

THE IMMACULATA



"Lord Give Us Priests Again!"

Anna Stang endured great suffering during the Communist persecution, and like many other women in her situation, she offered it up for priests. In her old age, she has become a woman with a priestly spirit.

"WE WERE LEFT WITHOUT PASTORS!"

Anna Stang was born in 1909 to a large faithful family living in the German area of the Volga in Russia. She began suffering for the faith as a nine-year-old schoolgirl. She writes, " ... In 1918, in second grade, we still prayed the Our Father before class. One year later, everything was forbidden and the priest was no longer allowed in school. People began to laugh at those of us who believed, showing no respect for the priests anymore, and the seminary was destroyed."

When she was 11 years old, Anna lost her father and several siblings to a Cholera epidemic. When her mother died six years later, Anna was left to raise her younger brothers and sisters. Not only did they lose their parents, but, "Our priest also died at this time, and many religious were arrested. So we were left without a pastor! That was so difficult. ... In the neighbouring parish, the church was still open, but there was no longer a priest there either. The faithful gathered for prayer, but without a priest, the church was very cold. I just used to cry, no longer being able to hold myself together. Earlier, this church had been filled with so much song and prayer! Everything seemed dead to me."

Deeply afflicted by this spiritual suffering, Anna prayed from that moment on-especially for priests and missionaries. *Lord, give us another priest, give us Holy Communion! I gladly suffer everything for you, O most Sacred Heart of Jesus!* All the suffering which she endured in the following years, she consciously offered for priests-even when the Communists raided their house in 1938 and arrested her brother and the husband to whom she had been happily married for seven years. Neither of them ever returned.

A PRIESTLY SERVICE

In 1942, the young widow, was deported with her three children to Kazakhstan. *"It was hard, arriving in*

the bitter cold of winter, but we lived through it to see spring. In those days I cried a lot but I also prayed a lot. It was always as if somebody was leading me by the hand. Some time later, I found some Catholic women in the city of Siryanovsk. We secretly congregated on Sundays and solemnities to sing hymns and pray the Rosary. I prayed so often, 'Mary, our beloved mother, see how poor we are; send us priests, teachers and pastors again!'"

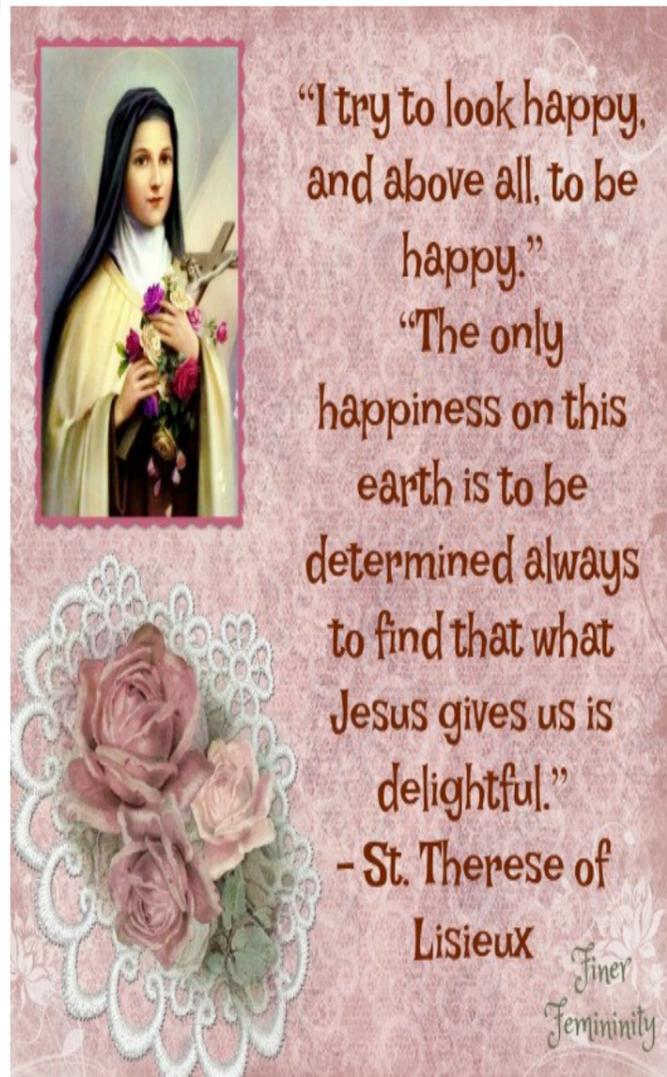
The persecution subsided somewhat after 1965. "A church was even built in Bishkek (the capital of Kirgizstan), and once a year my friend Veronica and I went there for Holy Mass. It was a long way, more than 1000 kilometres, but we were so happy to go. We had not seen a priest or a confessional for more than 20 years! The priest there was old and had spent 10 years in prison for his faith. While I was there, somebody lent me a key to the church allowing me to spend a long time in adoration. I never thought that I would be so close to the tabernacle again and in my joy, I knelt down and kissed it."

Before returning home, Anna always received permission to bring Holy Communion back to the Catholics in her city who could not make such a trip. "With the mandate of the priest, I baptized the children and adults in my city for 30 years; I led couples to the sacrament of marriage and buried the dead until my health no longer permitted it."

HIDDEN PRAYERS ... THAT A PRIEST MIGHT COME!

You cannot imagine how thankful Anna was when a missionary priest visited her home for the first time in 1995. She cried for joy and said so movingly, "Jesus the High Priest has come!" At 86 years of age, having prayed for decades for priests and missionaries, she no longer believed she would see them again.

Holy Mass was celebrated for the first time in the apartment of this exceptional woman who possessed a true priestly spirit. Out of reverence and joy for the reception of Holy Communion, she ate nothing for the entire day.



Prayer of Cardinal Newman

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Thy fragrance everywhere I go.

Flood my soul with Thy spirit and life.

Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly,

That my life may only be a radiance of Thine.

Shine through me, and be so in me

That every soul I come in contact with

May feel Thy presence in my soul.

Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus!

Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as Thou shinest,

So to shine as to be a light to others;

The light, O Jesus will be all from You;

none of it will be mine;

It will be Thou, shining on others through me.

Let me thus praise Thee in the way Thou dost love best, by shining on those around me.

Let me preach Thee without preaching, not by words but by my example,

By the catching force of the sympathetic influence of what I do,

The evident fullness of the love my heart bears to Thee.

Amen.

God Has Chosen You! By Rev Fr F. Meyer

Life is often compared to a stage, upon which we are all given a part to play. God Himself has assigned our individual roles to us. In calling you to the married state He has allotted to you a distinguished and arduous part on the stage of life. And if you are a parent, your part is immensely more sublime and difficult.

It is by no means easy to play well and creditably the part of a Catholic married person and parent. This requires virtue and ability of the highest order. Whoever in a dramatic play has to represent a difficult character, is glad to have someone instruct him and provide him with helpful cautions, hints and suggestions.

God Has Chosen You

You must above all remember, that God has chosen you for the part you must play on the stage of life; and since He has chosen you for it, He will supply you with the strength you need to acquit yourself of it satisfactorily.

Even if you married frivolously and thoughtlessly, or through mere passion or spite: now that you are bound by the marriage tie, you can be sure that God intended you should be bound thus: and consequently you can count on His help to achieve happiness and holiness in the marriage you have legitimately contracted, and from which you can no longer withdraw.

All regrets as to what else might have been, had you not married as you did, are idle and futile. What matters now is that you make the most of your present situation through good sense and the grace of God.

Do not make things worse by dwelling gloomily and pessimistically on your real or imaginary mistake in marrying as you did, and by thus increasing the evil effects of it: but rather make a virtue out of necessity, and turn your mistake, whatever it was, into a stepping stone to sanctity and everlasting glory.

To those who entered the convent or the priesthood without a vocation from on high, and who realized their mistake after they had bound themselves by the

holy vows for life, St. Augustine said: "If you are not called, see to it that you be called."

Similarly married people who, after they are married a while, find that they made a mistake in marrying at all, will apply the best remedy to their hard situation not by unavailing complaints or morbid self-pity, but by doing what they can to render their actual married life their real vocation.

With the aid of God's grace many have done this to their great contentment and sanctification. What others have done, you can do too, with the assistance of the same grace.

Spiritually and religiously you may even thrive better for being unfortunately married.

A Vale of Tears

The fact alone that you are not fully happy in your married life, is not by any means a sign that you were not called or destined for it. No one, in the married or any other state of life, is completely happy on this earth.

God did not intend that anyone should be entirely happy. This earth will always be a vale of tears no matter how we arrange it, in marriage, in the single life in the world, in the cloister, in the priesthood, and everywhere else.

We are merely pilgrims or tourists steering towards our eternal home, and the more we are disposed to put up with the discomforts and annoyances of tourists or travellers, the less chagrined shall we be.

Even in paradise there was the forbidden tree and the insidious serpent. No home or family life can therefore be expected to be without some trouble and worry.

All we can do is to achieve a relative eternal happiness here below, as a preparation for an eternal happiness beyond. Marriage offers a good opportunity for the accomplishment of both.



How is YOUR superiority complex?! By Leane Vanderputten

A few thoughts about our attitude.....are we humble, or are we proud?

Do you ever have this feeling that you are better than your husband? Do you find you look down on him because he doesn't quite measure up to your expectations of whatever.....orderliness, manners, managing finances, education, etc. It's easy to fall into this trap and to replay it over and over again in our minds.

If you are thinking this way, I want you to remember that he has qualities that you are lacking. Would you like it if he looked down on you for not measuring up to the qualities **he** holds so dear?

"Do you wish to be great? Do you desire to construct a vast and lofty fabric? Think first about the foundations of humility. The higher your structure is to be, the deeper must be its foundation."
—Saint Augustine

"The most powerful weapon to conquer the devil is humility. For, as he does not know at all how to employ it, neither does he know how to defend himself from it."

—Saint Vincent de Paul

"Humility does not disturb or disquiet or agitate, however great it may be; it comes with peace, delight, and calm. . . . The pain of genuine humility doesn't agitate or afflict the soul; rather, this humility expands it and enables it to serve God more."
—St Teresa of Avila

from *Fascinating Womanhood*:

Similar to self-righteousness is a feeling of superiority. You may consider yourself more intelligent,

better educated, more skilled, alert, careful, clever, or successful than he. You may come from a better family background, one with more money and status.

With this view of yourself, you may take the initiative to shape him up to your standards. If you want a good marriage, don't count the worth of these things in your favor, or flaunt them before him, making him feel inferior.

Instead, learn to appreciate the things which really count. One thing that makes it difficult to overlook a fault in a man is that his faults are different from yours. He may be disorganized and messy, whereas you may be neat and orderly. He may be forgetful and you may be alert.

On the other hand, you may be critical whereas he is inclined to be forgiving. You may be tardy and he may be prompt. Because your faults are different, you may focus on his and overlook your own. The next time you are troubled about your husband's faults, say to yourself, "He has this fault but he is better than me in other ways."

