



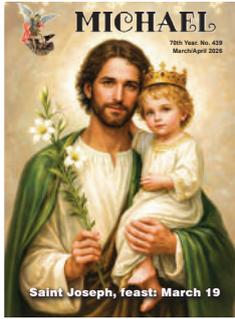
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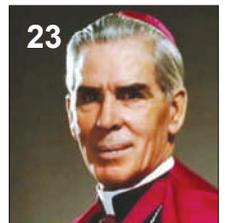
MICHAEL

A journal of Catholic patriots
 for the Kingship of Christ and
 Mary in souls, in families
 and in nations

For social justice through Economic Democracy
 in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic
 Church through the vigilant actions of heads of
 families, and not through political parties

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Letter from the Editor

A time of conversion

It is always time to be converted (from the Latin *convertere*, meaning to turn around, to change direction, to go in the opposite way), that is, to turn away from evil and turn toward God — especially during this season of Lent, a special time given to us by the Church to help facilitate our return to God. We continually experience our human weakness and limitations, declaring with Saint Paul, “For I do the evil I do not want to do” (Romans 7:19).

We quickly realize the truth of Jesus’ words: “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Fortunately, Jesus does not leave us without help; He even offers Himself to us through the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession, which allow us to live in a state of grace in union with Him.

The three pillars of Lent are traditionally prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In his message for Lent 2026, Pope Leo XIV suggests a special form of fasting: in addition to abstaining from food, he proposes “a practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbour” (see page 10).

As for prayer, in addition to the Mass and reading the Word of God, the Church offers us a very powerful prayer: the Rosary, which according to God’s will is the key that binds Satan and renders his actions powerless (see page 31).

The devil is not inactive in our times, for his objective is to oppose God’s plan and to bring about the loss of souls — our most precious good (see page 12). Indeed, no matter our material or temporal successes, they will last only for the time of our presence on earth. But if we lose the salvation of our soul, we lose everything — life with God for eternity.

We see how fragile the situation in the world is, whether in wars, poverty, or persecutions. The Pope recalled this in his message to the diplomatic corps at the beginning of this year (see page 20), emphasizing that war now tends to replace diplomacy, and that even the meaning of words is being manipulated, to make what is vice and falsehood appear as virtue and truth. Christian values are denied and even fought against, and the institution of the family — “the exclusive and indissoluble union between a woman and a man,” as the Pope said — is under attack.

One of the important aspects of family life is the presence in the home of one parent — in most cases, the mother — to raise the children. This is what the Church teaches (see page 16), for example in the “Charter of the Rights of the Family” presented by the Holy See in 1983, which called for “the remuneration of the work in the home of one of the parents, it should be such that mothers will not be obliged to work outside the home to the detriment of family life and especially of the education of the children.”



Because of the rising cost of living, increasing grocery and housing prices, and the fact that a single salary — that of the husband — is no longer sufficient, it has become in practice increasingly difficult for mothers to remain at home full-time, often obliging them to seek employment outside the home.

Of course, women are free to decide whether they wish to pursue a career in the workforce or not. But many mothers, if given the opportunity, would prefer to remain at home to care for their children — a task that is just as noble, if not even more important. For this reason, MICHAEL launched, in the 1980s, a campaign to obtain an income for stay-at-home mothers. With what is now paid in Canada in the form of child benefits, one can say that MICHAEL has won that battle (see page 14).

Returning to the loss or manipulation of the meaning of words, people no longer distinguish between what constitutes true wealth — products, goods, and services — and the sign that represents them, money (see page 4). Some even come to believe that gold gives value to money, that we should return to the gold standard, whereas it is products that give value to money (see pages 5 to 7). Even if you had tons of gold with you, if you had no food, no fruits and vegetables, no bread, no water, you would starve to death.

An honest monetary system, one that allows everyone to benefit from progress (see page 8), is possible — provided that the people are educated on the subject, so as to give governments the strength to stand up to international financiers. That is a worthy struggle in the season of Lent — and throughout the entire year! ❖

Alain Pilote, Editor



Are we more intelligent than monkeys?

Look at the cartoon above: a store filled with good things. Abundance. In front of the store, a starving man. Deprivation. The good things are made to be consumed. The merchant displays them in order to sell them. The consumer would like to buy them. But he lacks permission to do so. He has no money. The result: the good things will not be consumed but will rot on the shelves. And yet everyone would be happy if it were otherwise. The merchant would be happy to sell. The consumer would be happy to buy. Why then does something that would bring happiness to all fail to take place among human beings?

Let us look instead at monkeys. They see abundance in the trees. They need these things in order to live. They simply use them.

And yet monkeys have never developed, in their universities, learned economic systems. In their monkey minds they have never reasoned about the law of supply and demand, nor about the difference between Communism and neo-liberalism. They find themselves in front of good things meant for them and see sufficient reason not to starve.

But a monkey is a monkey, and a man is a man. The first has no intellect. The second can abuse the intellect he has. The monkey is guided by instinct, which does not deceive him. Man is guided by his intellect, often thrown off balance by pride. So man quibbles, engages in dialectics, but forgets simple reasoning based on common sense.

Certainly, this great absurdity — multitudes starving in the midst of abundant wealth — is caused by the greed of those who establish power upon the enslavement of the masses. But it can also be said that this absurdity is defended and maintained by so-called experts in economics who lead minds to the most foolish conclusions while appearing to reason with science and wisdom.

Gilberte Côté-Mercier

This entire absurd situation can be summarized in the form of a story, but one that carries a very serious conclusion:

A group of monkeys in the jungle were discussing among themselves whether humans were more intelligent than monkeys. Some said yes; others said no. One monkey cried out: "To settle the matter, I will go into the city among the humans and see whether they are really more intelligent than we are." All the monkeys agreed to his proposal.

So the monkey went into the city and saw a penniless man starving in front of a store filled with bananas. The monkey returned to the jungle and said to the others:

"Do not worry — humans are not more intelligent than we are. They starve in front of bananas that have already been picked and placed at their disposal on store shelves."

Monkeys cannot understand why humans starve in front of available bananas; for them it remains a profound mystery. It is because they are unaware of the rule humans have imposed upon themselves — the rule that one must pay money in order to obtain products, including bananas.

That rule can function very well, provided humans have enough money to purchase at least the necessities of life. But under the present financial system, this is unfortunately not the case, as has often been explained in various issues of MICHAEL

Money is important in today's world not because it is wealth, but because wealth is not distributed without money. Wealth — useful goods — may mock you while you starve in front of bursting granaries if you

have no money. No money, no products: man will die of hunger, and the products will be discarded.

Conclusion: for heaven's sake, let us be more intelligent than monkeys, and design a monetary system that will allow us to eat the bananas and all the other products that God gives in abundance to all His children on earth.

Money is essentially a matter of accounting and must be issued according to the country's production — for example, as much money as there are bananas, so that the bananas can be purchased. Such a monetary system exists; it is the one promoted by MICHAEL, known as Economic Democracy. ❖

Alain Pilote



The basis of money: gold or products?



Today, more than 95% of the money in circulation is created by commercial banks in the form of loans that must be repaid with interest, which creates unpayable debts for governments, businesses, and individuals. What MICHAEL proposes is that an independent body create, in the name of society, interest-free money issued according to the needs of the population.

On what would this money of Economic Democracy be based?

On the same basis as today: on production — on the things that money is used to buy. Any money not based on production, actual or potential, would be pure and simple inflation.

But isn't today's money based on gold?

The gold basis is a myth. What relationship can there be between gold — which must be extracted from the depths of the earth — and the things that feed, clothe, house, heal, rest, entertain, and educate?

Place all the gold in the world in the midst of nothing — at the North Pole, for example. Be the owner of all that gold, surrounded by nothing. You will simply starve to death.

Even when banks held a certain quantity of gold in their vaults — for example, 25 cents in gold for every paper dollar — gold, no more than paper, had monetary value except in relation to the production available. Destroy all the output of farms and factories while keeping the gold. What will you live on?

But destroy all the gold and preserve the farms and factories: you will live just as easily as before — provided you are not foolish enough to wait for gold before taking a bite of bread.

Money is a convention. The monetary instrument can be made of anything, provided everyone accepts it in exchange for goods or services.

But we are so accustomed to money based on gold that no one would accept money no longer backed by gold?

Really? In 1914, when the First World War broke out, English depositors rushed to their banks to withdraw their money in "gold sovereigns." An obvious impossibility, since gold represented only a fraction of the money in circulation.

The banks closed their doors. The government had the Bank of England print paper pounds sterling and declared them legal tender on the same footing as gold. The banks reopened. The English had paper, and life went on.

In Canada, on April 30, 1940, the government decided to abolish the gold basis for all the country's money. Gold was transferred to foreign exchange control — that is, to serve as a commodity for exchange between countries.

Louis Even

Note: Beginning with the First World War in 1914, all countries abandoned the gold standard, which had never truly functioned, since the need for money far exceeded the quantity of gold available. After the Bretton Woods Agreements in 1944, only the U.S. dollar was convertible into gold, and only central banks of other countries — not individuals — could obtain gold in exchange for U.S. dollars. Obviously, demand soon exceeded the available gold supply, which led U.S. President Richard Nixon to end this arrangement in 1971.

Gold is not the solution

Faced with the possible dangers of an economic crisis or a collapse in the value of the dollar, several so-called experts advocate a return to the gold standard, or suggest that individuals invest in gold, which they consider a “safe haven” investment.

They are mistaken. These “experts” admit that there is not enough gold to represent all the money needed in the economy but, they say, this is a good thing, because by tying the creation of money to gold, it limits the amount of money that governments can create and would therefore prevent inflation. They claim that if money is not based on gold, it is based only on confidence — that is, “on nothing, on no solid asset,” according to them.

But this confidence is not nothing; it is the confidence that goods and services can be obtained in exchange for money. As we saw in the previous article, money is based on the existence of products, not on the existence of gold. Moreover, gold cannot be eaten; it is fruits, vegetables, and other foods that nourish us. Destroy all the production of farms and factories, and keep the gold — what will you live on?

Alain Pilote

by Juan Castro Soto

For millennia, gold has been valued for its beauty and scarcity, rather than for its chemical, physical, or technological properties. In fact, other metals and chemical elements have been more useful.

Its high value has been more subjective. Its beauty and scarcity confer privilege and prestige upon its possessor. Furthermore, its trade allows one to acquire other goods and buy influence... It signifies power.

Therefore, the struggle for gold has been relentless since antiquity.

Gold has also been used as currency, facilitating trade. However, it has been corrupted by banks with fiat money, symbolic money based on trust rather than the object itself. Bankers took advantage of this trust to grant loans with checks or promissory notes, representing gold that either did not exist or was insufficient.

Thanks to this trust, these notes circulated in commerce, representing gold that was supposedly always available. People preferred to hold other goods in their hands, such as food, land, tools, and clothing, and left their gold in the bank, as it solved nothing for them at home.

Thus, gold was a false backing that, nevertheless, drove the economy for centuries. And the US dollar was the main paper money that represented gold. Until, in 1971, gold, real or imagined, ceased to back anything. President Richard Nixon ended this dependence, as there was too much money in circulation

and not enough gold to back it, so they removed it and continued issuing banknotes without the need for gold, as they had already been doing, but now without a legal obligation to possess it.

Simply changing the number or denomination of the banknote is enough to increase or decrease the value of that money, without having to increase the gold reserves.

Note that gold as a reserve is not truly money, unless it circulates as coins, fulfilling the functions of payment, deposit, savings, value, and exchange of goods and services... just as other forms of money have done, such as paper, cocoa, furs, stones, blankets, etc.

So why isn't gold backing the best option for the economy? There are many reasons:

Insufficient backing

Gold remains highly valued, and some believe it should once again back fiat currency. But only those who already possess that gold or can easily obtain it will say so. Again, the limited gold reserves would lead to an uncontrolled increase in the issuance of fiat currency to meet the demands of commerce, as has happened, even if the gold reserves are smaller and remain worth the same. This is illogical.

Hoarding of wealth

Besides being scarce, gold is hoarded by banking institutions, even by families, which means power and wealth are concentrated in the hands of a few. Thus, the economy fails to fulfill its basic function of satisfying needs of the people, which is reason enough not to return to the gold standard.

Debt system

Any fiat money that originates as paper money representing gold will be concentrated in the hands of those who possess gold. And it will be distributed as a loan, that is, to be repaid, to be taken out of circulation and pay off the debt; and to remain the same in the best-case scenario, since interest worsens the situation, generating more scarcity and deficits. As we can see, this debt system is the source of the great paradox: the more money is issued, the less money there is.

Interest

Indeed, these debts are aggravated by the payment of interest, which exceeds the amount borrowed and is the banker's motivation. Interest that no one received and is not circulating, neither in paper nor in gold; and which keeps increasing, since this money takes many paths and is held up before it can be recovered within the payment deadlines. Even worse is when interest is applied to interest, compound interest.

Inflation

Such monetary scarcity is what corrupts society with fraud, theft, inflation, labor exploitation, and everything that snatches more money. The easiest and quickest thing to do is raise prices—inflation. So, prices don't rise because everyone has more money in their pockets, but because of a lot of debt to pay to the holders of gold.

Speculation

To speculate is to tempt the ever-dissatisfied poor, who always need more. So, gold surpasses its subjective and official value, and those who possess it can speculate on its sale, raising and lowering its price at will; or reducing the amount of gold in circulating coins. All this is done to hoard more and become even richer with all the goods and services that gold represents.

Individualism

The desire to hoard more gold and money stems from the egocentrism of competing to save oneself and one's own kind. It's assumed that the monetary system is unfair and could ruin many people, and only the hoarders survive. This doesn't foster cooperation and healthy coexistence, but rather greed, envy, and war.

Difficult to control

It's difficult to control or even know the gold reserves of each country, whether in vaults or even in nature. It's easy to boast about or hide; no one really knows how much exists or where it is. Extraction costs can vary. And it doesn't circulate. When is it scarce or not? When does its price rise and fall? Who decides that? The only certainty is that gold generates even more debt and monetary scarcity.

Without monetary sovereignty

The gold standard, however, requires a global reference currency, as the US dollar has unfairly been. This eliminates the possibility of monetary sovereignty to issue one's own money, free of debt, in different countries. Backing it with oil would also be unjust—even though it is more valuable due to the vast amount of wealth and goods it generates.

Against digitalization

Advances toward the digitalization of money do not require backing from any intrinsic value like gold. That is, gold goes against the most efficient technocratic trends—although these have other shortcomings, such as the lack of democracy and honesty in those who manage digital money, and the danger of control if paper money is abandoned.

Exploitation

In addition to the labor exploitation that gold has entailed, ecological degradation stands out. Many



The new golden calf that we are being forced to worship

communities around the world suffer from these exploitations by mining companies that pollute and hoard water, to the detriment of the local economy. Furthermore, community leaders are murdered with complete impunity and government complicity, as in Mexico.

In short, unjust and inequitable money worsens if we return to the gold standard. In the end, gold only represents an obstacle and an obsolete model for creating the sufficient money that economic activities need today, without contributing to society.

Economic Democracy

In contrast, proposals for Economic Democracy seek the distribution of fiat money to meet everyone's basic needs, whether paper or digital, without debt. Gold backing is not required.

However, private entities create money for their own benefit, while for the people it represents debt and a means of social control. And the world's governments, due to their lack of democratic controls and their commitments to banks, are incapable of achieving economic democracy.

Citizens must implement their own autonomous, alternative, debt-free currency, independent of governments and the international financial system, or it will not be possible.

Until now, the best way to generate this monetary abundance has been through community currencies at the local level. These are democratic experiences where participants make their own decisions and create autonomous currencies, alternative markets, and a more artisanal but more humane production. There are no debts, no interest, no taxes. It's not about importing or exporting, but about developing the regional economy.

Thus, these currencies strengthen as they can acquire more goods and services around the world. ❖

Juan Castro Soto

Where does progress come from? Who should benefit from progress?

To purchase progress: discounts and dividends

by *Louis Even*

Progress, a human achievement

What is progress? It is an advance toward a desired goal.

What have human beings sought, since the beginning of the world, in all productive activity? To satisfy human needs? Certainly — but to satisfy them as fully as possible, with the least possible effort.

Maximum results with minimum effort.

The man who tamed and harnessed the horse in order to produce more work with less human fatigue achieved progress.

The man who invented the wheel to replace the sled on dry land achieved progress.

When, then, is there progress? There is progress when there are more products with less human labour.

To make progress, therefore, is to reduce human toil while increasing the goods produced for man.

Is there progress today? Are we succeeding in producing more things with fewer workers, with fewer working hours? Everyone knows the answer is yes. Many have learned it at their own expense and have even come to curse progress.

And yet progress is a good thing. Its aim is increasingly to free man from the labour required to maintain his material life and to leave him leisure for his life as a human being.

Man has always sought progress because he is a man and not a beast. The elephant and the beaver have not made progress. Man has; it is one of his distinguishing marks, one of the products of his intelligence — and therefore of his soul.

The machine

The man who invents a machine to do what ten men previously did achieves progress: more goods with less expenditure of human energy.

With what did he invent the machine? Let us say that five years of his time and research were financed by capital of \$100,000 at his disposal. If he had had only his time and the \$100,000, he would not have invented the machine. But in addition, he

had science — science he did not create, which he found already prepared for him when he entered the world. He may have contributed to its growth, but he did not start from zero. The greater part of the science he applied is an accumulation of human knowledge passed down from generation to generation.

With what, then, did the man invent his machine? With science, plus his personal labour, plus the capital placed at his disposal to finance his research and time.

What will be the result of his invention? More products than before his invention. More products than the labour of one man over five years and an investment of \$100,000 could have produced under previous conditions. Otherwise, there would be no progress.

If there is progress, then the output of the invention will far exceed what \$100,000 and five years' wages can purchase. The inventor's salary and the ordinary interest on capital cannot buy the full product of the invention.

The machine replaces ten men, we said. It therefore produces at least what those ten men previously produced. Even if those ten men could once, with their wages, buy the equivalent of their production, how can they now, with ten fewer wages, buy the output of the machine, which is at least equal to theirs?

With his salary and royalties, the inventor buys a share of the progress. With the return on his \$100,000, the capitalist buys a share of the progress. But together they purchase only the consumption of two men. Since the machine has replaced the work that sustained ten men — and two men cannot eat like ten, heat their homes like ten, sleep like ten, or raise children like ten — it is clear that together they cannot purchase the entire output of the machine.

Thus progress has been achieved, but rendered unpurchasable. What is to be done?

A policy of dividends

The policy of wages for workers and interest for investors will never solve this problem, since progress reduces the number of wage earners. And it is because we cling to the policy of wages and interest that thousands and millions of starving people curse progress instead of blessing it.

For centuries, beavers have built their dams in the same way. They do so by instinct, not by intelligence. Man, on the other hand, has improved his production techniques over the centuries.



This is why Economic Democracy calls for the distribution of dividends to everyone, so that all may purchase their share of progress.

Their share of progress. Progress is the result of accumulated science, the personal labour of the inventor, and the contribution of capital. The investor and the inventor receive their reward in the usual way. But accumulated science — which is a common capital — plays a very large part in the invention. What remains after the capitalist and the worker have been satisfied is therefore the share of accumulated science, which belongs to everyone.

That is why all the good things left unsold — all the goods that wages and interest do not purchase — belong to everyone, and everyone must have the right to take his or her share, rather than let them go to waste and bring progress to a halt.

And who must ensure that everyone receives a share of progress? The government, since it alone represents everyone and is charged with the common good.

Discount and Dividend

There are two ways to enable men and women to purchase their share of progress: by lowering the price of products, so that each dollar buys more; or by increasing the number of dollars in people's hands.

The first method can be generalized in the form of a discount or rebate — a discount that would not harm merchants, because the government would create the necessary money to compensate them for it.

But this method gives a share of progress only to those who already have money to spend. Since progress reduces the number of wage earners, it reduces the flow of income from employment, and many people have no income at all: a sales discount or price rebate would mean little to them. Since everyone owns the greater part of progress, everyone must have their right.

That is why the second method — a dividend for all — is necessary in order to reach everyone. The first method is more technical; the second is more social. The first protects against inflation and against the production of useless goods; the

second gives everyone the means to claim their share and to guide production through their choice of products.

The combination of both methods, as advocated by Economic Democracy, accomplishes both objectives at once: it guarantees the share of each and every person, and it prevents inflation.

Progress in the volume of production requires progress in the volume of money.

Progress is enormous in the field of production. It must be made enormous in the field of distribution.

Those who cling to the old method of financial distribution are enemies of progress in distribution; they paralyze the expansion of progress in production and prepare the ground for progress in revolution.

To make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before — that is progress, when it is grass that is desired.

If grass is abundant and dollars are lacking, progress consists in making two dollars grow where only one grew before. And that is why Economic Democracy is progress. And since progress is in the natural order, Economic Democracy is in the natural order. And since progress distinguishes man from beast, Economic Democracy distinguishes the intelligent from the foolish.

Therefore, demand the national dividend to purchase your share of progress and to enable everyone to purchase theirs. ❖

Louis Even

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Refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor

Message of Pope Leo XIV for Lent 2026

Dear brothers and sisters, Lent is a time in which the Church, guided by a sense of maternal care, invites us to place the mystery of God back in the center of our lives, in order to find renewal in our faith and keep our hearts from being consumed by the anxieties and distractions of daily life.



Every path towards conversion begins by allowing the word of God to touch our hearts and welcoming it with a docile spirit. There is a relationship between the word, our acceptance of it and the transformation it brings about. For this reason, the Lenten journey is a welcome opportunity to heed the voice of the Lord and renew our commitment to following Christ, accompanying him on the road to Jerusalem, where the mystery of his passion, death and resurrection will be fulfilled.

Listening

This year, I would first like to consider the importance of making room for the word through listening. The willingness to listen is the first way we demonstrate our desire to enter into relationship with someone.

In revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush, God himself teaches us that listening is one of his defining characteristics: "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry" (Ex 3:7). Hearing the cry of the oppressed is the beginning of a story of liberation in which the Lord calls Moses, sending him to open a path of salvation for his children who have been reduced to slavery.

Our God is one who seeks to involve us. Even today he shares with us what is in his heart. Because of this, listening to the word in the liturgy teaches us to listen to the truth of reality. In the midst of the many voices present in our personal lives and in society, Sacred Scripture helps us to recognize and respond to the cry of those who are anguished and suffering. In order to foster this inner openness to listening, we must allow God to teach us how to listen as he does. We must recognize that "the condition of the poor is a cry that, throughout human history, constantly challenges our lives, societies, political and economic systems, and, not least, the Church."

Fasting

If Lent is a time for listening, fasting is a concrete way to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Abstaining from food is an ancient ascetic practice that is essential on the path of conversion. Precisely because it involves the body, fasting makes it easier to recognize what we "hunger" for and what we deem necessary for our sustenance. Moreover, it helps us to identify and order our "appetites," keeping our hunger and thirst for justice alive and freeing us from complacency. Thus, it teaches us to pray and act responsibly towards our neighbor.

With spiritual insight, Saint Augustine helps us to understand the tension between the present moment and the future fulfillment that characterizes this custody of the heart. He observes that: "In the course of earthly life, it is incumbent upon men and women to hunger and thirst for justice, but to be satisfied belongs to the next life. Angels are satisfied with this bread, this food. The human race, on the other hand, hungers for it; we are all drawn to it in our desire. This reaching out in desire expands the soul and increases its capacity." Understood in this way, fasting not only permits us to govern our desire, purifying it and making it freer, but also to expand it, so that it is directed towards God and doing good.

However, in order to practice fasting in accordance with its evangelical character and avoid the temptation that leads to pride, it must be lived in faith and humility. It must be grounded in communion with the Lord, because "those who are unable to nourish themselves with the word of God do not fast properly." As a visible sign of our inner commitment to turn away from sin and evil with the help of grace, fasting must also include other forms of self-denial aimed at helping us to acquire a more sober lifestyle, since "austerity alone makes the Christian life strong and authentic."

In this regard, I would like to invite you to a very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbor. Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgement, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves. Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities. In this

way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace.

Together

Finally, Lent emphasizes the communal aspect of listening to the word and fasting. The Bible itself underlines this dimension in multiple ways. For example, the Book of Nehemiah recounts how the people gathered to listen to the public reading of the Law, preparing to profess their faith and worship through fasting, so as to renew the covenant with God (cf. 9:1-3).

Likewise, our parishes, families, ecclesial groups and religious communities are called to undertake a shared journey during Lent, in which listening to the word of God, as well as to the cry of the poor and of the earth, becomes part of our community life, and fasting a foundation for sincere repentance. In this context, conversion refers not only to one's conscience, but also to the quality of our relationships and dialogue. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by reality and recognizing what truly guides our desires — both within our ecclesial communities and as regards humanity's thirst for justice and reconciliation.

Dear friends, let us ask for the grace of a Lent that leads us to greater attentiveness to God and to the least among us. Let us ask for

the strength that comes from the type of fasting that also extends to our use of language, so that hurtful words may diminish and give way to a greater space for the voice of others. Let us strive to make our communities places where the cry of those who suffer finds welcome, and listening opens paths towards liberation, making us ready and

eager to contribute to building a civilization of love.

I impart my heartfelt blessing upon all of you and your Lenten journey.

From the Vatican, February 5, 2026, Memorial of Saint Agatha, Virgin and Martyr. ❖

LEO PP. XIV

First International Conference on Douglas Social Credit (Economic Democracy) and Catholic Social Teaching

Scholars, students, clergy and the public who are interested in the renewal of economic thought are invited to the 1st International Conference on Douglas Social Credit and Catholic Social Teaching, hosted by the Pilgrims of St. Michael in Rougemont, Quebec, Canada on May 21st and 22nd, 2026.

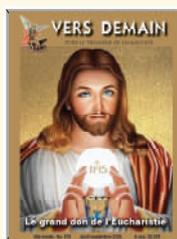
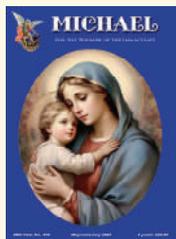


C.H. Douglas

The conference will examine the economic ideas of Clifford Hugh Douglas, the founder of the Social Credit movement and their relationship with Catholic social teaching, particularly the principles of the dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity.

We welcome proposals for presentation at the 2-day conference until March 31. Two days studying the principles of Douglas Social Credit (May 19-20) will precede the conference.

Contact Helen Kmera at 458 658-1939 or at helenkmera@gmail.com for full details.



MICHAEL is published in four languages

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What is your most precious possession ?

by Melvin Sickler

Once, when I was teaching catechism to a student, I asked the question: "What is your most precious possession?" Of course the student did not know what to reply as there could be thousands of different answers to that question. But I said I wanted only one specific answer.

So I said that maybe I should word the question differently: "What is it that will last forever?" Now the answer became very obvious. Of course, your soul!

Today very few people fully understand the importance of their soul. They live just for the passing pleasures of the moment and all that the world has to offer. But little do they think about eternal life; about the life that will never end. Some cling so to this life that, if they could remain here for ever, they would not care at all for the Kingdom of God. They take pride in building up their worldly wealth which will be of no value for them when they die. They live just for the moment, indulging in every pleasure imaginable. How foolish they are. When they die, they will have the bitter realization of the uselessness and nothingness of what they loved.

All must die

No one can deny that someday they must die. But then what?

The Church has always taught that, at the moment of death, the soul will leave the body and, accompanied with its guardian angel, will go before the judgement seat of God to be judged. Then it will be decided if the soul will go to the eternal bliss of heaven, the purifying fires of purgatory, or to the eternal torments of hell.

Purgatory, as we know it, is only a temporary place of purification – be it for one week, 40 years, or even for centuries, depending on the state of the soul when the person dies. But the destination of heaven and hell are eternal. Let's meditate on these two eternal destinations.

The reality of hell

On July 13, 1917, at Fatima in Portugal, the Holy Virgin Mary showed hell to the three little shepherd children. Lucy, one of the seers, later wrote:

"Our Lady opened her hands months once more, as she had done two previous months. The rays of light seemed to penetrate the earth, and we saw, as it were, a sea of fire. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke now falling back on every side like sparks in huge fires, without weight nor equilibrium, amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear..."

Saint Frances of Rome, who lived between 1384 and 1440, had several visions of hell that she described in her writings. Here are some excerpts:

The lazy ones

"The souls of the lazy ones are set on a furnace. The flames cover them completely. They hold their heads bowed down in their hands, with arms that are crossed. The seat they are sitting on is a square stone that is sculptured and dug with cracks like a grooved column so that the lines are full of live coals, and the stone itself is on fire... The coals that are filling the cracks burn them. The hooks that are manipulated by the butcher tears them and rips them into pieces.

The hateful and the envious

"The hateful and the envious are sitting in the middle of the flames in the inferior part of the abyss. The demons tear them with combs of enflamed iron.

The usurers

"The usurers are on a table of fire on which they are nailed with their hands laid down at their sides. They are not disposed in the form of a cross. On their heads is placed a crown of fire. The demons have stoves that contain boiling gold and silver. They pour the frightfully hot metals in the mouths of the damned and they anxiously pierce a hole in the chest over the heart. In that hole, they pour the liquefied gold and silver, saying to their victims: "O miserable souls! Remember your past life!"

Those who are proud

"The general punishment of the proud is the following: In their prison stands a gigantic lion made of enflamed iron. In its throat are planted sharpened razors that are fiery red. In its sides are moving snakes and frogs, demons seen under the aspects of filthy animals.

"At the posterior part of that lion are disposed, like in the front, burning razors.

"The devils that are assigned for that function throw the proud in the air. In this way they fall in the mouth of the iron monster on the razors. The wretches are cut and divided to the point that they look dead. After that, they pass in the stomach of the lion and find themselves plunged in the accumulation of disgusting and ugly animals who are dirty and venomous. So they seemed to be annihilated, but they do not take much time to revive, to take back new forces, because the unfortunate cannot die..."

The sodomites

"The unfortunate that let themselves do these crimes, and who caused Sodom and Gomorrah, live in the deepest and most terrifying area of the eternal abyss. They endure terrifying punishments.



On July 13, 1917, at Fatima, Portugal, the Blessed Virgin Mary showed hell to the little shepherds.

“Here the demons are armed with long enflamed sticks that they impale and run through them. They pierce through the body until you see the point of their instruments of fire come out at the mouth.

“Their butchers also hold in their hands hooks of red iron, and they tear them from head to foot. Sometimes, to make them suffer even more, they will take the extremity that comes out of their throat, and will completely pull it out, and they will start back again to pass it through their guts. The souls that live through these terrifying tortures never see them stopped nor diminished for one single moment.”

The other side of the coin

Oh, happy are we if we suffer with patience on earth the troubles of this present life. Distress of circumstances, fears, bodily infirmities, persecutions, and crosses of every kind will some day come to an end; and if we are saved, they will become for us subjects of joy and glory in paradise.

Throughout the centuries, many spiritual writers have, let’s say, dreamed about what the Kingdom of Heaven must be like. In the writings of St. Alphonse de Liguori, in his book entitled *The Passion and Death of Jesus Christ*, he writes the following about his idea of Heaven on pages 459 to 461:

Beauties like the beauties of paradise, eye hath never seen; harmonies like unto the harmonies of paradise, ear hath never heard, nor hath ever human heart gained the comprehension of the joys which God hath prepared for those who love Him. Beautiful is the sight of the landscape adorned with hills, plains, woods, and views of the sea. Beautiful is the sight of a garden abounding in fruit, flowers, and fountains. Oh, how beautiful is paradise!

“To understand how great the joys of paradise are, it is enough to know that in that blessed realm resides

a God omnipotent, whose care is to render happy his beloved souls. St. Bernard has stated that paradise is a place where “there is nothing that thou wouldst not, and everything that thou wouldst.”

“In paradise there will be no more persecutions, no jealousies are there, for there do all in sincerity love one another, and each rejoices in each other’s good, as if it were his own. No more bodily infirmities, no pains are there, for the body is no longer subject to suffering; no poverty is there, for every one is rich to the full, not having anything more to desire. No more fears are there, for the soul, being confirmed in grace, can sin no more, nor lose that supreme good which it possesses.

“There the sight is satisfied in beholding that city so beautiful, and its citizens all clothed in royal apparel, for they are all kings of the everlasting kingdom. .. The smell will be satisfied with the perfumes of paradise. The hearing will be satisfied with the harmonies of heaven and the canticles of the blessed, who will all, with ravishing sweetness, sing the divine praises for all eternity.”

The ultimate question

It will be good for one to meditate on eternity, knowing that we all must die, sooner or later. But how many really give eternity much thought.

Many saints have stated that there is nothing more important than your eternal salvation; salvation is our only affair. Everything on earth comes and goes, even our bodies must die some day, but eternity will never end.

Now the ultimate question arises: “How will You spend Your ‘forever’, knowing that you will not be given a second chance?” ❖

Melvin Sickler

MICHAEL's campaign for an income for stay-at-home mothers

by Lise Rodrigue-Fournier

Since its founding in 1939, our Movement has waged vigorous campaigns to improve the situation of families and has achieved several victories. We are pleased to recall here the campaign that MICHAEL led in the 1980s to demand an annual income of \$12,000 for stay-at-home mothers.

The Charter of the Rights of the Family

This campaign began in 1984 (just before the Holy Father's visit to Canada) with the Charter of the Rights of the Family, given to us by our good Pope, Saint John Paul II, in October 1983. All the articles of the Charter are important, but especially Article 10, which concerns the work of the stay-at-home mother. It reads as follows:

“Remuneration for work must be sufficient for establishing and maintaining a family with dignity, either through a suitable salary, called a “family wage,” or through other social measures such as family allowances or the remuneration of the work in the home of one of the parents; it should be such that mothers will not be obliged to work outside the home to the detriment of family life and especially of the education of the children. The work of the mother in the home must be recognized and respected because of its value for the family and for society.”

The directors and members of MICHAEL were immediately inspired by the Holy Father's message: to demand sufficient remuneration for the family. This struggle lies at the very heart of the mission of MICHAEL.

The movement then undertook to print one-and-a-half million leaflets on the Charter of the Rights of the Family. To distribute them, our pilgrims — fathers and mothers of families, their children, and even grandparents — gave themselves generously, without pay, travelling through the cities and villages of their regions. The years 1985–86 were, for MICHAEL, two years of intense apostolate for the rights of the family.



The role of the stay-at-home mother is irreplaceable.

\$12,000 for stay-at-home mothers

After informing families of their right to sufficient remuneration, it was time to challenge our governments. Our directress, Mrs. Gilberte Côté-Mercier, in agreement with all the pilgrims, launched a petition demanding \$12,000 per year for stay-at-home mothers.

Municipal elected officials were asked to adopt a resolution in support of the \$12,000 for mothers; this resolution was sent to 4,600 municipalities across Canada.

Thousands of petitions were signed, and hundreds of municipalities adopted our resolution. Even newspapers began speaking about the “\$12,000 for mothers.” Here are a few excerpts:

● “The White Berets believe it would be preferable to give \$12,000 to stay-at-home mothers rather than increase daycare subsidies...” — *Progrès-Dimanche*, Chicoutimi.

● “An Action Committee on the Status of Women has accused senior Canadian officials of sabotaging government efforts to introduce pension plans for homemakers...” — *La Tribune*, Sherbrooke, June 14, 1986.

● “Stay-at-home wives should receive a salary of \$12,000... A Montreal Catholic group wants all Canadian housewives to receive an allowance of \$12,000 per year.” — *Daily News*, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Aug. 14, 1986.

●“The cost of placing one child in a care centre is \$50,000 per year... It costs the government three times more to place children than to assist the mother directly.” — *L’Actualité*, October 1987.

Quebec enhances family allowances

The population supported us in demanding \$12,000 for stay-at-home mothers. Although our petitions were addressed to the federal government in Ottawa, the first results came from Quebec: Premier Bourassa granted \$500 for the first child, \$500 for the second, and \$3,000 for the third child in 1987, stating, “This is only the beginning.” In 1988, the allowance for the third child increased to \$4,500.

You won public opinion, dear pilgrims! When the people are informed and organized, politicians are obliged to yield.

Regional Congresses

We needed to reach more families to demand the \$12,000 for mothers. In 1988, our directors decided to hold congresses throughout French Canada. Mr. Gérard Mercier wrote:

“Our pilgrims will cover the country with regional congresses; we will proclaim Christ the King and the \$12,000 for stay-at-home mothers... Heaven wills it! The family is a divine institution... Heaven will work the miracle when there are enough rosaries and apostolate.”

Our pilgrims walked throughout Quebec, New Brunswick, and Ontario to prepare these congresses. In each region, they installed large banners reading: “Let us demand \$12,000 per year for stay-at-home mothers.” They visited thousands of families, presented them with the Charter of the Rights of the Family, gathered signatures for the \$12,000 petition, and in every home asked to pray a decade of the Rosary.

The reports of this apostolate were inspiring:

●In Saint-Georges de Beauce, May 1988, our first congress was held. About forty pilgrims visited families; thousands of petitions were signed; the City of Saint-Georges authorized the installation of the \$12,000 banner in front of City Hall, along with the MICHAEL flag.

●In June, the congress was held in Hull-Gatineau. In July, in Chicoutimi, several pilgrims gave up their vacations to prepare.

●In August 1988, about fifty pilgrims travelled to New Brunswick despite great distances; every family agreed to pray a decade of the Rosary.

●In Rouyn, October 1988, 23,000 petitions were signed. “We have never seen such determination,” wrote Mr. Mercier.



The \$12,000 banner in front of City Hall in Saint-Georges-de-Beauce, Quebec

●In Montreal, December 1988, 18,000 petitions were signed. The congresses continued in 1989–90–91, covering Quebec, Sherbrooke, Shawinigan, Trois-Rivières, Thetford Mines, Alma, Val-d’Or, Saint-Hyacinthe, Granby, and Sudbury, Ontario. Our pilgrims, unpaid, begged for their meals and lodging and were generously received by families.

In 2026, what remains of the \$12,000 campaign?

Did you know that MICHAEL won this battle? I myself was astonished to discover that in 2026 families receive nearly three times the amount we demanded in the 1980s. It is not called “income for the stay-at-home mother,” but it is an amount that allows a mother or father to remain at home and educate their children.

These allowances are calculated according to family income.

For a family with three children and a family income of \$37,000, they receive the maximum:

- From the Federal Government: \$25,250
- From the Government of Quebec: \$9,200
- **Total per year: \$34,450**

For a family income of \$60,000, still with three children, the allowances are around \$28,000.

Recently, a mother told me that it is thanks to these allowances that she is able to keep her children at home rather than sending them to daycare. That is undoubtedly the case for many families.

What a beautiful struggle! Thank you to MICHAEL, and thank you to all the pilgrims who walked for this noble cause! ❖

Lise Rodrigue-Fournier

An income for stay-at-home mothers: What the Church says

by Alain Pilote

The previous article mentioned the Charter of the Rights of the Family, published by the Holy See in October 1983, which refers to “remuneration for the work of one parent in the home; it must be such that the mother of the family is not obliged to work outside the home to the detriment of family life, especially the education of the children.”

In fact, this appeal from the Catholic Church regarding the importance of a woman’s work in the home is not new. As early as 1931, Pope Pius XI wrote in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, no. 71:

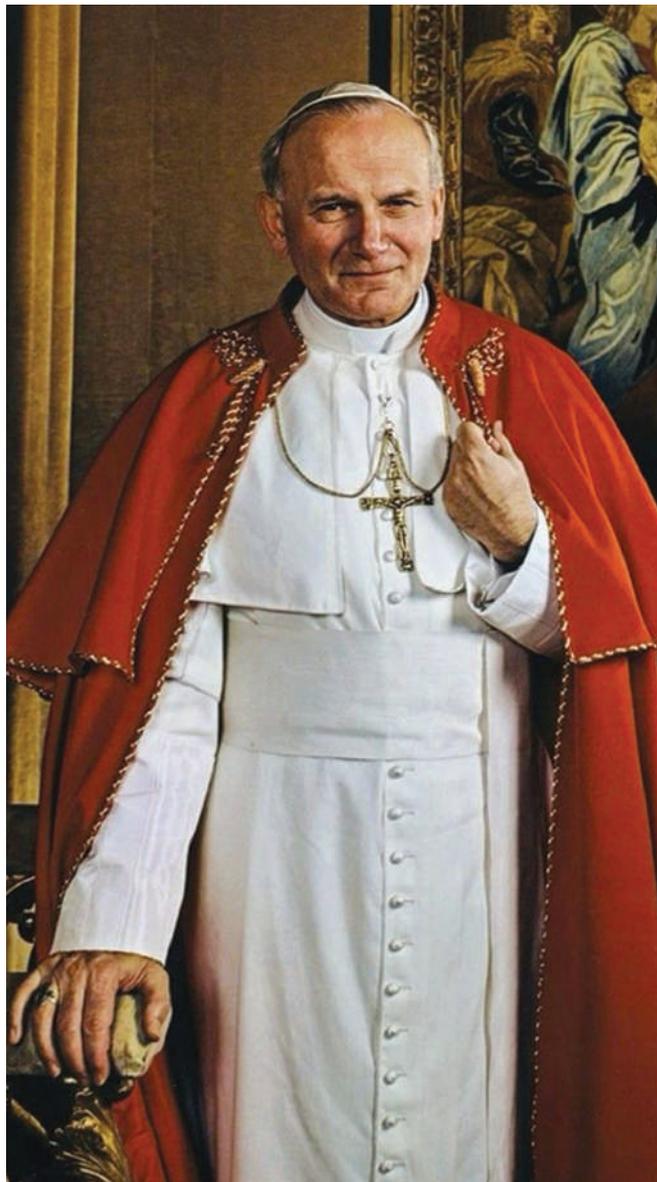
“It is an intolerable abuse, and to be abolished at all cost, for mothers, on account of the father’s low wage, to be forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the home to the neglect of their proper cares and duties, especially the training of children.”

More recently, Saint John Paul II wrote in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* on human work, dated September 15, 1981, paragraph 19:

“Experience confirms that there must be a social re-evaluation of the mother’s role, of the toil connected with it, and of the need that children have for care, love and affection in order that they may develop into responsible, morally and religiously mature and psychologically stable persons.

“It will redound to the credit of society to make it possible for a mother—without inhibiting her freedom, without psychological or practical discrimination, and without penalizing her as compared with other women—to devote herself to taking care of her children and educating them in accordance with their needs, which vary with age. Having to abandon these tasks in order to take up paid work outside the home is wrong from the point of view of the good of society and of the family when it contradicts or hinders these primary goals of the mission of a mother.”

John Paul II returned to this theme in his address to women workers in Łódź, Poland, on June 13, 1987:



Saint John Paul II

“Woman is the heart of the family community. If the heart fails, the organism ceases to live... All the work that a woman does in the home, all her activity as mother and educator, is important work. It cannot be socially devalued; it must constantly be revalued if society does not wish to act to its own detriment... A true promotion of women requires from society a particular recognition of maternal and family tasks, since they are of greater value than all other tasks and public professions...”

In everything that concerns education,

woman is irreplaceable, especially in the early years of a child's life — irreplaceable. My fervent wish is that all children in the world, and particularly in my homeland, may be raised by their own mothers within their families, and that there be no abandoned children gathered into 'children's homes' (daycares) — useful social institutions, but which do not substitute for feminine genius."

Daycares do not replace the mother

The Pope's words are very clear: the presence of the mother is irreplaceable, especially in the child's early years. This means that daycares, however useful they may be, however well equipped and clean they are, and however dedicated and well-intentioned their staff may be, will never replace a mother's "genius" and affection.

Moreover, even the strongest supporters of daycare agree that a mother's presence in the home is preferable during a child's first three years. They therefore propose longer maternity leaves (21 weeks) or workplace daycares. These measures may help women in the workforce, but they bring absolutely nothing to those who remain at home. Why are feminists opposed to any assistance for stay-at-home mothers?

A question of money

In Canada, in 1951, only 7% of women worked outside the home. In 1967, the figure was 17%. In 2024, it exceeds 61%. In fact, the traditional family — that is, the father working outside the home and the mother remaining at home to care for the children — has become the exception, representing only one family out of six in Canada. Why this change?

It is essentially a question of money. The cost of living has risen so dramatically that the husband's single salary is no longer sufficient to support the entire family. If 60% of women in Canada work outside the home, it is because most of them are financially compelled to do so. If they truly had the choice, many would prefer to remain at home full-time to care for their children.

What some feminists do not understand — or do not wish to understand — is that a woman can be highly intelligent and still consider it preferable, for the good of her children, to choose to remain at home full-time to care for them. The stay-at-home mother has no reason to feel inferior to women who work outside the home, since, as the Pope reminded us, "maternal and family

tasks are of greater value than all other public professions."

It is also wrong for certain feminists to claim that granting an income to mothers aims to "confine women to the home." Those who wish to work outside the home remain free to do so. But those who choose to remain at home full-time to care for their children should receive an allowance that recognizes the importance of their work in the home. As John Paul II explained in an address in Piacenza, Italy, on June 5, 1988:

"The dignity of man and woman is equal, for both are created in the image of God. All areas of human activity — economic, social, cultural, or political — are and must be open to women. But there is a specific activity that particularly concerns woman as 'mother of the living.' It is in this that woman finds her highest expression; and it is therefore just that the State and society support her in the fulfillment of this duty through social benefits similar to those granted to women who work outside the home."

Therefore, the government should at least grant mothers who work in the home the same amount that it gives to mothers who work outside the home and send their children to daycare. In Quebec today, the cost of daycare for one child ranges between \$15,000 and \$20,000 per year, of which a maximum of \$2,520 (\$9.65 per day multiplied by 261 days) is paid by the parents. For two children, it is already double. Yet with the same allowance, a stay-at-home mother is just as capable of raising two children as one.

Much could also be said about the enormous social costs resulting from the absence of the mother in the home: family conflicts, divorces, psychological difficulties among children, juvenile delinquency, and other problems that are sometimes irreparable. In fact, granting an income to the stay-at-home mother is by no means excessive; one can easily conclude that it would cost the government less to provide an income to mothers than to subsidize daycare centres. ❖

Alain Pilote

Next monthly meetings

**House of the Immaculate
1101, rue Principale, Rougemont, QC
March 22, April 26, May 24**

The representative of MICHAEL among the African bishops

From January 25 to February 1, 2026, the 13th Plenary Assembly of ACERAC (Association of Episcopal Conferences of Central Africa) was held in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad. It brought together the bishops of the following six countries: Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, the Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, and Chad. These bishops meet every three years, and this year's theme was: "The Challenges of the Church, Family of God in Africa, 30 Years after *Eclesia in Africa*," the apostolic exhortation written by John Paul II.

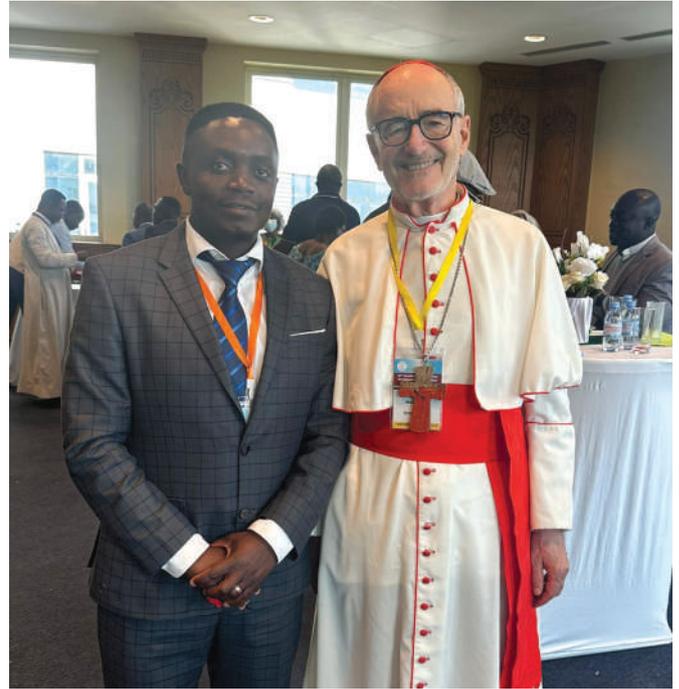
In addition to the bishops from these six countries, those present included Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and special envoy of the Holy See (representing Pope Leo XIV), as well as Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, President of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). Besides Cardinal Ambongo, several of the bishops present had already come to Rougemont to attend our study sessions on Economic Democracy, including Bishop Samuel Kleda of Cameroon and Bishop Jean Vincent Ondo of Gabon, along with two others who had also previously visited Rougemont.

Mr. Philbert Bagilimana, representative of the Pilgrims of Saint Michael and of the Louis Even Institute of Canada, also took part in the opening of this ACERAC assembly, where he presented the mission of the Institute: the promotion of Economic Democracy, founded on justice, human dignity, and the common good. He addressed a heartfelt appeal to the bishops and archbishops present.

On January 30, in partnership with the Centre for Research in Socio-Economic and Political Studies, the Louis Even Institute invited the academic community to a high-level conference at the University of N'Djamena, moderated by Dr. Alfred de Hamadi. President Bagilimana also answered questions from the media about the Institute and Economic Democracy.

From February 2 to 9, Mr. Bagilimana then travelled to Cotonou, in Benin, to represent MICHAEL. As part of the expansion of the Louis Even Institute in West Africa, an official mission was carried out in Cotonou to strengthen the organization's presence, reinforce institutional relations, and organize a regional congress under the auspices of the Association of Episcopal Conferences of Central Africa.

Below is the text of the address delivered by Mr. Bagilimana in N'Djamena at the opening of the 13th Plenary Assembly of ACERAC.



Mr. Philbert Bagilimana with Cardinal Czerny

Address by Mr. Philbert Bagilimana

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Reverend Fathers and Sisters, dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We convey to you the greetings of the General Directorate of the Louis Even Institute of Canada for Social Justice and assure you of its ever-growing closeness with the Church in the Central African sub-region.

In a world where inequalities are increasing, where the economy often becomes an instrument of exclusion rather than of communion, it is urgent that Christians rediscover their voice, their mission, and their courage. The message of the Gospel is not foreign to economic realities: it transforms structures of sin into structures that promote human dignity.

The Louis Even Institute of Canada was founded to promote Economic Democracy, based on justice, the dignity of the human person, and the common good. This vision rests on simple yet powerful principles: every human being has a right to the goods necessary for life, not as a favour, but as a natural right that society must guarantee.

In the spirit of the Church's social teaching, we believe that a healthy economy is an economy at the service of the human person, not the other way around. It must allow everyone to participate fully in social, family, and spiritual life, without being crushed by poverty, insecurity, or exclusion.



The bishops of the six episcopal conferences participating in the ACERAC assembly in N'Djamena, Chad

This is why we make an appeal to all the fathers present here and to all people of good will: help us form, in your dioceses, missionaries of the Church's social teaching as promoted through Economic Democracy! Let us commit ourselves to implementing these values in our dioceses in order to combat poverty in all its forms.

Christians must become informed, become indignant, and become involved in turning the tide against injustice. They must understand these injustices in order to fight them effectively. Through our training sessions on Economic Democracy, you will discover the root causes of poverty, but above all concrete and realistic solutions, rooted in the Church's social doctrine. Justice and peace are not slogans: they are responsibilities.

We believe it is possible to unite spirituality and action, faith and economics, charity and justice. The disciple of Christ is also a builder of justice, and this begins with enlightened education in economic life. We place at your disposal Father Clément Aboudi, ACERAC expert and regional coordinator of the Louis Even Institute, as well as Professor Pierre Thibaut Bata, permanent secretary, for bishops

who would like to pursue this formation in Canada.

We therefore invite you to join our training programs, and we remain at your disposal at all times. May your faith become a light within the structures of this world, and

may your commitment contribute ever more to building a more fraternal society.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." (Mt 5:9) Praised be Jesus Christ! ❖



From left to right: the new Secretary General of ACERAC, Rev. Dr. Steve Bobongo; Philbert Bagilimana; Rev. Fr. Clément Aboudi; and Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, Archbishop of Kinshasa.

The main challenges of the contemporary world

Address of Pope Leo XIV to the Diplomatic Corps

As all Supreme Pontiffs customarily do at the beginning of each year, Pope Leo XIV delivered an address on January 9, 2026, to the ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, expressing his hopes and concerns regarding the current world situation. Here are excerpts highlighting the main points emphasized by the Holy Father. The subheadings are by MICHAEL.

War is replacing diplomacy

In our time, the weakness of multilateralism is a particular cause for concern at the international level. A diplomacy that promotes dialogue and seeks consensus among all parties is being replaced by a diplomacy based on force, by either individuals or groups of allies. War is back in vogue and a zeal for war is spreading.

The principle established after the Second World War, which prohibited nations from using force to violate the borders of others, has been completely undermined. Peace is no longer sought as a gift and a desirable good in itself, or in the pursuit of "the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect form of justice among men and women." [4] Instead, peace is sought through weapons as a condition for asserting one's own dominion. This gravely threatens the rule of law, which is the foundation of all peaceful civil coexistence. (...)

I would like to draw particular attention to the importance of international humanitarian law. Compliance with this cannot depend on mere circumstances and military or strategic interests. Humanitarian law, in addition to guaranteeing a minimum of humanity during the ravages of war, is a commitment that States have made. Such law must always prevail over the ambitions of belligerents, in order to mitigate the devastating effects of war, also with a view to reconstruction.

We cannot ignore that the destruction of hospitals, energy infrastructure, homes and places essential to daily life constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law. The Holy See firmly reiterates its condemnation of any form of involvement of civilians in military operations. It likewise hopes that the international community will remember that the protection of the principle of the inviolability of human dignity and the sanctity of life always counts for more than any mere national interest. (...)

The meaning of words is being manipulated

Today, the meaning of words is ever more fluid, and the concepts they represent are increasingly ambiguous. Language is no longer the preferred means by which human beings come to know and encounter one another. Moreover, in the contortions of semantic ambiguity, language is becoming more and more a weapon with which to deceive, or to strike and offend opponents. We need words once again to express distinct and clear realities unequivocally. Only in this way can authentic dialogue resume without misunderstandings.

This should happen in our homes and public spaces, in politics, in the media and on social media. It should likewise occur in the context of international relations and multilateralism, so that the latter can regain the strength needed for undertaking its role of encounter and mediation. This is indeed necessary for preventing conflicts, and for ensuring that no one is tempted to prevail over others with the mindset of force, whether verbal, physical or military.

We should also note the paradox that this weakening of language is often invoked in the name of freedom of expression itself. However, on closer inspection, the opposite is true, for freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed precisely by the certainty of language and the fact that every term is anchored in the truth.

It is painful to see how, especially in the West, the space for genuine freedom of expression is rapidly shrinking. At the same time, a new Orwellian-style language is developing which, in an attempt to be increasingly inclusive, ends up excluding those who do not conform to the ideologies that are fueling it.

(Editor's note: The adjective "Orwellian" refers to the novel Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell, published in 1949, which depicts a fictional oppressive totalitarian society where government propaganda is used to monitor, control, and manipulate the population. The people are ruled by Big Brother, a dictatorial leader who forbids freedom of expression and calls truth what is actually falsehood.)

Unfortunately, this leads to other consequences that end up restricting fundamental human rights, starting with the freedom of conscience. In this regard, conscientious objection allows individuals to refuse legal or professional obligations that conflict with moral, ethical or religious principles deeply rooted in their personal lives. This may be the refusal of military service in the name of non-violence,

“It is painful to see how, especially in the West, the space for genuine freedom of expression is rapidly shrinking. At the same time, a new Orwellian-style language is developing which, in an attempt to be increasingly inclusive, ends up excluding those who do not conform to the ideologies that are fueling it.”



or the refusal on the part of doctors and healthcare professionals to engage in practices such as abortion or euthanasia. Conscientious objection is not rebellion, but an act of fidelity to oneself.

Freedom of conscience is questioned

At this moment in history, freedom of conscience seems increasingly to be questioned by States, even those that claim to be based on democracy and human rights. This freedom, however, establishes a balance between the collective interest and individual dignity. It also emphasizes that a truly free society does not impose uniformity but protects the diversity of consciences, preventing authoritarian tendencies and promoting an ethical dialogue that enriches the social fabric.

In a similar way, religious freedom risks being curtailed. As Benedict XVI recalled, this is the first of all human rights, because it expresses the most fundamental reality of the person. The most recent data show that violations of religious freedom are on the rise, and that sixty-four percent of the world's population suffers serious violations of this right.

In requesting that the religious freedom and worship of Christians be fully respected, the Holy See asks the same for all other religious communities. On the sixtieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, one of the fruits of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council that concluded on December 8, 1965, I had the opportunity to reiterate the categorical rejection of all forms of antisemitism, which unfortunately continues to sow hatred and death. I likewise emphasized the importance of cultivating the Jewish-Christian dialogue, deepening our common biblical roots.

Persecution of Christians

However, it cannot be overlooked that the persecution of Christians remains one of the most widespread human rights crises today, affecting over 380 million believers worldwide. They suffer high or

extreme levels of discrimination, violence and oppression because of their faith. This phenomenon impinges on approximately one in seven Christians globally, and it worsened in 2025 due to ongoing conflicts, authoritarian regimes and religious extremism. Sadly, all of this demonstrates that religious freedom is considered in many contexts more as a “privilege” or concession than a fundamental human right. (...)

At the same time, we must not forget a subtle form of religious discrimination against Christians, which is spreading even in countries where they are in the majority, such as in Europe or the Americas. There, they are sometimes restricted in their ability to proclaim the truths of the Gospel for political or ideological reasons, especially when they defend the dignity of the weakest, the unborn, refugees and migrants, or promote the family.

The inalienable rights of migrants

In its international relations and actions, the Holy See consistently takes a stand in defense of the inalienable dignity of every person. It cannot be overlooked, for example, that every migrant is a person and, as such, has inalienable rights that must be respected in every situation. Not all migrants move by choice, but many are forced to flee because of violence, persecution, conflict and even the effects of climate change, as in various parts of Africa and Asia. In this year, which also marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the International Organization for Migration, I renew the Holy See's hope that the actions taken by States against criminality and human trafficking will not become a pretext for undermining the dignity of migrants and refugees.

Protecting the family

Furthermore, from a Christian perspective, human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, who, “by calling them into existence out of love, has at the same time called them to love.” This vocation is revealed in a privileged and unique way within the family. (...)

▶ Despite its centrality, the institution of the family faces two crucial challenges today. On the one hand, there is a worrying tendency in the international system to neglect and underestimate its fundamental social role, leading to its progressive institutional marginalization. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the growing and painful reality of fragile, broken and suffering families, afflicted by internal difficulties and disturbing phenomena, including domestic violence.

The vocation to love and to life, which manifests itself in an important way in the exclusive and indissoluble union between a woman and a man, implies a fundamental ethical imperative for enabling families to welcome and fully care for unborn life. This is increasingly a priority, especially in those countries that are experiencing a dramatic decline in birth rates. Life, in fact, is a priceless gift that develops within a committed relationship based on mutual self-giving and service.

In light of this profound vision of life as a gift to be cherished, and of the family as its responsible guardian, we categorically reject any practice that denies or exploits the origin of life and its development. Among these is abortion, which cuts short a growing life and refuses to welcome the gift of life.

In this regard, the Holy See expresses deep concern about projects aimed at financing cross-border mobility for the purpose of accessing the so-called "right to safe abortion." It also considers it deplorable that public resources are allocated to suppress life, rather than being invested to support mothers and families. The primary objective must remain the protection of every unborn child and the effective and concrete support of every woman so that she is able to welcome life.

Likewise, there is the practice of surrogacy. By transforming gestation into a negotiable service, this violates the dignity both of the child, who is reduced to a "product," and of the mother, exploiting her body and the generative process, and distorting the original relational calling of the family.

Similar considerations can be extended to the sick and to those who are elderly or isolated, who at times struggle to find a reason to continue living. Civil society and States also have a responsibility to respond concretely to situations of vulnerability, offering solutions to human suffering, such as palliative care, and promoting policies of authentic solidarity, rather than encouraging deceptive forms of compassion such as euthanasia. (...)

While Saint Augustine highlights the coexistence of the heavenly and earthly cities until the end of time, our era seems somewhat inclined to deny the city of God its "right of citizenship." It seems

that only the earthly city exists, enclosed exclusively within its borders. Seeking only immanent goods undermines that "tranquility of order," which, for Augustine, constitutes the very essence of peace, which concerns society and nations as much as the human soul itself, and is essential for any civil coexistence.

In the absence of a transcendent and objective foundation, only self-love prevails, to the point of indifference to God, who governs the earthly city. Yet, as Augustine notes, "great is the folly of pride in those individuals who think that the supreme good can be found in this life, and that they can become happy by their own resources."

Pride obscures both reality itself and our empathy towards others. It is no coincidence that pride is always at the root of every conflict. Consequently, as I recalled in my Message for the World Day of Peace, "we lose our sense of realism and surrender to a partial and distorted view of the world, disfigured by darkness and fear," thus paving the way for the mentality of confrontation, which is the precursor to every war.

We see this in many contexts, starting with the ongoing war in Ukraine and the suffering inflicted on the civilian population... At the same time, we see this in the Holy Land, where, despite the truce announced in October, the civilian population continues to endure a serious humanitarian crisis, adding further suffering to that already experienced.

Notwithstanding the tragic situation before our eyes, peace remains a difficult yet realistic good. As Augustine reminds us, peace is "the aim of our good," because it is the very aim of the city of God, to which we aspire, even unconsciously, and of which we can enjoy a foretaste even in the earthly city. During our pilgrimage on this earth, peacemaking requires humility and courage. The humility to live truthfully and the courage to forgive. In the Christian life, we see these virtues reflected at Christmas, when Truth, the eternal Word of God, becomes humble flesh, and at Easter, when the condemned Righteous One forgives His persecutors and grants them His life as the Risen One.

This coming October will mark the eighth century of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi, a man of peace and dialogue, universally recognized even by those who do not belong to the Catholic Church. His life shines brightly, for it was inspired by the courage to live in truth, and the knowledge that a peaceful world is built starting with humble hearts turned towards the heavenly city. A humble and peace-loving heart is what I wish for each of us and for all who dwell in our countries at the beginning of this New Year. Thank you. ❖

Leo XIV

Bishop Fulton Sheen, fiery preacher and future Blessed

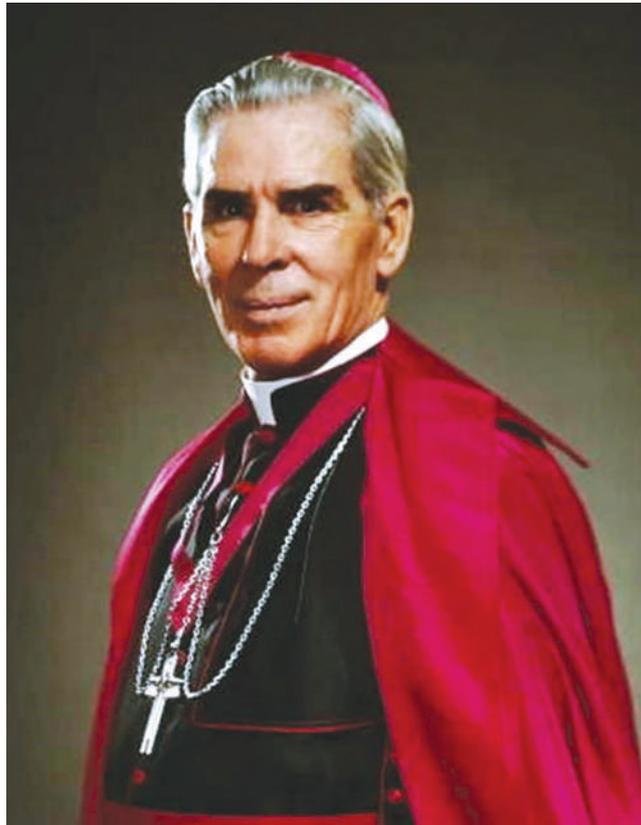
On February 9, 2026, Bishop Louis Tylka, Bishop of the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, in the United States, joyfully announced the news that many had long awaited: the Vatican had given the green light for the beatification of Bishop Fulton Sheen (1895–1979), bishop and renowned preacher on American radio and television, one of the first to understand the importance of the media for spreading the Catholic faith.

What is quite remarkable in this case is that Bishop Sheen's beatification had to overcome two serious obstacles before reaching this point.

First, the beatification had originally been scheduled for December 21, 2019, at the Cathedral of Peoria — where Fulton Sheen had been ordained a priest 100 years earlier, in 1919 — after Pope Francis approved in July 2019 a miracle attributed to Bishop Sheen's intercession. (This miracle, the details of which will be discussed on page 30 of this issue, occurred in 2010.)

However, to everyone's surprise, on December 3, 2019, just two weeks before the scheduled ceremony, the Bishop of Peoria announced that the beatification had been postponed indefinitely by the Vatican. The delay followed a request from certain American bishops, including at the time the Bishop of Rochester, Bishop Salvatore Matano, who asked for a postponement out of concern that allegations related to the handling of clergy abuse cases might be raised against Bishop Sheen, who had served as Bishop of Rochester from 1966 to 1969. Obviously, no fault or wrongdoing on the part of Bishop Sheen was ever found, and with the Vatican's permission, the beatification will therefore take place in 2026, likely next September.

A second obstacle had already arisen in September 2014. After a panel of seven Vatican medical experts unanimously concluded that there was no



Bishop Fulton Sheen (1895-1979)

natural explanation for the 2010 healing, the cause for Bishop Sheen's beatification was suspended due to a legal dispute between the Archdiocese of New York, custodian of Bishop Sheen's mortal remains (buried in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York), and the Diocese of Peoria, which wished to receive them. After several legal proceedings, the Archdiocese of New York agreed on June 9, 2019, to transfer the body to Peoria, thereby allowing the cause to move forward.

Bishop Sheen was not an ordinary bishop. He was one of the greatest communicators of the faith in the twentieth century. From 1951 to 1957, his television program *Life Is Worth Living* attracted more than 30 million

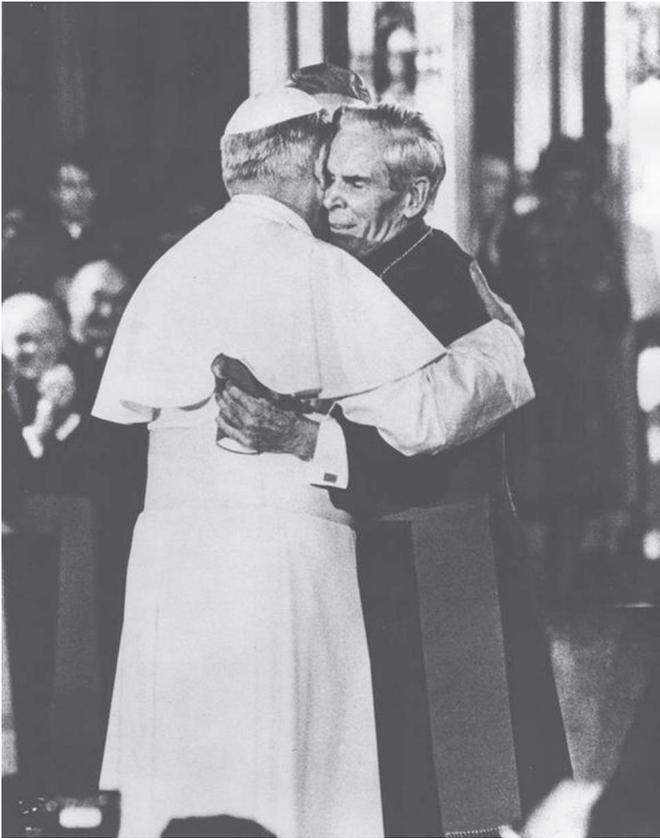
viewers each week, Catholics and non-believers alike. In 1952, Bishop Sheen even won an Emmy Award as "Most Outstanding Television Personality". Accepting his award, with his characteristic humour, he declared: "I wish to thank my four writers — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John."

Here is a summary of the life of this extraordinary bishop and future Blessed, as published in the May 2016 spiritual newsletter of Saint Joseph Abbey of Clairval, France (www.clairval.com):

by Dom Antoine-Marie, O.S.B.

On October 2, 1979, in Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York, in front of a huge crowd of worshipers who had come to greet the Supreme Pontiff, a venerable octogenarian among the American bishops came forward with difficulty, and knelt down. John Paul II raised him to his feet and embraced him, saying: "**You have written and spoken well of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are a loyal son of the Church.**"

(Editor's note: This bishop was Fulton Sheen. Despite his fragile health, he still wished to take part in the meeting with John Paul II during the Pope's apostolic visit to the United States. On that occasion,



John Paul II and Bishop Sheen, October 2, 1979

► *he arrived at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York by ambulance. Bishop Sheen passed away a few weeks later, on December 9, 1979.)*

The crowd was touched by this gesture, and the prelate was deeply moved by the Pope's words. Nothing could have given Archbishop Fulton Sheen more joy, at the end of a life entirely devoted to the love of Jesus Christ and His Church. In his own words: The Church is "the Temple of Life in which I am a living stone; it is the Tree of Eternal Fruit of which I am a Branch; it is the Mystical Body of Christ on earth of which I am a member. The Church is therefore more to me than I am to myself... So absorbing does she become that her thoughts are my thoughts; her loves are my loves; her ideals are my ideals. I consider sharing her life the greatest gift God has ever given to me, as I should consider losing her life the greatest evil that could befall me... My life is her life, my being is her being, she has my love, my service."

Archbishop Sheen was born on May 8, 1895, in El Paso, Illinois, is the first of four boys born to Newton Sheen and Delia Fulton, who managed a modest hardware store. The day of his Baptism, he was placed on the altar of the Virgin as a sign of special consecration to the Queen of Heaven. At Baptism he received the names Peter and John, but he would commonly be called by his mother's maiden name, Fulton, and it was by this name that he would be known.

Five years later, for economic reasons, the family was forced to move near the city of Peoria. There, the child successfully completed his elementary and secondary schooling. Throughout his life, he would be grateful for having had profoundly Catholic parents. "The best influences in life," he would write, "are undeliberate, unconscious; when no one is watching, when reaction to the good deed was not sought. Such is the long term influence of a mother at home; fulfilling her daily duties with love and a spirit of self-sacrifice, she leaves an imprint on the children that deepens with the years."

Fulton had a normal schooling and proved to be an all-around excellent student. Summers, he helped his father on the farm, despite his lack of attraction to farm work, since his interests were intellectual. One day a neighbor told his father: "That oldest boy of yours, Fulton, will never be worth a damn. He's always got his nose in a book." After high school, the young man entered university, where his success earned him a scholarship for a doctorate. However, he felt the Lord's call to the priesthood. He asked the advice of a good priest, Father Bergan, who answered him flatly: "Tear up the scholarship. That is what the Lord wants you to do; trusting in Him, you will receive a far better university education after you are ordained than before." Fulton then decided to enter the seminary. He would never regret it.

Considerable time

On September 20, 1919, the day of his priestly ordination, he made two promises: to spend an hour



The newly-ordained priest, Fr. Fulton Sheen



**“Do you want to know the secret of my power? Every single day since I have been ordained, I have spent one continuous hour in the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. That’s where I got power. That’s where I got light. That’s where I discovered the joys and beauties of my priesthood. And there are vocations hidden in you. And they can be lighted and sparked by that Divine Presence. I tell you, it’s the sweetest and greatest association in the world. Try it!” —
*Mgr Fulton Sheen***



before the Blessed Sacrament every day of his life, and to celebrate the Mass every Saturday in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so as to solicit the protection of the Queen of Heaven for his priesthood. He would later speak of the “deep ecstatic sense of love that comes with ordination, and spoils us for all other love.” The Holy Hour would become the frequent subject of his reflections and preaching, especially when he would speak to priests. He maintained that it is impossible for a priest to give Christ to others if he does not spend considerable time each day in His presence: “Neither theological knowledge nor social action alone is enough to keep us in love with Christ unless both are preceded by a personal encounter with Him.”

Why? Because it is a question of love, and love demands that one spend time with the beloved: “Very few souls ever meditate; they are either frightened by the word, or else never taught its existence. In the human order a person in love is always conscious of the one loved, lives in the presence of the other, resolves to do the will of the other, and regards as his greatest jealousy being outdone in the least advantage of self-giving. Apply this to a soul in love with God, and you have the rudiments of meditation.”

Shortly after his ordination, Fulton enrolled in the Catholic University of America, in Washington, where he earned degrees in theology and canon law. Rather than continuing his studies in America, he asked to earn his doctorate at a European university, and chose the University of Louvain, in Belgium. After receiving his doctorate in July 1925, Sheen passed further exams qualifying him to be a professor of philosophy at the highest level. But then he was appointed vicar in a poor parish in his native diocese of Peoria, Illinois.

After the studies he had just completed, many were surprised at this appointment, which seemed humiliating for so brilliant a priest. But he gracefully

accepted this ministry. He threw himself completely into the pastoral care of souls, and soon becoming the friend of all, obtaining numerous conversions. At the end of eight months, the bishop admitted to him, “Three years ago I promised you to the faculty of the Catholic University of America, but everyone said you’d gotten so high-hat in Europe that you wouldn’t take orders any more. But you’ve been a good boy, so run along.”

Father Sheen would remain in Washington for more than twenty years, much appreciated by his students: “You’d no more think of raising a hand in one of his classes,” one of them later said, “than of telling the sun to stop shining for a minute. Nor can I honestly say you’d want to. He was that spell-binding a teacher.” The young priest considered teaching to be “one of the noblest vocations on earth, for, in the last analysis, the purpose of all education is the knowledge and love of truth.”

His intellectual capabilities did not prevent him from remaining very close to the simple faithful all his life. Showing great kindness towards all, he never dazzled others with his learning. Rather, he strove to always learn something from the person with whom he was speaking. In his teaching, he began by placing himself at the level of his students, so as to gradually raise them higher.

Removing the masks

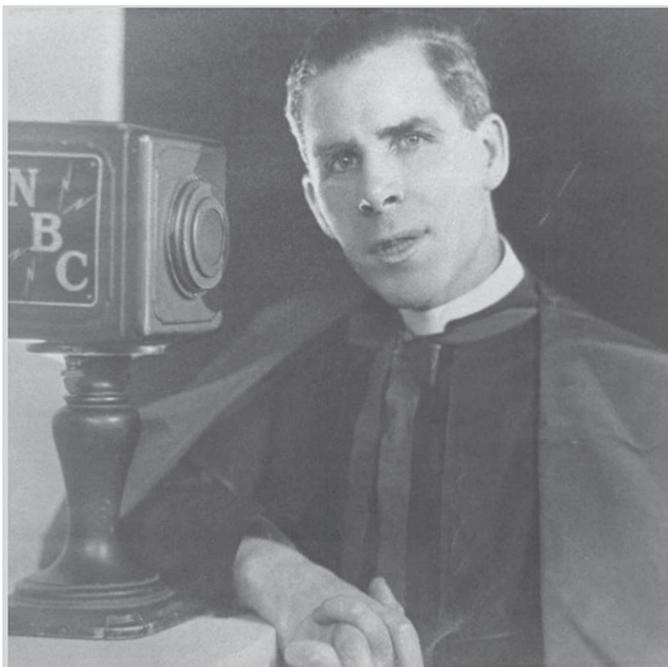
His full-time professorship did not keep him from accepting numerous invitations to preach retreats or give talks. He prepared his talks with great care, always speaking standing up and without notes; he liked to say that no one starts a fire sitting down. His clear and precise presentation of the truths of the Catholic faith was peppered with humorous anecdotes that kept the audience’s attention.

Very soon his reputation spread far and wide. He felt real faith was what was most lacking in the ►

► world. So he did not hesitate to confidently remind his listeners of the great truths of the Gospel, which, when meditated upon, bring about the conversion of souls: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. For him, modern man wanted the impossible: a religion without the Cross, a Christ without Calvary, a kingdom without justice, and in his church, “a soft dean who never mentions hell to ears polite.”

But that is not the faith of the Church. In fact, during the judgment, he reminds us, “each man will have to learn for himself that narrow is the gate and strait the way to Eternal Life, and few there are who enter therein... There all the masks will be taken off; he will step out of the ranks, away from the crowd, and the only voice he will hear will be the voice of conscience, which ... will reveal self as he really is; ... No opiates will be served to make him forget or waft him off into the delightful irresponsibility of sleep; no cocktails will be served at heavenly bars with angelic barmaids to make him deaf to the voice of conscience.”

Half a century later, Saint John Paul II would similarly write: “**Nor can the church omit, without serious mutilation of her essential message, a constant catechesis on what the traditional Christian language calls the four last things of man: death, judgment (universal and particular), hell and heaven ... Only in this eschatological vision can one realize the exact nature of sin and feel decisively moved to penance and reconciliation**” (Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, December 2, 1984, no. 26).



Beginning in 1928, Father Sheen’s voice was regularly broadcast over the airwaves in the program “The Catholic Hour”. For over twenty years, he strove to present to his listeners, in simple terms, the contents of the Catholic faith, which he defended against modern attacks. He received many letters (between

3,000 and 6,000 per week) as a result of these broadcasts. Many correspondents sent money, which he generously redistributed to the needy. “In time God replaces any energy or money that is given away,” he replied to those who complained about his generosity. In 1934, his renown resulted in his being named a Papal Chamberlain with the title “Monsignor.” In 1951, he was invited to preach the Gospel on television in a series called “Life Is Worth Living.” This apostolate would last seven years.

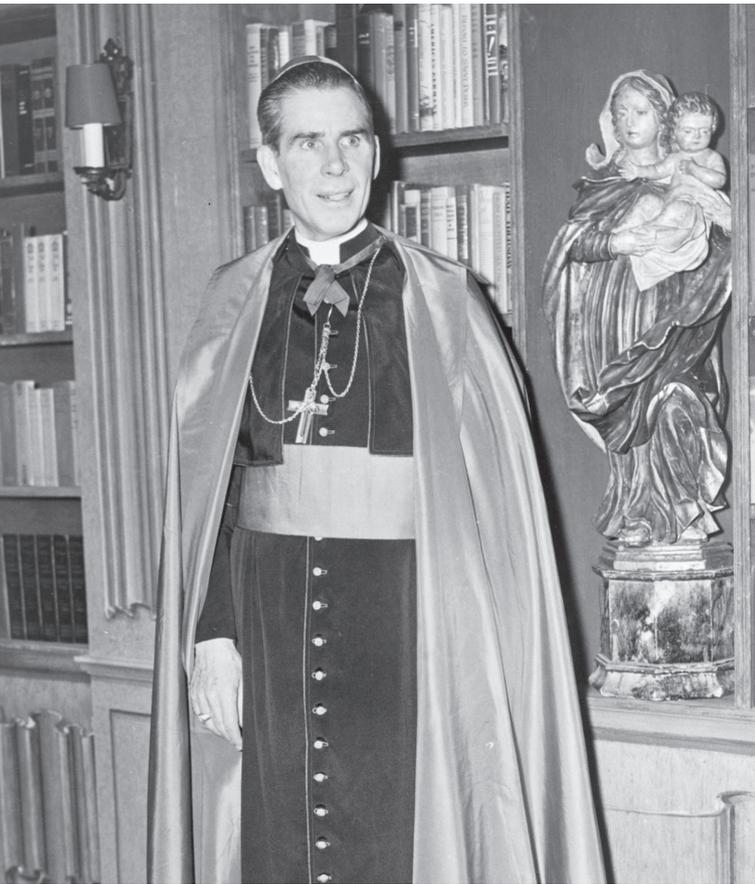
Leading figure

For decades Monsignor Sheen remained a leading figure in the fight against Communism. Rather than making only the Russian revolutionaries responsible for the success of this ideology, he did not hesitate to attribute its success to a secularized West that had lost the faith, the source of its grandeur: “As Western civilization loses its Christianity it loses its superiority. The ideology of Communism rose out of the secularized remnants of a Western civilization whose soul was once Christian.” Moreover, he predicted that the moral decadence of the West would lead to its certain collapse if it did not undertake a serious reform. Citing the historian Arnold Toynbee, Sheen pointed out that “sixteen out of the nineteen civilizations which have decayed from the beginning of history until now, decayed from within.”

Writing his books (he wrote 66) and carefully preparing his homilies, talks, and televised broadcasts took a great deal of time; despite this, he found a way to visit the poor, the sick, and distant missions in the Third World, to personally respond to tens of thousands of letters, and to instruct a great many people who were coming to or returning to the faith. He insisted that God’s grace seeks out a soul that is open to it. He liked to say “the latch is on our side and not on God’s,” and “God does not break down doors. It is we who bar His entrance.”

He reflected on the modern phenomenon of atheism: “Atheism, nine times out of ten,” he declared, “is born from the womb of a bad conscience. Disbelief is born of sin, not of reason.” And he gladly advised those who found themselves in this situation: “If you want to know God, there is only one way: get down on your knees... If you do not worship God, you worship something, and nine times out of ten it will be yourself.”

It is impossible to count the number of people who were converted by this tireless apostle. “I never keep a record of converts,” he admitted, “lest I fall into the error of thinking I made them. The Good Lord would never let me have another. He would punish me for my pride.” A man who walks under trees laden with ripe apples gathers them effortlessly. In the same way he recognized that every conversion is first and foremost a gift from God, granted through



Bishop Sheen in front of the television cameras

prayer, without which nothing good can be done in the order of grace.

Where are your gods?

Fulton saw the wars that took place over the course of his life as the result of a multitude of sins. Indeed, violation of the moral law in and of itself incurs grave consequences—it is sin that brings suffering. In response to those who point the finger at God, making Him responsible for evil, he wrote, “The only time some men... ever think of God is when they want to find someone to blame for their own sins. Without ever saying so, they assume that man is responsible for everything good and beautiful in the world, but God is responsible for its wickedness and its wars... They ignore the fact that God is like a playwright who wrote a beautiful drama, gave it to men to act with all the directions for acting, and they made a botch of it.”

Confronted with unbelievers who ask, when everything is going wrong, “Where is God?” he replied, “Where are your gods now? Where is your god Progress in the face of two world wars within 21 years? Where is your god Science, now that it consecrates its energies to destruction? Where is your god Evolution now that the world is turned backward into one vast slaughterhouse?”

After his consecration as a bishop in Rome, on June 11, 1951, Bishop Fulton Sheen was named an

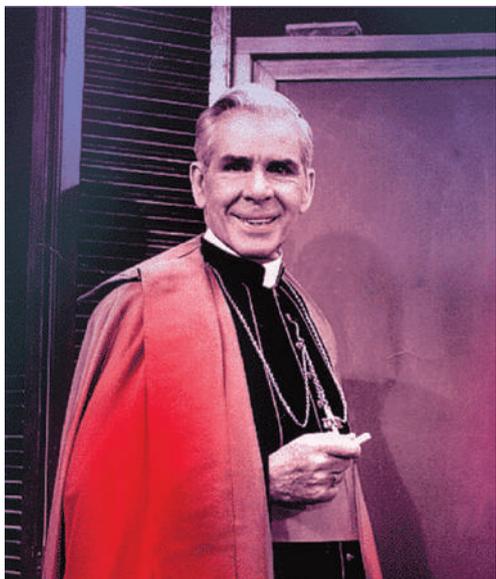
auxiliary bishop of New York. He carried out this ministry for fifteen years, while leading the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, an organization charged with coordinating aid to the missions for all the American dioceses, in concert with the Holy See. In this role, he collected considerable sums for the missions. His episcopal coat of arms bears the Latin motto *Da per matrem me venire*, which may be translated as this filial prayer: “Grant that I may come through the Mother.” In its own way, it summarizes one of the central themes of his spirituality: trust in Marian intercession, united with a fervent Eucharistic faith.

But his fame, and the money that passed through his hands, drew jealousy and criticism. A dispute with a high ecclesiastical dignitary (Cardinal Spellman of New York City) over a governmental gift on behalf of the missions would remain a painful thorn for him for a decade. Paradoxically, this conflict helped him progress in the night of the faith, and discover the mysterious joy of suffering with the Savior: “Unless there is a Good Friday in our lives there will never be an Easter Sunday,” he wrote. “So essential is dying to self the prelude to the true life of self.” During a trip to the Holy Land and other places linked to biblical history, Bishop Sheen stopped in Ephesus, a city evangelized by Saint Paul, who nearly lost his life there (cf. Acts 19). “Ephesus taught me,” said the prelate, “that preaching the Word will always provoke antagonisms. Whether it be against Communism or against greed, whether it be directed against divorce or abortion, there will be not only individual harassment but organized revolt.”

Bishop Sheen participated in all the sessions of the Second Vatican Council, making several interventions. In 1966, he was named bishop of Rochester, a position he would assume for three years. In 1969, he officially retired and received at this time the honor- ▶



Sheen as Bishop of Rochester in 1966



Some famous quotes by Bishop Fulton Sheen:

- “Wrong is wrong even if everybody is wrong. Right is right even if nobody is right.”
- “Sometimes the only way the good Lord can get into some hearts is to break them.”
- “Freedom does not mean doing what you please, but having the right to do what you ought.”
- “The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white Host.”
- “The refusal to take sides on great moral issues is itself a decision. It is a silent acquiescence to evil.”
- “There are not over a hundred people in the United States who hate the Catholic Church, but there are millions who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church.”

► ific title of archbishop. However, his activity did not lessen—talks and conferences in front of the most diverse audiences took him across the United States and Europe.

He even found the energy to do a new television series titled “What Now, America?” It was as though he wished to die in harness! The years following the Council were marked by great sufferings—while he was delighted about some reforms, he was deeply troubled by the confusion that seemed to prevail in the Church. “We have distanced ourselves from the standard of Christ to move towards the standard of the world. We do not ask ourselves, ‘Does this please Christ?’ but ‘Does this please the world?’ So I will dress and act in such a way that I will not be separate from the world; I want to be with it. We marry this age, and we become a widow in the next one. We take on its verbiage, its fashions. This is one reason for so much instability in the Church today: the sand on which we are walking is shifting. We’ve given up the rock which is Christ.”

A peephole

In 1976, the archbishop emeritus went to Rochester for the dedication of the Sheen Archives, a collection of his writings and recordings established at the diocesan seminary. On this occasion, he confided the following to those who hoped to find his “secret” in these archives: during his trips to Paris, he loved to visit a former Carmelite monastery that had been converted into a student residence. “There,” he said, “there is one room that I always visit. It’s at the end of a corridor... and over the desk was carved a peephole.

“It was the room of the great preacher Lacordaire, and as he sat at that desk he could look through that peephole, and what did he see? He looked on the

tabernacle—He looked on the Blessed Sacrament. It was that that made Lacordaire great. There is no complete explanation of Fulton J. Sheen in these books, in these tapes. You have to look for a secret from the outside, where knowledge is converted into wisdom, and that is done only at the feet of Christ and his Blessed Sacrament. So may all who enter this room be reminded of a peephole. Look through it, and you’ll explain Fulton John Sheen.”

In 1977, his health began to fail. He underwent open heart surgery, never before attempted on a man his age. As soon as possible afterwards, a priest came to celebrate Mass at the foot of his bed. The suffering archbishop managed to whisper the words of consecration and, gasping, he gave an explanation of the Mass to one of the attendants who was not Catholic. Even in these extreme circumstances, he took seriously the words of Saint Paul the Apostle: Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel! (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16) One evening, while he was in intensive care and barely conscious, he heard a nurse speak about another patient who was dying in a nearby bed. Unable to raise his hand, Sheen lifted his finger and traced the sign of the cross towards the dying man, giving him conditional absolution on the threshold of eternity.

On his back

In September 1978, he returned to the hospital for four months. He wrote to a cousin: “I have no complaint whatever about my condition because I firmly believe that the Lord often puts us on our back so that we will keep looking up to heaven.” During this stay, he consoled an elderly man and brought him back to the faith, after he had been away from the Church for forty-five years and had tried to kill himself. After several hours of conversation, Archbishop



Bishop Sheen's tomb is now located in a chapel of the Cathedral of Peoria.

Sheen heard his confession, reconciled him with the Church, and gave him Holy Communion. This event was a tremendous consolation for the aging archbishop, who saw in it a fruit of his own sufferings willingly accepted: "I had asked the Lord to let my sufferings do some good for some soul and He had answered the prayer."

Tireless, he returned to his activities once released from the hospital. In January 1979, he was invited to the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, in the presence of Jimmy Carter, then president of the United States. The venerable prelate began his speech with these words: "Mr. President, you are a sinner." After a moment of silence, he continued, "I am a sinner." Then, scanning the celebrities in attendance: "We are all sinners, and we all need to turn to God." Billy Graham, who was present, would declare that this was one of the most eloquent and inspiring sermons he had ever heard.

On Good Friday of that year, greatly weakened by his intense sufferings, Archbishop Sheen climbed the pulpit of Saint Agnes' Church in New York for the last time, determined to give a homily, even if it cost him his life. He had always thought that the pulpit would be a good place to die. But the months passed... Finally, on December 9, 1979, Fulton Sheen obtained the grace he had often asked for: to die before the Blessed Sacrament. A short time before, he had confessed his desire to leave this life: "It is not that I do not love life; I do. It is just that I want to see the Lord.

I have spent hours before Him in the Blessed Sacrament. I have spoken to Him in prayer, and about Him to everyone who would listen, and now I want to see Him face to face."

Archbishop Sheen's cause for beatification, opened in 2002, resulted in the 2012 declaration of his heroic virtues. From that point on, he bears the title "Venerable ". As we pray for his canonization, let us ask him to share with us his intense love for Jesus in the Eucharist, and his solicitude for the eternal destiny of souls. ❖

Dom Antoine-Marie, O.S.B.

This article is reprinted with permission from the Abbey of Clairval, France, which every month publishes a spiritual newsletter on the life of a saint. Their postal address is Dom Antoine Marie, Abbe, Abbaye Saint-Joseph de Clairval 21150 Flavigny sur Ozerain, France. The website is <http://www.clairval.com>

Why Fulton Sheen remains relevant today:

- **An outstanding communicator**, he knew how to unite theological depth with accessible language.
- **A visionary**, he understood before anyone else the importance of the media in shaping consciences.
- **A pastor**, he guided a society in transition with clarity and compassion.
- **A witness**, he embodied a joyful, intelligent, and courageous faith.

The miracle that led to the beatification of Fulton Sheen



Little James Fulton with his parents in 2014, accompanied by Bishop Jenky, then Bishop of Peoria

The miracle accepted in the cause for the beatification of Bishop Sheen concerns the unexplained recovery of James Fulton Engstrom, a boy who was apparently stillborn on September 16, 2010, to Bonnie and Travis Engstrom, a Catholic couple from the town of Goodfield in the Peoria area. The parents had planned to welcome their third child at home. Although the pregnancy had proceeded without difficulty, a complication arose during labour: a knot had formed in the umbilical cord and tightened during delivery, cutting off James's supply of oxygen and blood.

The baby was born blue, motionless, and without a pulse. He was not breathing. For 20 minutes, family members and paramedics performed CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and chest compressions while waiting for the ambulance, which transported him to OSF St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria, less than a mile from the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria, where Fulton Sheen had served as an altar boy, had been ordained a priest, and where his earthly remains now rest. At the hospital, a team of doctors and nurses spent an additional 40 minutes attempting to revive the infant.

Doctors administered two injections of epinephrine (adrenaline) directly into his heart, but this had no effect. One nurse later recalled that the baby's feet were "ice cold," a sign of death. A physician later testified that James's blood gas levels indicated a degree of toxicity typically seen in a person who had been dead for a week.

After 61 minutes without a pulse or breathing, the attending physician was about to declare death when James's heart suddenly began beating at a normal newborn rate of 148 beats per minute. During that entire hour, Bonnie Engstrom had been unable to pray calmly. She later recounted that she simply repeated the name "Fulton Sheen, Fulton Sheen, Fulton Sheen" in her mind. The couple had already decided to name their baby after Bishop Sheen, as they had watched reruns of his program *Life Is Worth Living* during the pregnancy. While James lay lifeless in the living room before the ambulance arrived, Travis Engstrom performed an emergency baptism, naming him James Fulton.

Resuscitation after 61 minutes without oxygen almost certainly guarantees severe brain damage, organ failure, or blindness. Yet, to the great surprise of his medical team, James suffered no organ failure. Within a few weeks, he began reaching normal developmental milestones. At his first birthday, follow-up MRI scans (magnetic resonance imaging) showed that his brain was entirely normal.

Today, James Fulton is a healthy teenager with no physical or intellectual disabilities — something that the Vatican's medical experts described in 2014 as "scientifically inexplicable." On July 5, 2019, Pope Francis recognized the authenticity of the healing attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Fulton Sheen and signed the decree permitting his beatification. ❖



James Fulton with his parents in February 2026

“The Rosary is the weapon which you must make use of”

A message of Our Lady of the Rosary to Don Gobbi



At Fatima in 1917, the Virgin Mary appeared under the title of Our Lady of the Rosary and asked that the Rosary be recited every day.

Don Stefano Gobbi (1930-2011) was an Italian priest and founder, in 1972, of the Marian Movement of Priests, of which more than 100,000 priests are members. He reported receiving interior locutions from the Virgin Mary. Below is the text of the message received in Germany on October 7, 1992, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary:

My assured victory

The Rosary is my prayer; it is the prayer which I came down from heaven to ask of you, because it is the weapon which you must make use of, in these times of great battle, and it is the sign of my assured victory.

My victory will be won when Satan, with his powerful army made up of all the infernal spirits, will be shut up within his kingdom of darkness and death, from which he will no longer be able to escape in order to do harm in the world.

For this reason, there is to come down from heaven an angel to whom there is given the key of the abyss and a chain with which this angel will bind the great dragon, the ancient serpent, Satan, with all his followers.

An “angel” is a spirit who is sent by God to carry out a particular mission.

I am the Queen of the Angels, because it is of the very nature of my role to be sent by the Lord to accomplish the very great and important mission of conquering Satan. (Rev. 20:1.)

In fact, from the very beginning, I was announced as She who is the enemy of the serpent; She who does battle with him; She who in the end will crush his head: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. She will crush your head, as you attempt to bite at her heel.” (Gen. 3:15.)

My offspring is Christ. In Him, who has carried out the work of redemption and set you free from the slavery of Satan, my complete victory is accomplished.

And so, there has been entrusted to me the key with which it is possible to open and shut the door to the abyss.

The key is the sign of the power which belongs to Him who is lord and master of a place which belongs to Him.

In this sense, He who holds the key of the universe is the Incarnate Word alone, because all things have been made through Him, and therefore ►

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► Jesus Christ is the Master and King of all the universe, namely, of heaven, of earth and of the abyss.

My Son Jesus alone possesses the key of the abyss, because He Himself is the Key of David, who opens and no one can shut, who shuts and no one can open. (Cf. Rev. 3:7.)

Jesus consigns this key, which represents His divine power, into my hand because, as His Mother, mediatrix between you and my Son, there is entrusted to me the task of conquering Satan and all of his powerful army of evil. It is with this key that I am able to open and shut the door to the abyss.

The chain, with which the great Dragon is to be bound, is made up of prayer made with me and by means of me. This prayer is that of the holy Rosary. A chain has in fact the function of first of all limiting action, then of imprisoning, and finally of making ineffective every activity of the one who has been bound by it. (Cf. Rev. 20, 1-2.)

The chain that binds Satan

The chain of the holy Rosary has, first of all the function of limiting the action of my Adversary. Every Rosary which you recite with me has the effect of restricting the action of the Evil One, of drawing souls away from his pernicious influence, and of giving greater impetus to the expansion of goodness in the life of many of my children.

The chain of the holy Rosary has also the effect of imprisoning Satan, that is, of making his action impotent, and of diminishing and weakening more and more the force of his diabolical power. And so, each

Rosary which is recited well deals a mighty blow to the power of evil, and it represents one part of his reign which is destroyed.

The chain of the holy Rosary brings about, in the end, the result of making Satan completely harmless. His great power is destroyed. All the evil spirits are cast into the pool of fire and sulphur, the door is shut by me with the key of the power of Christ, and thus they will no longer be able to go out into the world to do harm to souls.

You understand now, my beloved children, why, in these last times of the battle between me, the Woman clothed in the sun, and the great Dragon, I am asking you to multiply everywhere the cenacles of prayer, with the recitation of the holy Rosary, meditation on my word, and your consecration to my Immaculate Heart.

With these, you make it possible for your heavenly Mother to take action in binding Satan, so that I may thus carry out my mission of crushing his head, that is to say, of defeating him once and for all, shutting him up in his abyss of fire and sulphur.

The humble and fragile cord of the holy Rosary forms the strong chain with which I will take as my prisoner the dark ruler of the world, the enemy of God and of his faithful servants. Thus the pride of Satan will once again be defeated by the power of the little, the humble and the poor.

As I announce to you today that this, my great victory, is near at hand, the victory which will bring you to your assured liberation, I give you the comfort of my motherly presence among you, and I bless you." ❖



Don Stefano Gobbi