The globalists use cyclical climate trends to alarm the people, as if the climate cycle was going to continue without end in the same direction. In an earlier article, we examined the fact that the climate is naturally cyclical. There are daily cycles, yearly cycles, decades-long cycles and centuries-long cycles. Read this article: *Climate Alarmists Abuse Data from Natural Weather Cycles*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2023/02/24/climate-alarmists-abuse-data-from-natural-weather-cycles/>

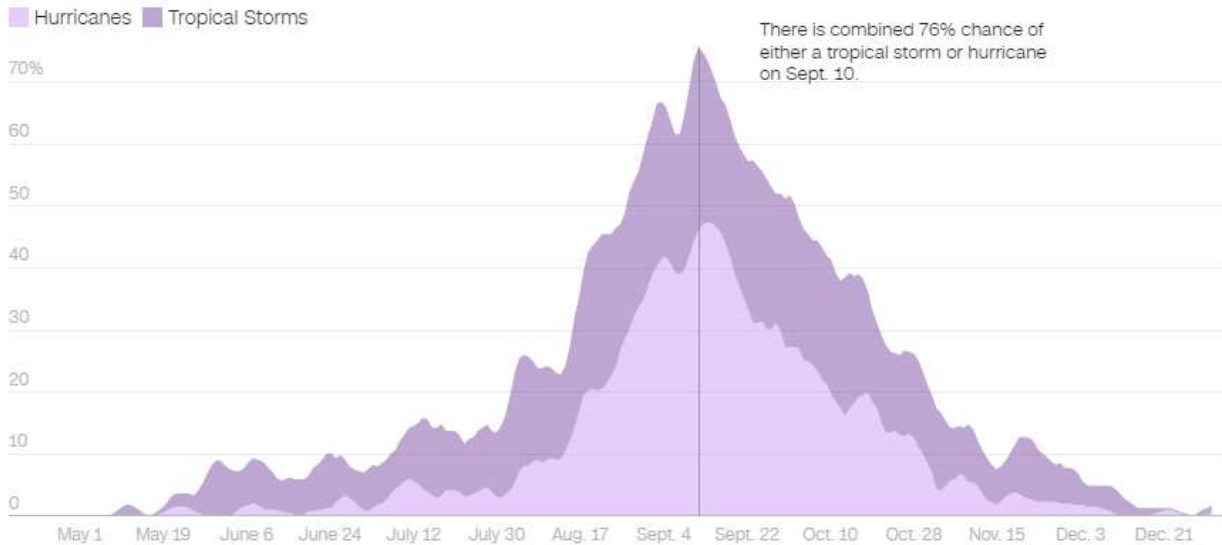
The article below treats of a related topic, debunking the claims of the climate alarmists who assert that hurricanes are becoming more numerous and more severe because of man-made (anthropogenic) “climate change”.

The False Claim that Man-Made Global Warming Causes Hurricanes to be More Numerous and Severe

Part 1

The leftists seek to alarm gullible people (especially the young) by claiming that the current warming cycle (which the leftists call “global warming”) is harmful because this warming causes hurricanes to be more numerous and more severe. This alarmism is false as we will see.

Just as the temperature goes in long and in short-term cycles, it would not surprise any thinking person that hurricanes go in cycles too. There is an obvious annual hurricane cycle, because of which part of the year is called the “hurricane season”, especially in places such as the Gulf of Mexico. Here is a NOAA (U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) graph of the annual hurricane cycle:



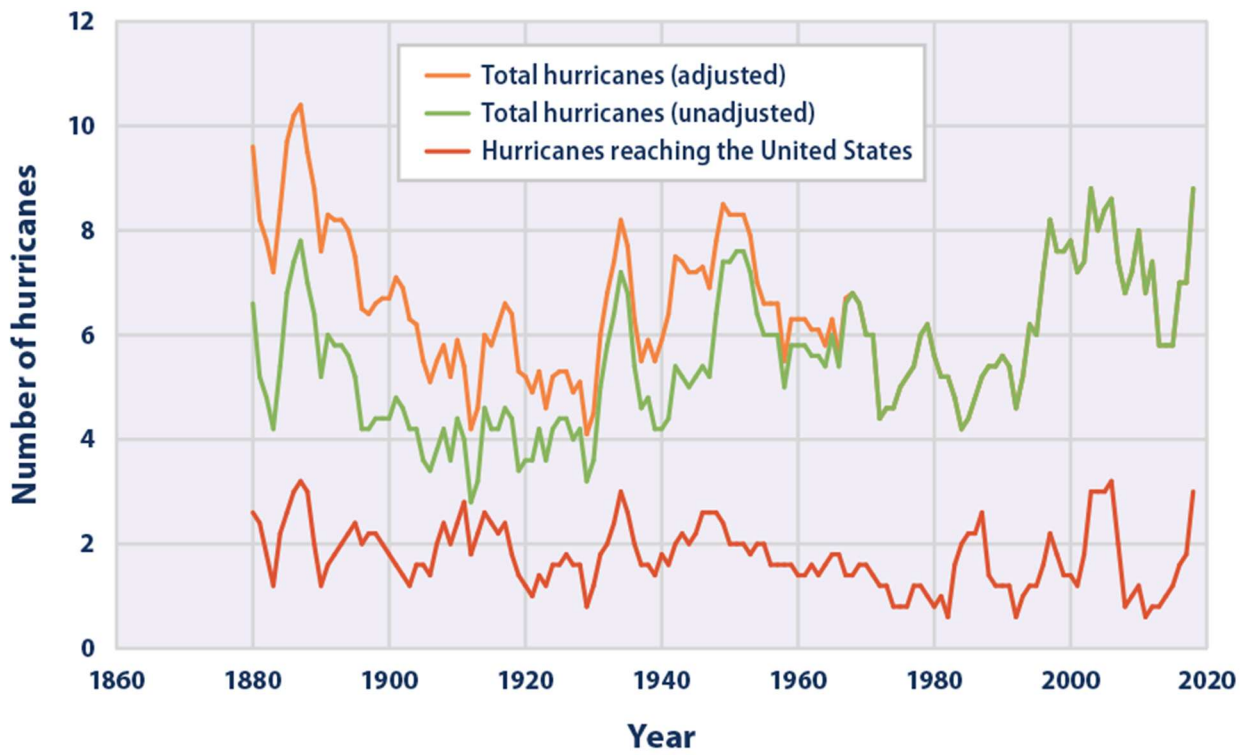
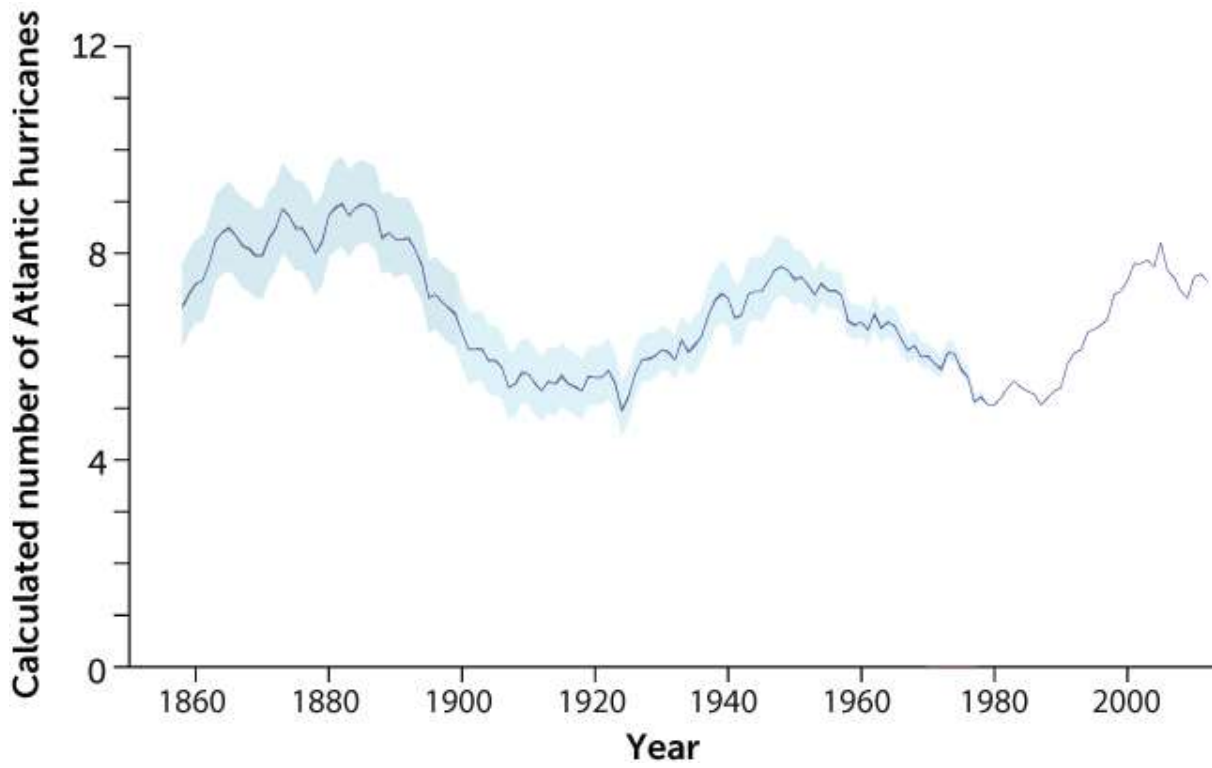
Note: Values are 5-day averages based on data from 1944 through 2020.

Source: NOAA

In addition to those annual cycles, hurricanes also follow decades-long cycles. Below are some graphs showing such decades-long cycles. The first one⁸ is averaged to make the graph less “spikey”. The second one⁹ (the one from the U.S. E.P.A. *i.e.*, the Environmental Protection Agency) is the non-averaged, “spikier” version of the first graph. We see that both of them display a cyclical pattern that takes decades to repeat itself.

⁸ This graph is taken from: From <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/hurricanes-frequency-danger-climate-change-atlantic>

⁹ This graph is taken from: <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-tropical-cyclone-activity>



It would seem plausible that there would also be hurricane cycles that take centuries to repeat, just as there are centuries-long temperature cycles.¹⁰ But we have no information on that question, one way or the other.

Regarding these hurricane cycle graphs (above), notice that the U.S. E.P.A. graph refers to the pre-1972 data being “adjusted”. The U.S. government began wide-spread use of weather satellites that year. The U.S. government and academic researchers all adjust the pre-1972 data and they all agree that an upward adjustment is necessary because the pre-1972 data for hurricanes missed all hurricanes that did not reach landfall unless a ship at sea happened to see the hurricane. It is reasonable and obvious to everybody that this pre-1972 tracking system missed many hurricanes and so the data is adjusted upward to account for this under-count in both government and academic records.

Because hurricanes occur in cycles (like the weather more generally), this enables climate alarmists to manipulate the hurricane data to have it “prove” what they want. So, *e.g.*, “cutting” the data (*i.e.*, starting their graph) at a low point allows the climate alarmists to claim that the upward slope of the normal hurricane cycle “proves” that there is an “alarming” hurricane increase (which they blame on a global warming emergency).

Although the government weather and climate services, as well as academia (university researchers) are controlled by the leftists, they cannot entirely avoid the truth that the climate data does not support climate alarmism. So, when government or university reports dispel alarmist myths, those reports are “buried” and de-emphasized, all the while the leftist media, academia, and government agencies continue to insist on dire climate danger and the need for drastic reductions in human-caused carbon emissions.

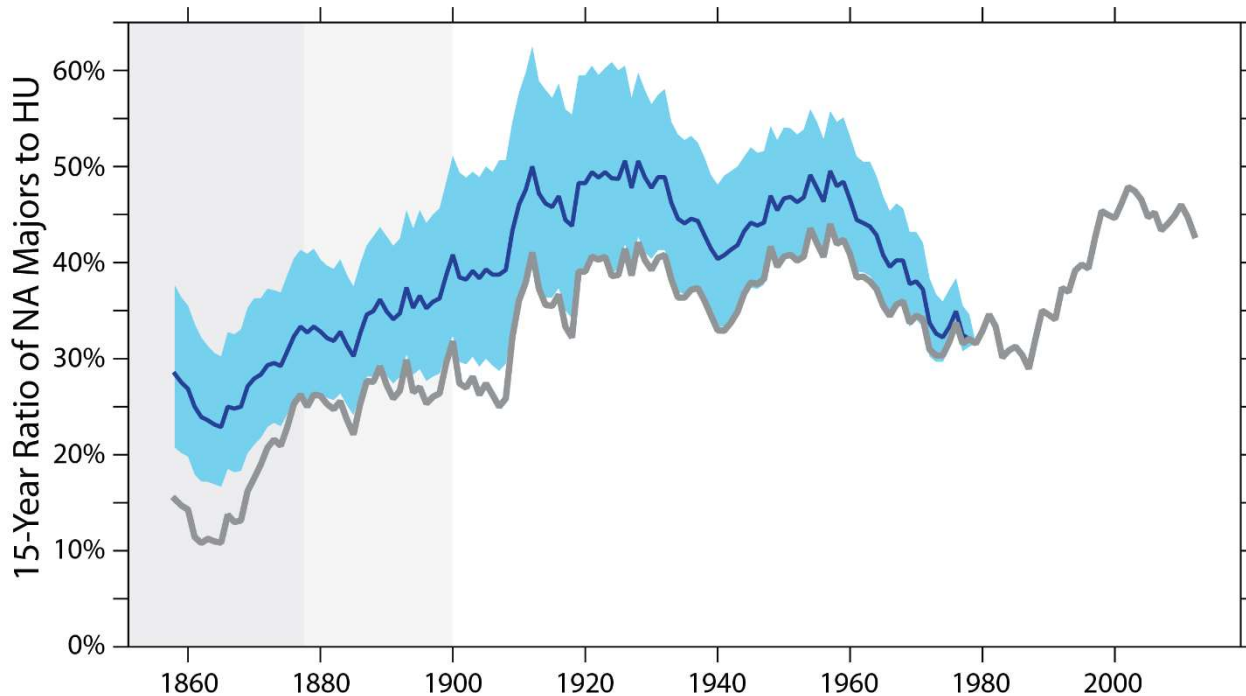
One example of the truth coming out recently – but being “buried” – is a NOAA hurricane study that came out in October 2022. Immediately below are NOAA’s conclusions regarding *no trend* in the strengthening of storms which would cause them to become major hurricanes:

After adjusting for changes in observing capabilities (limited ship observations) in the pre-satellite era, ***there is no significant long-term trend (since the 1880s) in the proportion of hurricanes that become major hurricanes.*** We conclude that the historical Atlantic hurricane data at this stage do not provide compelling evidence for a substantial greenhouse warming-induced century-scale increase

¹⁰ <https://catholiccandle.org/2023/02/24/climate-alarmists-abuse-data-from-natural-weather-cycles/>

in frequency of tropical storms, hurricanes, or major hurricanes, or in the proportion of hurricanes that become major.¹¹

NOAA provides the graph (below) of 160 years of data, adjusted to account for inferior sighting and tracking ability before 1972. This graph, is called “figure 4” in the NOAA report. The graph not only does *not* show an increasing proportion of hurricanes becoming major, but rather it shows greater proportions of hurricanes being major in the 1960s hurricane cycle (compared to now) and an even-greater proportion of major storms in the 1910-1930s cycle. See below.¹²



¹¹ Quoted from the report by the *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory*, found here: <https://www.gfdl.noaa.gov/global-warming-and-hurricanes/> (parenthetical words in the original; emphasis added).

¹² Quoted from the report by the *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory*, found here: <https://www.gfdl.noaa.gov/global-warming-and-hurricanes/> at figure 4, *ratio of Atlantic major hurricanes (Cat 3-5) to all hurricanes (Cat 1-5)*. The gray curve is prior to adjustment; blue curves include an adjustment for estimated missing storms. This graph and data were originally published in [Vecchi et al. 2021](#).

The reference to “*Vecchi et al., 2021*” in NOAA’s graph description (quoted immediately above), is merely NOAA’s attributing the source of the graph that it was using. This study and report, issued by the *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory*, is available here: <https://www.gfdl.noaa.gov/global-warming-and-hurricanes/>

NOAA is telling us that the evidence shows cycles but shows no “significant long-term trend (since the 1880s) in the proportion of hurricanes that become major hurricanes”. NOAA adds (in the quote above) that there is no “compelling evidence” that greenhouse gases cause more storms to become major hurricanes – although the climate alarmists insist the opposite.

NOAA (despite being controlled by leftists) admits that the data does not support the supposition that there is an increase in the severity of hurricanes, once a person adjusts (as all the studies do) for the obvious under-count which occurred when hurricanes were counted by chance ship observations rather than by ever-“watching” satellites, as occurred beginning about 1972.

Let us look again at the graph above. We see from graphs such as this one that in roughly 1980, there was the bottom (trough) of a down cycle. In fact, here is a lengthy study, *Changes in Atlantic major hurricane frequency since the late-19th century*, which observes on this issue:

Nevertheless, the recent increase in the proportion of NA HUs [*i.e.*, North American Hurricanes] becoming MHs [*i.e.*, major hurricanes], after adjustment, which is also reflected in the results of ref. 14, [which is a data source on which this report relies] is ***not a continuation or acceleration of a long-term trend, but rather is a rebound from a deep minimum in the decades surrounding the 1980s***

We find that *recorded* century-scale increases in Atlantic hurricane and major hurricane frequency, and associated decrease in USA hurricanes strike fraction, are consistent with changes in observing practices and not likely a true climate trend. After homogenization, increases in basin-wide hurricane and major hurricane activity since the 1970s are not part of a century-scale increase, but a ***recovery from a deep minimum in the 1960s–1980s. ...***

Our results indicate that the recent increase in NA basin-wide MH/HU ratio or MH frequency is not part of a century-scale increase. Rather it is a rebound from a deep local minimum in the 1960s–1980s. ...

[T]he inactive period in the late 20th century may have been the most inactive period in recent centuries.¹³

¹³ *Changes in Atlantic major hurricane frequency since the late-19th century*
<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-021-24268-5>, citing (in the statements above) the following studies:

Notice in the graph above that a person could cut the graph at roughly 1980 if he wanted to fool gullible people into believing that hurricanes are becoming more intense. This is because graphs or data sets that begin in roughly 1980 lack the context of the fact that 1980 is the trough of a prior cycle. Such a graph misleadingly shows an increase in hurricanes and major hurricanes which make the graph or data *look* as if there is an alarming acceleration in these storms, as the climate extremists falsely claim. This same hurricane study remarks about this false appearance in these words:

Furthermore, the **1980**–2019 increases in basin-wide HU [*i.e.*, hurricanes] and MH [*i.e.*, major hurricanes] frequency are not a continuation of a longer-term trend, but reflect a recovery from a strong minimum in the 1970s and 1980s¹⁴

Now let us look at the leftists' other alarmist hurricane assertion, *viz.*, that anthropogenic (human-caused) greenhouse gases are causing a greater **number** of hurricanes.

NOAA's report concludes that, aside from the usual hurricane cycles, there is no trend toward an increasing number of hurricanes – after adjusting for under-counting in the pre-satellite data. Here are NOAA's conclusions:

After adjusting for a likely under-count of hurricanes in the pre-satellite era, there is essentially no long-term trend in hurricane counts. The evidence for an upward trend is even weaker if we look at U.S. landfalling hurricanes, which even show a slight negative trend beginning from 1900 or from the late 1800s.¹⁵

NOAA's report combines and summarizes its findings as follows:

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- Kossin, J. P., Knapp, K. R., Olander, T. L. & Velden, C. S. *Global increase in major tropical cyclone exceedance probability over the past four decades*, Proc. Natil Acad. Sci. USA 117, 11975–11980 (2020) in “ref. 14”;
 - Chenoweth, M. & Divine, D. *A document-based 318-year record of tropical cyclones in the Lesser Antilles, 1690 – 2007*. Geo- chem. Geophys. Geosyst. 9, Q08013 (2008); and
 - Nyberg, J. et al., *Low Atlantic hurricane activity in the 1970s and 1980s compared to the past 270 years*, *Nature*, 447, 698–701 (2007).

Emphasis added and bracketed comments added for clarity.

¹⁴ *Changes in Atlantic major hurricane frequency since the late-19th century*, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-021-24268-5> Emphasis added.

¹⁵ Quoted from the report by the *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory*, found here: <https://www.gfdl.noaa.gov/global-warming-and-hurricanes/>

We conclude that the historical Atlantic hurricane data at this stage do not provide compelling evidence for a substantial greenhouse warming-induced century-scale increase in frequency of tropical storms, hurricanes, or major hurricanes, or in the proportion of hurricanes that become major hurricanes.¹⁶

We see that even the leftist-controlled NOAA is admitting that it is false to say that greenhouse gases are causing a greater number of hurricanes or a larger number of major hurricanes. But these truths do not change what the leftists are claiming in the mainstream media, academia, and government because the leftists are not seeking the truth (as Karl Marx did not seek the truth). Instead, the leftists seek to complete their globalist power grab.

The leftists would be embarrassed by reports such as the NOAA, Vecchi, and *Nature* reports above, if those reports became well-known to the public. But the leftists know that few people will ever know the truth because their comrades in the media will “bury” these reports in silence and their comrades in the universities will continue to lie to their students that hurricane frequency and severity “prove” that there is an anthropogenic climate crisis.

Conclusion of Part 1 of this Article

We see that weather and climate go in cycles and that this applies to hurricanes, too. We see that NOAA (and the studies it relies on) conclude that, after adjusting for the pre-1972 hurricane under-count, there is ***no upward trend*** in the number or in the severity of hurricanes.

We see that there was a deep trough in the hurricane cycle – in approximately 1980 – which would allow a dishonest manipulation of the data by deceptively cutting the data there in order to give a false appearance of an alarming hurricane increase, as the climate alarmists fraudulently claim.

Remember this trough in 1980 because next month we will look at deceptive alarmist graphs beginning then.

To be continued

¹⁶ Quoted from the report by the *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory*, found here: <https://www.gfdl.noaa.gov/global-warming-and-hurricanes/>

Mary's School of Sanctity

Lesson #21 The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius —SECOND WEEK —THE SECOND CONTEMPLATION—THE NATIVITY

At this time St. Ignatius brings us to our *Second Contemplation* for his plan of the second week. This contemplation will be about the *Nativity*.

As usual we will give the text of St. Ignatius and then give some further considerations.

Besides the *Contemplation on the Nativity*, we are including an additional *Contemplation about the Doubts of St. Joseph*. This Contemplation, in an abridged format, will be set out first because St. Joseph's doubts occurred prior to the Nativity. Further, this allows the exercitant to combine some of these ideas with his contemplation about the Nativity if he so wishes. The doubts of St. Joseph are not mentioned in St. Ignatius's plan for the second week. Still, knowing that we can draw great profit from studying the virtue of the Universal Patron of the Church, we thought it fitting to include this separate contemplation of St. Joseph's doubts in the same *Lesson* as the *Contemplation of the Nativity*. Indeed, this additional Contemplation may help us increase our appreciation of St. Joseph, the foster father of Our Lord.

***** THE EXTRA CONTEMPLATION → THE DOUBTS OF ST. JOSEPH *****

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: I will review the history concerning St. Joseph's doubts once he found that Mary was with Child. He is a just man and we see how God informed him in his sleep what he ought to do.

The SECOND PRELUDE: I will also form a mental image of St. Joseph bewildered when Mary returns from visiting St. Elizabeth in Judea and is clearly with child. I will imagine St. Joseph sleeping and him seeing in his dream an Angel to guide him.

The THIRD PRELUDE: It will be the same and in the same form as it was in the preceding contemplation. [In the preceding contemplations -*This was 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.* And in particular

how Providence ordained that good St. Joseph was specially chosen from all eternity to be the foster father of the Incarnate Word.]

The FIRST POINT: We will SEE St. Joseph noticing a physical change in the sweet Virgin maid.

The SECOND POINT: I will also consider the THOUGHTS that St. Joseph is having concerning his intended spouse with whom he has an understanding since they both have made vows of consecrated virginity.

The THIRD POINT: I will also OBSERVE and CONSIDER how St. Joseph is sleeping and being enlightened about what to do with Mary. I see him waking from slumber and obeying the Holy Ghost by taking her into his own home.

The COLLOQUY: Conclude with a colloquy with St. Joseph, and as in the preceding contemplation, end with the “Our Father.”

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

- SEE the situation before Mary and St. Joseph came together as man and wife. St. Joseph was reassured by an angel in a dream that he should take Mary as his wife. [The following verses are from St. Matthew 1:18-24:]

When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost.

Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. And Joseph rising up from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife.

Considerations for the SECOND AND THIRD POINTS: OBSERVE and HEAR what was spoken and the actions done.

We must remember that St. Joseph was espoused to Mary. This was rather like a time of engagement. Although, for the Jews, this really meant that the couple technically belonged to each other and could join together whenever they wished.

St. Thomas Aquinas explains several reasons why Our Lady was espoused and had a husband. One reason was that she would not have the shame of being with child without a husband. Another reason was because she would need a man's protection when fleeing for the life of the Child. Yet another reason was so the devil would not know about the Divinity of Our Lord, because God did not want the devil to know this truth and thereby prevent the crucifixion.¹⁷

St. Joseph was a just man and therefore he feared God and he feared sin. He did not want to offend God. He had vowed perpetual chastity, thus he feared that taking Mary in her condition would be a grave scandal. He feared that he would be consenting to a sin by taking her within his home because there could be no other explanation for her condition other than adultery. Nevertheless, St. Joseph had such a great opinion of Mary's purity that he could not doubt her. He could not understand the enigma. Scripture says he "*thought on these things*". What turmoil this must have been for poor St. Joseph! Truly a spiritual cross! This was God's will for St. Joseph to suffer this mental anguish for his higher sanctification and for our edification. Mary must have likewise suffered greatly because it was not her place to tell St. Joseph the plan of God. She would certainly have known that St. Joseph would wonder what was going on. What suffering for both of them! How faithful they were to God to simply trust that His Providence would take care of everything!¹⁸

St. Joseph surely knew the scripture from Isaiah 7:14: "*Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and His Name shall be called Emmanuel.*" Did he think within himself, "Is Mary this virgin?"

St. Thomas says, "So also the Lord permitted Joseph to doubt concerning the chastity of Mary, that doubting he might receive the Angelic revelation, and by receiving might believe more firmly."¹⁹

St. Joseph did not make any rash decision about what to do with Mary's situation. He was prudent and waited for the Lord to instruct him. Also St. Joseph wanted to take care

¹⁷ This information is taken from St. Thomas Aquinas's Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel.

¹⁸ Some of this information is taken from St. Thomas Aquinas's Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel.

¹⁹ This quote is taken from St. Thomas Aquinas's Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel.

of the situation showing Mary the most mercy, thus he considered putting her away quietly.

St. Thomas explains that St. Joseph was a faithful believer in God's plan and so it was fitting that an Angel should reveal to him what he needed to know. "However, because a corporeal apparition is miraculous, such type of apparition was not becoming to him, since he believed and was faithful." It was fitting for Our Lady to receive a visible apparition because the message conveyed to her was more difficult to believe because it was at the beginning of the Incarnation, whereas St. Joseph could readily notice a physical sign of the revelation being true.²⁰

The angel Gabriel addressed St. Joseph as the son of David because he was of the house of David. We must notice, too, that the angel told St. Joseph, "Fear not", just as St. Gabriel had also told St. Zachary and Our Lady. This angel was sent from God and was a true messenger and so there was no reason to fear. As soon as St. Joseph found out that her conception of Our Lord was from the Holy Ghost, he had no fears. What a wonderful consolation for him!! With what fervor and dedication he would embrace all the trials that would come concerning Him Who Mary was to bear!

Another very edifying example to note about St. Joseph is that he immediately obeyed the angel's command and rose up to take Mary for his wife.

The COLLOQUY: Oh dear St. Joseph, you are such an edifying example for us of trust in God and His Plan for us. Even though you were beset with unanswerable questions and doubts, you remembered that God's Will is for our good. You simply prayed for guidance and had confidence that God would answer your prayers and not leave you in uncertainty. Please intercede for us, St. Joseph and beg God's assistance for us in our present needs and tribulations.

Now having finished our brief look at the Doubts of St. Joseph let us turn to the main part of our ***Lesson***, namely, the study of the Nativity of Our Lord.

CONTEMPLATION ON THE NATIVITY

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: ***I will review the history of the Nativity. How Our Lady, almost nine months with child, set out from Nazareth, seated on an ass, as may piously be believed, together with Joseph and a servant girl leading an ox. They***

²⁰ This quote is taken from St. Thomas Aquinas's Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel.

are going to Bethlehem to pay the tribute that Caesar has imposed on the whole land.

The SECOND PRELUDE: I will form a mental image of the scene and see in my imagination the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem. I will consider its length and breadth, and whether it is large or small, whether high or low, and what it contains.

The THIRD PRELUDE: It will be the same and in the same form as it was in the preceding contemplation. [The preceding contemplations were 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: I will SEE the persons: our Lady and St. Joseph, the servant girl, and the Child Jesus after His birth. I will become a poor, miserable, and unworthy slave looking upon them, contemplating them, and ministering to their needs, as though I were present there. I will then reflect within myself in order that I may derive some fruit.

The SECOND POINT: I will OBSERVE, consider what they are SAYING and to reflect within myself that I may derive some profit.

The THIRD POINT: I will OBSERVE and CONSIDER what they are doing: the journey and suffering which they undergo in order that Our Lord might be born in extreme poverty, and after so many labors; after hunger and thirst, heat and cold, insults and injuries, He might die on the cross, and all this for me. I will then reflect in order to gain some spiritual profit.

The COLLOQUY: Conclude with a colloquy as in the preceding contemplation and with the “Our Father.” {Note: the preceding contemplation had the following colloquy suggestion from St. Ignatius—I will now think of what I should say to the Three Divine Persons, or the eternal Word Incarnate, or to His Mother and 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”.}

Now let us take some time to review the events surrounding the Nativity. Here is the Scriptural account: [The following are verses from St. Luke 2:1-20]

And it came to pass that in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David. To

be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass that when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first born son and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger: because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them and the brightness of God shone round about them: and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people: For, this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will. And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: Let us go over to Bethlehem and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath shewed to us.

And they came with haste: and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. And seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child. And all that heard wondered: and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

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

- **SEE the journey to Bethlehem**

What a trial it must have been for St. Joseph and Our Lady who was with Child, the Incarnate Wisdom! The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem took several days. Certainly it would be slower with Mary's condition. Dear reader, you can imagine they have a donkey as St. Ignatius suggests or if you wish, you could imagine them walking because they were very poor. To travel from Galilee, they would have to pass through Samaria and this course was known to be dangerous because of thieves which were prevalent on this route.

The weather was cold and damp— bone-chilling cold. Poor St. Joseph must give up his work in order to fulfill the command of Caesar and go to the town of David. This foreign ruler did not care about the Jewish people. He only cared to know the count of his people so he could get more revenue out of them.

If Our Lord had been born at their home in Nazareth, it would not have been a rich palace by any means, but it would have been easier for the Holy Family. Even though the Holy Family was poor at Nazareth, they were in far poorer conditions in Bethlehem. Let us not forget that these circumstances were exactly as God willed them to be.

- **SEE their arrival at Bethlehem**

Imagine their arrival at Bethlehem. St. Joseph looks for lodging for Mary and the Child soon to be born. The town is packed with people also coming to be enrolled in the Census. The cobblestone streets are narrow and crowded. All the inns are full and the only place that the Holy Family can find to get out of the wind is a cave used as a stable. “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.”

They descend the steep steps to find a cloverleaf shape set of rooms—three symbolizing the Trinity. Watch how St. Joseph cleans the place the best he can without having cleaning tools. Mary takes the handmade swaddling clothes she has brought out of her small bundle of belongings. She prays in holy expectation of the moment of the sublime birth of her God made Man.

- **SEE the moment of the Nativity**

Let us see this wondrous Birth which is the pivot point of all human history. This is the miraculous Birth of Our Lord shining forth as light through a glass. Our Lady suffers nothing and remains ever-virgin. We shall consider more of the details below under the point of **considering actions**.

Considerations for the SECOND POINT: HEAR what Mary and St. Joseph might say on their way to Bethlehem and during the time that St. Joseph was looking for lodging for himself and his expectant wife.

Can we hear what St. Joseph and Mary might say to each other? They mostly walk in prayerful silence. When they do speak, they have words of mutual edification and resignation. They are determined to do God’s Will no matter what is involved.

It has been a long and tiring journey and now that they have arrived in Bethlehem, they meet with noisy crowds of complaining travelers. St. Joseph stops at inn after inn and is refused entrance, sometimes with harsh words and other times with flimsy excuses. He sorrowfully tells Mary the results. They neither complain nor murmur but thank God for doing His Will through them.

Consider how God treats His chosen ones—especially this holy couple. He gives them the choicest crosses and sanctifies them still further. They win abundant merits.

We can compare our wretched sinfulness to this holy pair. Fr. Hurter, S.J., has some moving words on this point. He says,

How often did Our Savior wish to come to you, and you did not receive Him. You closed your heart and turned your back on Him. Many a time, especially at Christmas, you think: Had I been living in Bethlehem at the time, how willingly I should have received Our Divine Savior in my house and waited upon Him.²¹

Fr. Hurter exhorts us further saying,

What was not possible for you then, you can do now. For what you do to one of your brethren the Savior considers as done to Himself. How consoling the thought that by works of Christian charity you can make up for the cold-heartedness of the inhabitants of Bethlehem!²²

Considerations for the THIRD POINT: TO CONSIDER ACTIONS

Consider the actions of the people in Bethlehem at the time of Our Lord's Nativity. Consider also the actions of St. Joseph, Our Lady, and Our Dear Savior after His Birth.

What did the people of Bethlehem care about on such a momentous night? They only cared about being as comfortable as possible in the inns. Little did they know that the King of kings and Lord of lords had now been born physically into the world. Fr. Hurter has these edifying words, to say about Our Lord's birth:

Adore the newborn Savior in the manger. Affectionately participate in the ineffable joy of the Virgin Mother and of St. Joseph, who now forgot all hardships, privations and humiliations, since for them the stable has become a paradise. Search into the mystery here consummated before your eyes. All the divine perfections of goodness, mercy, love, and omnipotence shine forth from it, more than from the creation of the universe. Already in the manger the Infant Jesus, by His example, teaches us a lesson of all virtues in a heroic degree, which later as the dying Savior He wished to recommend as a compendium from the cross. The manger and the cross—what effective pulpits! Learn especially one virtue from the

²¹ Considerations from *Sketches for the Exercises of An Eight Days' Retreat* by Hugo Hurter, S.J., Ph.D., D.D., Professor Emeritus of Theology in the Catholic University of Innsbruck, copyright 1918; third edition, 1926, St. Louis, MO and London, Page 149.

²² Considerations from *Sketches for the Exercises of An Eight Days' Retreat* by Hugo Hurter, S.J., Ph.D., D.D., Professor Emeritus of Theology in the Catholic University of Innsbruck, copyright 1918; third edition, 1926, St. Louis, MO and London, Page 148.

Infant Jesus in the manger. As humility shines from the Incarnation, so the love of *poverty* from His birth. Humility and poverty are the pillars of the following of Christ.²³

Fr. Hurter instructs us about Our Lord's poverty. He tells us that His poverty was *perfect*. Our Lord lacked necessities and a child could not come into the world under poorer conditions.²⁴

He tells us that Our Lord's poverty was His *own choice*. "And this is to be wondered at since He could have redeemed us if He had been rich."²⁵

Lastly, he informs us that Our Lord's "poverty was *intended* and *sought*. He permitted the decree of Augustus to be issued at this time that He might come into the world among strangers and very poor. At Nazareth the maternal solicitude of Mary would have made it too comfortable for Him."²⁶

Yes, the actions of the Holy Parents are so inspiring for us—their willingness to suffer all things for Christ their Son and King. They knew that they were so blest to be the guardians of their Savior.

Let us now briefly consider the message of the Holy Angels who appear to the shepherds in the fields. These simple and poor shepherds are found worthy to hear the tremendous news that the Christ, the Messiah, has been born. They are told that He can be found in swaddling clothes, the prefigurement of the Holy Winding Sheet and that He is lying in a manger. Well do these shepherds know about mangers and so they know which cave to find the Infant Savior. They go with haste to see Him. They report to the holy couple what they have seen and heard.

²³ Considerations from *Sketches for the Exercises of An Eight Days' Retreat* by Hugo Hurter, S.J., Ph.D., D.D., Professor Emeritus of Theology in the Catholic University of Innsbruck, copyright 1918; third edition, 1926, St. Louis, MO and London, Page 149.

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Mary, His Mother, files all of what they say deep in her heart to ponder again and again. The shepherds can see that St. Joseph is a tender protector of the Holy Family. They can also see that this tiny Infant is indeed special.

Our Infant King, we must keep in mind has perfect use of His reason being both God and Man. And yet, He acts and appears like a helpless Infant. What humility! The very one Who created heaven, earth, and all creation is allowing Himself to exist in such a lowly state.

Concluding thoughts: we will let Fr. Hurter supply our closing comments:

We shall close this meditation with a fervent prayer to the dear Infant Jesus to communicate to us that love of poverty which in the manger He so much recommended; and we shall resolve, in case we are not in duty bound to it by vow, to practice it at least in spirit by *detaching* our hearts from earthly goods, by *bridling* our too strong inclinations towards them, by being *content* with the means we possess, and by *reducing* our superfluous expenses, so that we may dispose of the money thus saved for the greater honor of God!

COLLOQUY: Dearest Babe in the manger, oh Incarnate Word, how can I thank Thee enough for becoming Man. Oh glorious Hypostatic Union, so mysterious to us that one Person can have two Natures. How happy I am that Thou hast accomplished this Union and will remain so for all eternity. Thou teacheth us so many lessons by being born so. Such humility! Such poverty! Such detachment from things of this world! Clearly Thy birth in a stable shows us that the things of this world should be as nothing to us. Unite me to Thee, O Infant King, and never let me separate myself from Thee. I thank Thee also for giving us such holy examples in St. Joseph and our tender Mother Mary.

Oh Mary, dear Mother of God, intercede for me. Instruct me in the ways of poverty and detachment. Teach me, too, how to accept all God has planned for me. Thank you, Mary, for being such a model of virtue for your children.

Dear St. Joseph, help me to lean on thee for protection and strength. Help me to follow your edifying examples of trust and confidence in God. Help me to pray for guidance like you did and humbly submit to God's plan for me.

We have done the meditations on the Incarnation and the Nativity. St. Ignatius has us go through several scenes of Our Lord's Life in the second week of the *Spiritual Exercises*. We can take topics from the Gospel of Our Lord's Life before He began His Public Life. For our next lesson we will set out the contemplation/meditation of the Trials of the Holy Family. Of course, a separate meditation could be done on each of the Trials. We will consider the *Flight into Egypt*, the *Return from Egypt* and the *Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple*.

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