

THE IMMACULATA



Sanctity of the Laity – Christ in the Home by Fr Raoul Plus

Heroic virtue is rare and where it does exist, it makes so little noise! How much real sanctity there is! Sanctity which may never be officially canonized but real just the same: the sanctity of a doctor who spends himself for the love of God and for the suffering members of Christ without counting the cost; the sanctity of a servant who lives her life of obedience and continual renunciation humbly and in a supernatural spirit—multiple types of sanctity, hidden and unknown but effective and a delight to the Heart of God. We should of course like to see sanctity more widespread, but we must not deny what already exists.

Furthermore, opportunities for martyrdom are not of general occurrence, and sanctity adorned by the martyr's palm is not the only kind of sanctity. As Rene Bazin so truly wrote: "Men do not seem to recognize the sacrifice of life unless it is made all at once." Martyrdom by the little fires of hidden fidelities constantly adhered to, of tormenting temptations courageously and perseveringly repulsed, of the exact and loving fulfilment of duties toward God and neighbour, of prayer faithfully practiced despite disgust, aridity and the pressure of work—is it not a martyrdom? Who can estimate the value of its countless offerings which are not publicized but which cost . . . and which count!

The amount of sanctity in the world today is not the essential problem; the important question is how much there ought to be, what the needs of the world demand, what the glory of God and Christianity well understood require.

Speaking one day with a group of cardinals, the Holy Father Pius X put this question to them:

"In your opinion, what is the most vital need for the salvation of society?"

"To build schools," answered one cardinal. **"No."**

"To build more churches," suggested another. **"No again."**

"To increase the number of priests," said a third.

"No, no," replied Pius X.

"All those things are important, but what is most necessary at present is to have in every parish a group of lay people who are very virtuous, very determined, enlightened in their faith and who are true apostles."

Let us consider now just the two words "virtuous" and "determined."

The Holy Father said "virtuous"—"very virtuous" and he was speaking of lay people.

Do I belong to that number of virtuous lay people? "What luck not to be a saint!" Doctor Vittoz of Lausanne used to say, "For then I can exert myself to become one!" Pius X had good reason to add the word "determined" to the word "virtuous."

Is my resolution to reach high sanctity resolute, determined?



Pope Pius XII told Christian (Catholic) mothers that they must "preserve intact that natural instinct of modesty" that God has given to their sons and daughters as a protection against impurity. He said that mothers must help their children pass through adolescence "like those who pick their way among serpents," so that their children will make it through that period "without losing anything of the joy of innocence."

O Christian mothers, if you only knew what a future of worries and dangers, of ill subdued doubts, of hardly suppressed shame you lay up for your sons and your daughters by imprudently accustoming them to live barely attired, making them lose the natural sense of modesty, you yourselves would blush, and take fright at the shame you inflict upon yourselves and the harm which you occasion to your children, entrusted to you by Heaven to be brought up in a Christian manner.

Pope Pius XII Allocution to Mothers 1941

"When rumours, curiosity, gossip, and the vanities of the world threaten to overwhelm us, let us quickly retire by a swift interior movement to the Heart of Jesus; there we shall always find recollection and peace."

Divine Intimacy

When a child is given to his parents, a crown is made for that child in Heaven, and woe to the parents who raise a child without consciousness of that eternal crown!

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

"If you don't have time for prayer, you don't have time for anything"
St Francis de Sales

From Achieving Peace of Heart by Fr Narciso Irala S.J.

No one who lives for himself alone lives as fully or produces as much as he who lives for others and does good for others.

When you are dominated by your unconscious mental activities, you lead a negative life which is coloured by a sickly egoism.

You are always thinking of your own troubles and finding ways to lessen them. You can find no time to busy yourself with others or do any positive and progressive work. You see the enemy everywhere and are wholly taken up with fleeing from him.

Such a person lives, as Fosdick puts it, as if in a room lined with mirrors. Wherever he looks he sees himself.

But when he busies himself with others, several of these mirrors are changed into windows through which he can see other faces, other lives and other more pleasant landscapes.

You will also find great help in a noble ideal. This may be professional or religious. Let it be some unselfish dedication of your work either out of patriotism, love of your neighbour, or from some religious motive.

I knew a young doctor who was exhausted by his studies and first labours. He was crushed by insomnia, obsessions, fatigue and a sickly egoism.

Then he decided to take a trip to rest and distract himself. On his arrival at a Chinese port, a missionary invited him to visit his hospital.

He began to interest himself in the illnesses of those good people and lent them his professional service out of compassion. He ended up by remaining as the head of the establishment. He forgot his own ills and was completely cured.

Keep Busy

Employ your time well and so distribute it among different tasks that by keeping yourself busy you have no time for worry.

To enable the factor of feeling to intervene here, let your undertakings be in the possible and practical order.

Make sure they are useful and interesting. Only when the sick imagination finds the field of consciousness unoccupied will it be able to torture you with its sad and discouraging exaggerations. *Idleness and the lack of an ideal produce more neurotics than work ever does.*

A young bride, her mother told me, used to live tormented by fears. One fear was that she would lose her mind.

She bore a son, and still the fears continued. In the course of time she had five more children and because she was not rich she had to do all her own housework. Hardly could a worry take shape when a child's wail would bring her flying to its side.

Or two of them would start a squabble and she would be off to calm them down. Or she had to get a meal ready, or the ironing board was calling her.

Or rain threatened to wet her laundry that was stretched on the line to dry. Some urgent household task would always be taking up her whole attention and coming just in time to kill worries at their first stirring.

The famous Jesuit scholar, Father Wassman, conquered his own depression by taking up the study of ants.

In this field he later became so preeminent that the whole world marvelled at his books.



A Cardinal's Dream

Nicholas Cardinal of Cusa (1401-1464), Bishop of Brixen, Italy, was not only a great Church politician, reputable Papal legate and reformer of spiritual life for the clergy and the faithful of the 15th century, but also a man of silence and contemplation. He was deeply moved by a dream in which he was shown that spiritual reality which still has meaning for priests and laity to this very day: the power of self-offering, prayer and the sacrifice of spiritual mothers hidden in convents.

The Offering of Hands and Hearts

Nicholas and his guide entered a small, ancient church decorated with mosaics and frescoes from the early centuries, and there the Cardinal saw an amazing sight. More than a thousand nuns were praying in the little church. Despite the limited space, they all fit due to their slender and composed nature. The sisters were praying, but in a way that the Cardinal had never seen. They were not kneeling but standing; their gaze was not cast off into the distance but rather fixed on something nearby which he could not see. They stood with open arms, palms facing upwards in a gesture of offering.

Surprisingly, in their poor, thin hands they carried men and women, emperors and Kings, cities and countries. Sometimes there were several pairs of hands joined together holding a city. A country, recognizable by its national flag, was supported by a whole wall of arms, and yet even then there was an air of silence and isolation around each one of them in prayer. Most of nuns, however, carried one individual in their hands.

In the hands of a thin, young, almost child-like nun, Nicholas saw the Pope. You could see how heavy this load was for her, but her face was radiating a joyful gleam. Standing in the

hands of one of the older sisters he saw himself, Nicholas of Cusa, Bishop of Brixen, and Cardinal of the Roman Church. He saw the wrinkles of his age; he saw the blemishes of his soul and his life in all their clarity. He looked with stunned and surprised eyes, but his flight was soon mixed with an unspeakable bliss.

His guide whispered, "Now you see how sinners are sustained and carried and, in spite of their sins, have not given up loving God." "What about those who do not love anymore?" the Cardinal asked. Suddenly, he was in the crypt of the church with his guide, where once again, more than a thousand nuns were praying. Whereas the former ones were carried in the nuns' hands, here in the crypt, they were carried in their hearts. They were exceptionally serious because the fate of eternal souls was at hand.

"So you see, Your Eminence," said the guide, "that also those who have given up loving are still carried. It happens occasionally that they become warm again through the ardent hearts which are being consumed for them-occasionally, but not always. Sometimes, in the hour of their death, they are taken from these saving hands into the hands of the Divine Judge, and they must also answer for the sacrifice that has been made for them. Every sacrifice bears fruit. However; when the fruit offered to somebody is not picked, the fruit of corruption ripens."

The Cardinal was captivated by the women who had made an offering of their lives. He always knew they existed, but he saw now, clearer than ever, their importance for the Church, for the world, for nations and for every individual. Only now was it so surprisingly clear. He bowed deeply before these martyrs of love.