

# Dowry

Winter 2020, Issue N°44

*“O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England thy Dowry.”*



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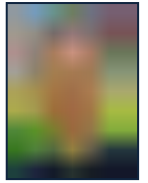
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***Anti Christian  
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# Editorial: Persecution and Resurrection



Our country has left the European Union. It has not left Europe, though. As one having lived in five different European countries and stayed in many more over the past twenty-five years, I affirm that I love Europe deeply, as a continent and in its distinct countries. Europe is rooted in Christ, but those making laws in Brussels have time and again rejected this truth, both at the natural and the supernatural levels. Brexit will be a failure, though, unless it coincides with a spiritual renewal. Great-Britain was once deeply Catholic. Having left the Church five centuries ago, for decades it has led the way to boastful apostasy. This new chapter in British history is an opportunity for all people of good will to bring back our country to its triune and incarnate God.

Our bishops have been inspired to choose the safest and quickest way to reach that end. They will re-dedicate England to the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary. The first dedication was made by King Richard II in Westminster Abbey as he sought the protection of Our Lady in the face of great political turmoil. At this point, England received the title 'Mary's Dowry'; meaning that England was 'set aside' as a gift, a dowry, for Our Lady under her guidance and protection.

On Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March at 12noon, the Re-dedication will take place throughout the country. We are invited to give ourselves, as the people of this country, to the Virgin Mary. We respond to this invitation on the day of Re-dedication in two ways; by making a personal promise and a communal

entrustment. Our personal promise brings us closer to Our Lady, the first disciple of Christ. In this we unite in her joy by following her openness to God's call. Our communal entrustment unites us together as the people of our country in prayer, by renewing the vows of dedication made to the Virgin Mary by our ancestors.

The Priestly Fraternity of St Peter in these Isles is glad to contribute to the re-evangelisation, with its limited resources but with time-proofed traditions. Our apostolates of Warrington, Reading, Chesham Bois, Bedford and Edinburgh are

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*No less than them,  
we are the Church in need.*

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steadily growing, while in Ireland the bishop of Waterford has now entrusted to us a regular ministry in his diocese. Our youth groups, retreats, summer camps and family events attract a growing number of souls.

As conditions sadly worsen for Catholic believers, the need for strong and varied pastoral support increases. The *Priory Campaign* in Warrington aims at securing a fully fledged centre to serve these growing needs, not only for our local congregation but also for visitors, retreatants, schoolchildren, pro-lifers, clergy etc. I thank you wholeheartedly for your past support. But despite the overall success of the *Campaign* so far, since last November we have

received almost no further donations. As explained at the time, our charity now owns two thirds of Priory Court next door to our Shrine, but we have only eight months left to raise the missing £140,000.00 needed to buy the last third. Thankfully we use the leased premises already, as depicted on the back cover picture showing eleven men from all over the UK and Ireland come to discern God's calling to consecrated life. However, we will be compelled to vacate this building unless we can buy it soon.

This Lent, I earnestly ask you to help us. While many Christians suffer abroad as illustrated in this issue of *Dowry*, no less than them, we are the Church in need. We few traditional priests and faithful in England are in urgent need of support to take part in the reconstruction, rejuvenation and re-inspiration of this land. If you can give no money, please inform your friends and acquaintances of our determination, inviting them to support us. Lastly, please ask the saints of these Isles and Our Lady to touch the hearts of wealthy souls to help us complete this essential purchase. We are working hard to raise souls to God. [Help us raise the missing amount](#) to complete our *Campaign*. May God reward you for investing with us in the future of Catholic Britain this Lent.

We assure you of our prayer especially next 29<sup>th</sup> March, on the Re-dedication of England to Our Blessed Lady.

Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP,  
Superior of the English FSSP  
Apostolate,  
2<sup>nd</sup> February 2020. □ *Malleray*

# For Your Diaries

**CLERGY RETREAT 27 APRIL - 1 MAY 2020, STONYHURST**  
**The priests and Holy Church: her sons and defenders.**

In the brand new retreat centre in historic Jesuit college in Lancashire. Make use of the Theodore House Oratory or St Peter's church for private prayer and Holy Masses, adoration and Compline. Enjoy the beautiful surrounding countryside with its network of footpaths. Comfortable en-suite accommodation makes Theodore House a fantastic retreat setting!

**COST: £320** in total (4 days full board, modern single room with ensuite).

**BOOKINGS:** Directly with Stonyhurst on [bookings@christianheritagecentre.com](mailto:bookings@christianheritagecentre.com); 01254 827329. Send your £50 and/or full payment to The Christian Heritage Centre, Stonyhurst, Clitheroe BB7 9PZ. Facebook page: <https://business.facebook.com/events/565043530909466/>

### Details:

- Arrival by 3pm on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020
  - Departure 3pm on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020.
  - Preached by: Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP
  - For: Any diocesan and religious clerics, including deacons and seminarians
  - Daily Mass (missal of your choice), Holy Hour and Latin Compline
- Scope:** Holy Church is under attack and her priests undermined. Can we

still profess the Church as holy and the priesthood as sacred? The traditional ecclesiology, spirituality and liturgy explain why the sins of her sons wound the Bride of Christ and yet do not mar her purity, neither invalidate their calling. After the example of the Sovereign High Priest Jesus Christ, today as ever,



priestly sanctity is essential to the welfare of Holy Church.

**About the preacher:** For fifteen years Fr de Malleray has been giving clergy retreats at various venues in England and abroad. Based in the Liverpool Archdiocese, he is the author of *Ego Eimi – It is I: Falling in Eucharistic Love*. His forthcoming book is on the sacred priesthood.

**In response** to a priest's enquiry: the retreat is not aimed at promoting the Extraordinary Liturgy in Latin.

**Summer Conference Weekend for Young Adults & Professionals 18-35 on 'Holy Church our Mother'**, at SPEC Retreat Centre, 125 Waxwell Lane, Pinner, London HA5 3EP on **3-5 July 2020**. Organised by *Juventutem*. With Frs Armand de Malleray FSSP, and Patrick

O'Donohue, FSSP. £135 per person full-board. Contact: [juventutemldn@gmail.com](mailto:juventutemldn@gmail.com); Info [www.facebook.com/londonjuventutem/](http://www.facebook.com/londonjuventutem/)

**Sacrament of Confirmation** on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2020, 3:00pm, administered by His Grace Malcolm McMahon, O.P., Archbishop of Liverpool, at St Mary's Shrine in Warrington, Buttermarket Street WA1 2NS. Followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and refreshments. Candidates from within and without the Liverpool Archdiocese should contact Fr Whisenant [henrywhiz@hotmail.com](mailto:henrywhiz@hotmail.com).

**Two residential summer camps for children** aged 10 to 17 next August, based at

Savio House, Ingersley Road, Bollington, Macclesfield.

Full price **£220**. Subsidized: £100.

Both camps will involve scheduled activities including Holy Mass, prayer and catechetical talks, sports / hiking / games, quizzes, preparing and acting in a drama production and excursions by bus to local places of interest.

For more information and booking forms contact Fr Phipps: [sphippis@fssp.org](mailto:sphippis@fssp.org)

**Girls: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> August 2020.**

**Boys: 10<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> August 2020.** □

# England is Our Lady's Dowry

*From the official page in preparation for the rededication of England on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020*

## The Annunciation

*“Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to thy Word” (Luke 1:38).*

At the Annunciation, Our Blessed Lady said yes to the Angel Gabriel, who asked her to conceive and give birth to God's son. She freely accepted God's will in her life. We also are free to say yes or no to God.

Mary's yes changed the world. *“Answer with a word, receive the Word of God. Speak your own word, conceive the divine Word. Breathe a passing word, embrace the eternal Word”*, wrote St Bernard of Clairvaux.

The story of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) perfectly describes the route of our spiritual journey: Before ever we seek God, He is seeking us and initiates the conversation; but we are hesitant and fearful; as we seek to understand God's will in our life; God reminds us of our experience of His love for us, and that “nothing is impossible for God”. If we, like Mary, say yes to God, we will conceive the Word in our heart, and bring Christ's love into our families, communities, and our world, for we shall share her joy: *“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour, for the Almighty has done great things for me”* (Luke 1:46).

## Walsingham

*‘When England goes back to Walsingham, Our Lady will come back to England.’* Pope Leo XIII.

Richeldis was a widow who lived in Walsingham, and desired to do something to honour the Mother of God. It was under the reign of King Edward the Confessor, in 1130. Our Lady asked her to build a replica of the Holy House in Nazareth that would be a permanent reminder of the Annunciation. Walsingham would become known as “England's Nazareth”. *‘It shall be a perpetual memorial to the great joy of the Annunciation, ground and origin of all my joys and the root of humanity's gracious redemption. This came about through Gabriel's message that I would be a Mother*





*through my humility and conceive God's Son in virginity.'* Pynson Ballad (1485)

Mary's request to Richeldis, became her message to us, to "share her joy", that her Son has become our Saviour. Richeldis' faith, and her Yes to Our Lady's request, has given us a sacred place of perpetual memorial in Walsingham where we are reminded to treasure all these things and ponder them in our hearts.

*"O England, you have every reason to be glad that you are compared to the promised land of Sion. This glorious Lady's grace and favour attest that you can be called everywhere the holy land, Our Lady's Dowry, a name given to you from of old. This title is due to the fact that here is built the house of new Nazareth in honour of our heavenly Queen and her glorious Salutation. As Gabriel hailed her with an 'Ave' in old Nazareth, so here that is daily remembered with joy. Therefore, Blessed Lady, grant your great grace to all who devoutly visit this place."* (Pynson Ballad, 1485)

### **Mary's Dowry**

*"The contemplation of the great mystery of the Incarnation has drawn all Christian nations to venerate her from whom came the first beginnings of our redemption. But we English, being the servants of her special inheritance and her own dowry, as we are commonly called, ought to surpass others in the fervour of our praises and devotions."* (Thomas Arundel Archbishop of Canterbury, 1399)



Unique among all the nations, the Catholics of England have believed for centuries that their nation is, in a special way, the "Dowry of Mary." It was believed that England belonged to Mary, who was seen as the country's "protectress" and who, through her powers of intercession, acted as the country's defender or guardian.

The word "dowry" (from the Latin *dos*, meaning "donation") is sometimes understood as the donation accompanying a bride. In medieval English law, however, the meaning is reversed—a husband would set apart a portion of his estate designated for the good of his wife, should she become a widow. The historical meaning of England as "Mary's Dowry" is understood in this sense; that England has been "set apart" for Mary. There is a tradition that the title goes back to St Edward the Confessor (1042 – 1066).

In 1381, a time of great political unrest, King Richard II sought Our Lady's guidance and protection, dedicating England as her Dowry in a ceremony at Westminster Abbey, on the feast of Corpus Christi. "*Dos tua Virgo pia haec est. Quaere leges O Mariae*", in English: "*This is your Dowry, O Holy Virgin, therefore, do thou rule in it*". These words were on a painting once at the English College in Rome, which depicted King Richard II kneeling before Our Lady, making the dedication of his country to Our Lady. This image is today to be seen in the Wilton Diptych (c. 1395-1399) in the National Gallery in London (cf picture on previous page).

'Mary's Dowry, therefore, is a title of England, established by an act of the King, and proclaimed by Archbishop Thomas Arundel, which has never been rescinded by Monarch or Parliament. Our Bishops have, over the years, consecrated our country to the Mother of God for her prayers and protection, and in reparation for the sins of the past. The first being at the request of Pope Leo XIII in 1893:

*"The wonderful love which burnt within the heart of your forefathers and mothers towards the great Mother of God ... to whose service they consecrated themselves with such abundant proofs of devotion, that the kingdom itself acquired the singular and highly honourable title of 'Mary's Dowry'"* (Pope Leo XIII 1893).

(Picture above: Traditional Mass in the Slipper chapel in Walsingham)

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# Our ¼ Billion Persecuted Fellow Christians

Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP reports on the Second Budapest International Conference on Christian Persecution

## Introduction

‘**C**ould you teach us the *Hail Mary*?’, Lieutenant László Tölgyessy asked me, looking more like a sheepish schoolboy than like an army officer at the Budapest military academy. It was 1994 and I had not expected this petition a mere three years after the end of Soviet occupation in Hungary. A soldier and not yet a seminarian, I happened to be stationed in Budapest to teach French to military staff as part of army cooperation with my home country. When a quarter of century later, in the autumn 2019, I accepted an invitation to attend the Second International Conference on Christian Persecution organised by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán in Budapest, I gave thanks for the unexpected surprise of this small country now taking the lead in raising awareness about the global Christian ordeal.

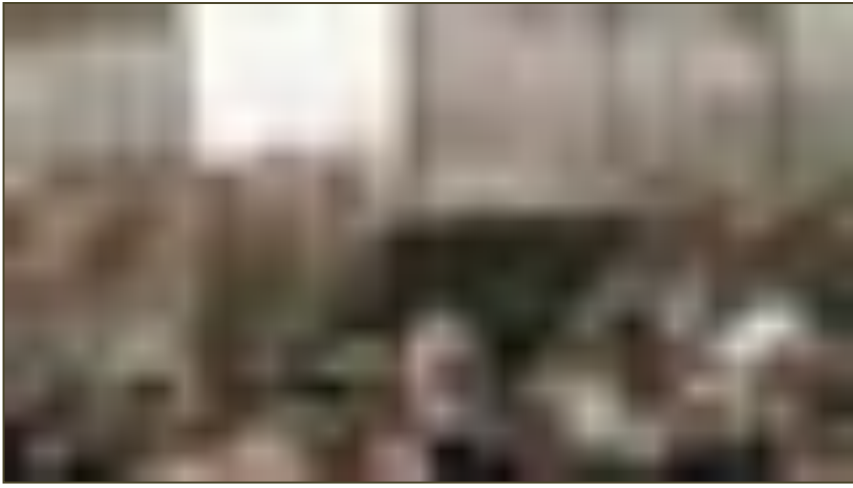
‘We have 245 million reasons to be here. This is how many people are persecuted daily because of their Christian belief,’ Hungarian State Secretary for the *Aid*

*of Persecuted Christians* Tristan Azbej said on 26 November 2019 as he opened the conference, attended by over 650 delegates from all over the world, with speeches by Prime Minister Orbán and by dozens of Cardinals, Archbishops and dignitaries of the Catholic Church and of other Christian communities.

## Part 1: Our main persecutors

Since its inception Islam has been a major factor of anti-Christian persecution. Anti-Christian secular forces such as freemasonry can even use Islam as a weapon or as a temporary ally against Christianity, like imperialist Prussians and Ottomans becoming allies for perpetrating the genocide of Catholic and Orthodox Armenians in 1915-1916 (German President Joachim Gauck publicly acknowledged this on 23 April 2015). In my opinion, the following anecdote can illustrate the tactical collusion between Islam and lethal secularism. Last year when praying on my own on the pavement opposite the Manchester abortuary with my cassock on, I saw a young veiled woman also alone, standing by the entrance as a





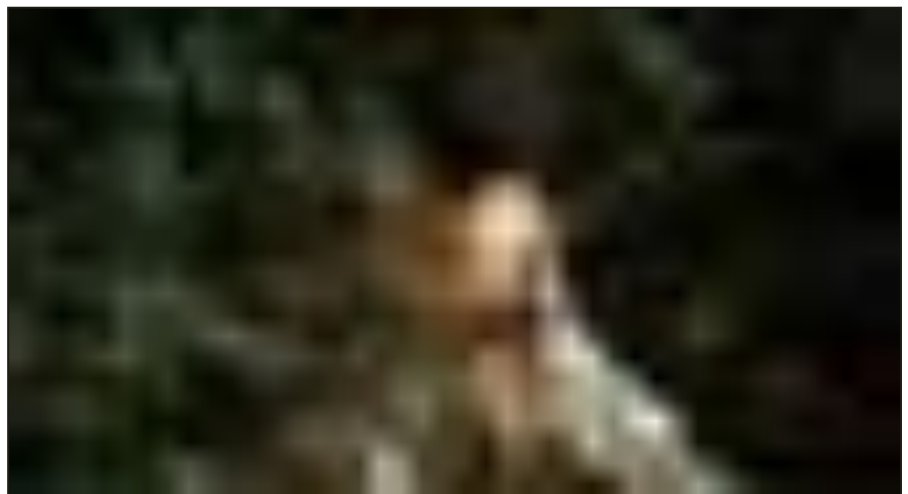
Eminences teasing each other on which one of them had spent the longest time in Marxist gaols. Among many others, Cardinal Robert Sarah at the Vatican and Bishop Athanasius Schneider of Kazakhstan also suffered under Communist oppression: the former through an assassination scheme (providentially not implemented) for resisting Marxist Guinean dictator Sékou Touré, and the latter as having been raised in the underground Church in the USSR. So much for political Marxism.

so-called ‘Sister Supporter’, that is, a woman requested by the abortuary to escort customers inside the facility for fear that pro-lifers might make them change their minds. After kneeling for a while (praying for the woman’s liberation from the double fetters of Mohammedanism and infanticide), I crossed the street, courteously asking her if she was Muslim and if her religion supported abortion. She answered that it was very much the case. Since then, the Manchester Borough Council has taken steps to ‘criminalise prayer’ (as literally quoted from their website) outside the abortuary. Surely my Muslim ‘Sister Supporter’ prays (elsewhere), and no doubt she rejoices at the growing number of Muslim children being born across the formerly Christian West. Never so far, while standing praying outside abortuaries in London, Birmingham or Manchester, did I notice customers dressed as Muslims. Indeed, the conspicuous silence of Muslims against abortion and in this anecdote, their active support of it for Western children, is part of the demographic takeover of former Christendom by Islam.

But Communism under its political and now cultural guises is even more harmful than Islam, if ever possible. Assuredly, the Christian witness under political Communist persecution must be remembered, as our brethren still suffer under Marxist rule in various Asian, African and Latin American countries, confirming Our Lady’s warning in Fatima. While in Budapest, this reality was illustrated on our way to holy Mass

by a conversation between Cardinal Duka of Prague and Cardinal Souraphiel of Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, the two

In 2020 Britain however and across the West, most of the recent laws undermining the natural and Christian order indicate further Marxist oppression. Western man rejoiced when standing by the fallen Berlin Wall in November 1989, assuming that he trod the dead shell of Communism. The Russian bear must be dead, it was believed, since one walked upon its empty skin of concrete rubble and cut-through barbed wire. The problem is that bears don’t shed skin, but other predators do. Happy Westerners climbing the fallen Berlin Wall were like Mowgli in the 2016 Disney remake of *The Jungle Book*, bumping into huge organic empty coils and not interpreting it as a sign that the boa is at large, bigger and hungrier. Like a snake shedding its outgrown skin, Marxism evolved from overtly political to subtly cultural.<sup>1</sup> To the boa Kaa in Disney’s rendition, constriction and hypnosis are but alternative means to one end: swallowing Mowgli! Cultural Marxism as hypnosis of our souls is more efficient than political



<sup>1</sup> A trick expertly exposed by Gabriele Kuby in *The Global Sexual Revolution: The Destruction of Freedom in the Name of Freedom*.





Marxism because it prevents struggle, avoiding martyrs. Indeed, which of us Western Christians suspects or admits that he or she is actually persecuted? The anti-Christian Marxist ideology wants us to hide, compromise and eventually forget our Christian faith. This works better than forcing us to deny it. Agents of cultural Marxism achieve this goal through political correctness more safely than with gulags. Why? Because gulags are uncomfortable, so that prisoners will denounce them and try to escape. On the contrary, we have been persuaded that we are free, being entertained (we have Netflix); and that we are happy, since we are fed (we have McDonald's).

The Budapest Conference did not dwell much on the matter of identifying our main persecutors, Mohammedanism and Western secularism. It stated that eighty percent of victims of religious persecution worldwide are Christians. Thank God for courageous Hungary, a small country speaking up for millions of our

fellow Christians. Addressing the hundreds of delegates, former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Cardinal Müller stated that undergoing hostility from the world is part of being followers of Christ, so that we must not lose heart but bear witness and persevere.

Awareness must be raised and anti-Christian persecution must not be camouflaged under the guise of religious persecution in general ('as if anti-Semitism were never addressed specifically, but only racism in general' at the Nuremberg Trials (1945-1946), a Protestant lay speaker suggested); or even denied as if attacks against Christians were accidental manifestations of purely ethnic and economical problems (e.g. African tribes merely fighting for water or pastures). Hungarian Ambassador to the Holy See Eduard Habsburg wondered: 'I ask myself why people suddenly turn quiet when you begin to speak about the plight of Christians all over the world.'

The main issues at stake are 1) the shrinking presence of Christians in the Levant after twenty centuries, now more and more under threat (90% Christians have left Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein); and 2) how the West can learn from these tragedies and prevent the eradication of Christianity in our own countries, where lawmakers and the media are unbloodily but even more successfully erasing the Christian values and identity.

(Below: Orthodox prelates with lay participant and the author.)





## Part 2: The courage of Prime Minister Orbán

‘Hungarians make up only 0.02 percent of the world’s population, so how much difference can it make? Is it worth it?’ Prime Minister Orbán asked. He answered his own question by reflecting on the twelve apostles who, though small in number, changed the world with the Good News. ‘Standing up for our persecuted brothers and sisters engenders courage in ourselves and others,’ Orbán continued.

He recalled that the first Hungarian tribes arrived in the Carpathian Basin 1,100 years ago but many other groups had come and gone before them. ‘To this day Hungarians are curious as to why we were the ones to survive,’ the prime minister said. ‘According to the most widely accepted answer, our military capabilities and vigour would not have been enough, so the key to our survival was our conversion to Christianity... There are some who see this as primarily a diplomatic feat or one of state organisation, and it was exactly those things, but first and foremost it was a spiritual rebirth and a real conversion.’

Orbán added that ‘The Hungarian people and their government believe that Christianity can help peoples and nations survive, just as it had happened with us... Our first Christian king was more than just a remarkable ruler... King St Stephen had been a visionary who had given Hungarians guidance and a spiritual and political compass.’ The prime minister stressed that Hungary was right to stand up for Christianity, arguing that ‘goodness inspires goodness’ and Hungarians’ commitment to helping persecuted Christians ‘breeds courage’. ‘Our example can have a far reach,’ he said. ‘Actions can free



those who are crippled and restore faith in personal action.’

Orbán said the question may arise whether there was already enough to be done about anti-Christian sentiment in Europe and if there was even a need to provide help to other continents. ‘The troubles of Christianity in Europe and the persecution of Christians in other places cannot be separated from one another,’ he argued. ‘Europe is quiet,’ Orbán said. ‘A mysterious force shuts the mouths of European politicians and cripples their arms.’ He said the issue of Christian persecution could only be considered a human rights issue in Europe, insisting that ‘Christians are not allowed to be mentioned on their own, only together with other groups that are being persecuted for their faiths.’ The persecution of Christians ‘is therefore folded into the diverse family of persecuted religious groups’, he added.

The Hungarian Prime Minister remarked that there were many ‘good and true Christian politicians’ in Europe today, but they were prevented from openly stating their

views due to a mix of constant coalition negotiations and succumbing to the power relations of Europe's media. 'Hungary,' he said, was 'blessed with political stability, a public against migration, and a majority that demanded the protection of Christian culture.' He added that Hungarian politics started from the position that 'we Christians have the right to protect our culture and way of life'.

Orbán said that unlike many politicians elsewhere in Europe, 'we believe people should be encouraged to live and thrive where their ancestors have lived for centuries. So the *Hungary Helps* scheme is about rebuilding schools, hospitals and dwellings in troubled parts of the world and providing young people with an education at Hungarian universities,' he explained.

He added that Europeans were wrong to think that the persecution of Christians could never take place in their own country. He remarked that even though Europe had suffered at the hands of terrorists several times, 'many Islamic State soldiers' had come from western European countries while 'Islamic masses' had migrated to Europe illegally and unchecked. Demographic forecasts indicate that the religious and cultural proportions in some European countries will change rapidly,' he warned, adding that 'Europe could only be saved by re-establishing its Christian identity.'

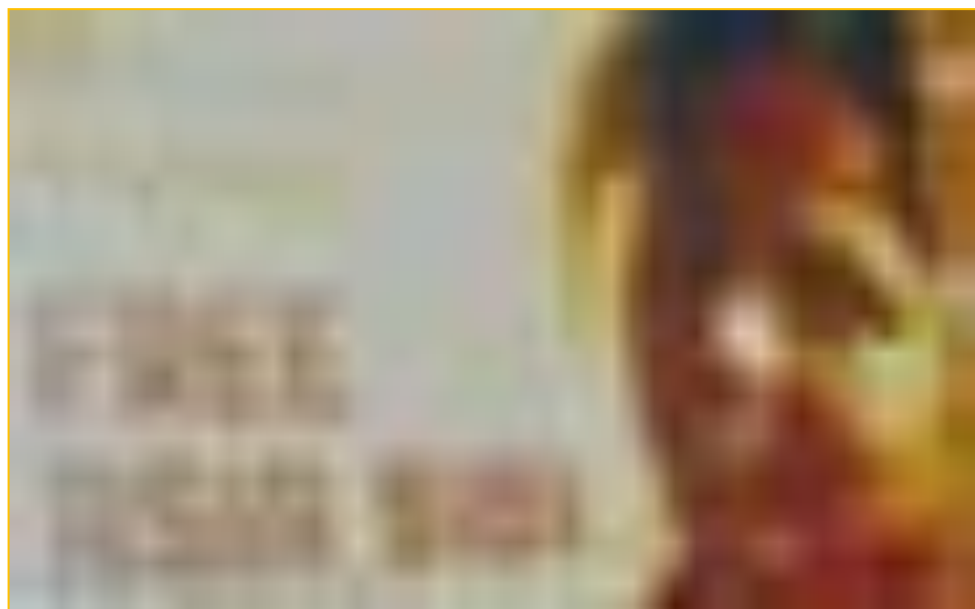
## Conclusion

I will conclude with an illustration. Two Pakistani women had to find refuge abroad for sheer survival from Muslim aggressors. In 2012, under Christian Prime Minister David Cameron, Malala Yousafzai was flown to



England for life-saving surgery after having been shot by Taliban in retaliation for her support to Muslim girls' education. She happily settled in Manchester. In 2018, after eight years on death row for alleged 'blasphemy', innocent Roman Catholic Asia Bibi was denied asylum by Christian Prime Minister Theresa May to avoid tensions with Muslims in Britain (cf *Daily Mail*, 25 November 2018).

On Christmas Eve last, Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke as if he had heard the plight of Christians: '*Today of all days, I want us to remember those Christians around the world who are facing persecution. For them, Christmas Day will be marked in private, in secret, perhaps even in a prison cell. As Prime Minister, that's something I want to change. We stand with Christians everywhere, in solidarity, and will defend your right to practice your faith.*' The *Truro Report on Christian Persecution* commissioned by the Government and released on 19 July 2019 provides ample evidence justifying prompt action. May the Prime Minister be true to his word.



Meanwhile, let us thank God for courageous Hungary standing up for Christianity. In ten years from now, if our children still learn the *Hail Mary*, it might well be in Hungarian: '*Üdvözlégy Mária, kegyelemmel teljes, az Úr van Teveled*' – although, no offense intended, Latin would still be easier: *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum...* □

# They Did Nothing But Pray

*By Eduard Habsburg, Ambassador of Hungary to the Holy See. Dowry thanks the author and First Things for their permission to reproduce his article on the shameful suppression by a Catholic monarch of contemplative religious across the Holy Roman Empire in the name of ‘the Enlightenments’.*

My birthday, January 12, is also the anniversary of an event that had a more fundamental and fatal effect on Catholicism in Austria than most people realize.

I refer to the 1782 Decree on the Dissolution of Religious Orders, by which Emperor Joseph II gave the coup de grace to the empire’s contemplative houses. This came as a bolt from the blue. In retrospect, people today see many of the reforming emperor’s radical measures—today generally given the name “Josephism” (or “Josephinism”)—as positive, or excuse their heavy-handedness. But when confronted with his zealous crusade against the contemplative religious houses, which he regarded as useless “sources of superstition,” we should be speechless.

First we need to grasp the figures. We need to realize the immense volume of (specifically contemplative) monasteries and convents that existed in Austrian crown lands and in Hungary in the wake of the Counter-Reformation. In 1770 there were 2,163 monasteries with about 45,000



monks and nuns. (To get an idea of this vast reserve of spirituality, note that in Austria today there are only 192 religious communities, totalling about 5,000 persons.) Nowadays we

can hardly imagine a world that was so rich in spiritual culture. Among these 2,000 were hundreds of genuinely contemplative religious houses: Capuchins, Carthusians,



Camaldolese, Brothers of the Forest, Hermits, Carmelites, Poor Clares, Capuchin Sisters, Paulists, Premonstratensians, and scores of others.

Some readers may have never been guests in a contemplative monastery or convent. Today, genuine contemplation can be hard to find. Several times in recent months I have had the privilege of being a guest in such a place. This enclosed and protected environment, with its total concentration on prayer, sacrifice, spirituality, great simplicity, purity, and the

contagious cheerfulness of the sisters behind their grilles—all this is infinitely valuable and easily damaged. It is something that every town, every country should thank God for; the contemplative life bears the most precious spiritual fruit. It is something for which, if it were threatened, one would give life and limb.

We must imagine this kind of life and world—innocent, vulnerable, full of the most profound trust in state and Church, where everything is ordered for the sake of prayer and community life—that suddenly was

overtaken by an unprovoked and undeserved apocalypse of destruction, simply because an emperor decided that it was “useless.”

The storm began to wreak havoc at the beginning of 1782, although it was brewing in the time of the Empress Maria Theresia, and that of her father, Charles VI. For decades there had been talk of reforming the religious houses. At the end of 1781, however, problems had arisen at the Carthusian house of Mauerbach, and Emperor Joseph II's anger grew. This is what he wrote on December 6, 1781:



There is longstanding evidence that those Orders that are of no practical use to their neighbours are not pleasing to God: accordingly I have commanded the Chancellery to send Commissioners to list those Orders (of men and of women) in all crown lands that neither maintain schools nor care for the sick, nor are prominent in other useful activities: their inmates shall be ejected and given their liberty. Those who are not so numerous may leave our lands without a pension, or else they may apply to the local authorities to be dispensed from their vows... These Orders I understand to include all the Carthusians, Camaldolese and Hermits, and also all the women

Carmelites, Poor Clares, Capuchin Sisters, and the like, who neither educate the young nor maintain schools, nor take care of the sick, but, whether men or women, merely lead a contemplative life.

On January 12, 1782, judgment was served on places of “uselessness.” One hundred and forty contemplative houses were closed in the first wave: This meant that around 1,500 religious sisters and brothers had to leave. Just imagine: All the contemplative monasteries and convents that could not be turned into schools and hospitals

In 1782, Pope Pius VI made a fruitless journey to Vienna to discuss the matter with the emperor. This visit achieved nothing. Dissolutions continued and even increased. A second wave, beginning in 1783, engulfed another 800 houses in Austria and the crown lands. In 1791 Emperor Joseph II had envisaged a third wave of 450 closures; only his death prevented them from being carried out. In the end, two-thirds of all religious houses were closed, and not a single contemplative Order was left.

Historians like to highlight the

But we rarely read about the terrible consequences suffered by the most vulnerable, the monks and nuns. In the first phase of the dissolution their reaction was emotional. The commissar in charge of dissolution wrote from Vienna’s Queen’s Monastery that “there was general dismay, weeping and wringing of hands.” In Vienna’s Carmelite Monastery of St. Joseph, the commissar commented: “The sisters, in extreme distress and shock, showed their accustomed firm resolution.”

The Decree of January 12 was followed by a concrete Decree of Dissolution from the Court Chancellery. Some weeks later, this document was read out to the distressed nuns. For instance, in Maria Steinach, in Meran (now South Tyrol, Italy), the Decree was issued on March 18 and read to the sisters on April 10. Once this had taken place, those concerned had to make an exact list of everything; they had a few weeks in which to decide whether to find another religious house to reside in or become laicized. By September they had to leave; the convent was shut. In Maria Steinach there had been about 50 sisters; seven joined a convent of Dominican nuns, and the others (no doubt under pressure) had to return to the world.

Even more heartbreaking was the situation in the convent of the Poor Clares in Villingen (now part of Baden-Württemberg, Germany), which at that time was in Austrian possession and had been a centre of spiritual life since 1482. This is what the chronicle says:



were shut—thereby putting a definitive end to their “enclosure.” In certain cases, members of the Orders were settled in other, non-contemplative houses, but in most cases they were simply “sent home.” Only a small number managed to make the change into a “life of usefulness.” Joseph II did not stop here, however. He began closing non-contemplative monasteries and convents also, with the result that in this first wave (1782–83), 400 religious houses were closed.

impoverished, badly organized, and positively ramshackle conditions of some of the religious houses. They also like to point to the magnificent results of the reforms: They brought about a reorganization of the parish system, a network of 3,000 well-organized parishes where Enlightenment ideas could be injected into the most remote corners of the empire. This was the embryonic modernization of Austria.

...on February 8, 1782, it occurred that the town parish priest, Dominicus Lutz, brought and read out an episcopal decree, to the effect that we should submit to the Will of God and open the enclosure in order to admit into the convent the Commissioner, Marquard von Gleichenstein, and his Secretary. All the women and sisters of the convent were summoned: they were told that the convent of Poor Clares in Villingen was suppressed, and that the sisters had five months in which to leave the convent and renounce their membership of the Order. Either they could enter another convent that was responsible for a school, or they could live as laypeople on a small pension. All the convent's keys, including that of the church, had to be surrendered to the Commissioner.

The sisters were horrified; their dismay and grief intensified when the great Commission arrived. The sisters had to prepare a midday meal for the Commissioner, the Father

Provincial, the Magistrate, Secretary Chorhummel, and Broz, the Administrator. The chronicler (one of the nuns) wrote:

The gentlemen were all relaxed and at ease, and tried (in vain) to lighten our spirits. We were appalled, for it was the first occasion, in the convent's entire existence, that the Poor Clares had eaten in the refectory with people from the world...

We must not forget that the sisters had been in an enclosed Order from their youth; they had hardly any contact with the outside world. They kept to their hours of prayer while the Commissioner was present. They omitted neither their night prayer nor the solemn choir office during the day. They redoubled their prayers in front of the Image of Grace (*Ecce Homo*) and called on their foundress, Ursula Heider, to intercede for them. In the case of Villingen the majority of the sisters were able to find a home with the

Dominican Sisters; but as for the contemplative life, it was over.

Reading these and other reports, I feel indignation and anger. How could anyone do this, and in a Catholic land, too? What had the Carmelites, the Poor Clares, and the Capuchin Sisters done? They were regarded as useless since they were involved neither in charitable work nor schools, nor in caring for the poor. They were persecuted because they did nothing but "pray."

Sometimes people ask why Austria's Catholic roots do not seem as deep as those of Poland and other "Catholic lands." Some point to the crises of the 1970s, but I think the death blow came earlier. It was delivered by Joseph II, and the year was 1782. □

(Picture below: Melk Abbey. Previous pages: Gaming Charterhouse; Author with Pope Francis; next page: drawing by Ursula Cavanaugh.)





# Our Lady's Reconquista

*Reflections on Lourdes, Fatima and Islam, by Deacon Roger Gilbride, FSSP*

The feast and devotion to the Immaculate Conception are inescapably connected to a small town in the French Pyrenees: Lourdes. It was there in 1858 that our Lady appeared to confirm the dogma of the Immaculate Conception declared 4 years prior by Holy Father Pope Pius IX. Until then, Lourdes was quite an insignificant village nestled in the foothills of the mountains alongside the Spanish border. One of hundreds of others like it.

In the year 711 the armies of Islam launched an invasion of Visigothic Spain from North Africa. Within 8 years, apart from one small pocket of resistance, the entire western flank of Christendom had fallen to the army of the Crescent. It was not long before the conquerors turned their eyes to north of the Pyrenees. In 720 they marched north and captured a large area in southern France, including the area around Lourdes. Spain had fallen, and now the heart of Frankish Christendom was in danger. The Christians further north were bracing themselves for further incursions. In 732, an army of over 20,000 marched north and were met by the Franks near the town of Tours. A great battle ensued, a

battle whose victory or loss would mean so much for either side. As it turned out, the Frankish army won a decisive victory and pushed the invaders back to their enclaves in the south. The pendulum had begun to swing in the other direction.

Some years later, in 778 the armies

The situation for the defenders, though, was grim. Food and fresh water were running low. The story then relates that an eagle accidentally dropped a fish into the confines of the fortress. Mirat sent it to Charlemagne's troops as if to say they had plenty of food and could outlast the weary Frankish



of Charlemagne were fighting their war of reconquest in the deep south of France. They came to the village that we now know as Lourdes. The soldiers of the Islamic Caliphate led by a commander named Mirat were held up in the fortress that sits atop a rocky promontory in the centre of town. It was a near impregnable fortress; the Franks could not take it by force, so they laid siege to the fortress and waited. Mirat was resolute, he proclaimed he would not surrender to any mortal man.

troops.

The chaplain for the Christian army, the Bishop of Le Puy, sensed this was a ploy to trick them. Approaching Mirat to negotiate, the Bishop proposed: “you have sworn never to yield to any mortal man. Could you not with honour make your surrender to an immortal Lady? Mary, Queen of Heaven, has her throne at Le Puy, and I am her humble minister there.”

The wearied defenders agreed and Mirat's forces surrendered to a

woman, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary. The story continues, that Mirat visited the shrine of Le Puy and was converted to Christianity. He was baptised 'Lorus', and the little village was then named after him. Over time the name evolved to Lourdes. So the town of Lourdes, then, is named after a Muslim military commander who 'surrendered' to our Lady in the eighth century.

More than one thousand years later, our Lady chose this small village as the place to appear to Bernadette Soubirous. She came, in the first place, to confirm the dogma of her Immaculate Conception. It had already been long taught by the Church, and the feast day was celebrated from time immemorial, so this declaration was not a novelty but simply a binding confirmation of its truth. What changed was that it was no longer simply a theological opinion or a local devotion; Christians became compelled to believe that Mary from the first moment of her human existence was preserved from all stain of sin.

Apart from confirming this dogma, she, of course, asked for a Church to be built on the site, for pilgrims to come in procession, to bathe in the waters, and for prayer and penance for the conversion of sinners. These

were other important reasons why our Lady made her earthly visitation. But the divine mysteries often have more to them. I find it unlikely to be a mere coincidence that our Lady chose Lourdes, of all possible villages, to appear in 1858. The one place in all of France where 1000 years before a Muslim commander surrendered not to a man, but instead to her, the Queen of Heaven.

The story of Lourdes and the conversion of Mirat comes to us



from a 12<sup>th</sup> Century monk.<sup>1</sup> It may be that he embellished the story, but what we can say for certain is that the story was written down 700 years before our Lady appeared to St Bernadette. This was not some pious tale invented after the apparitions.

<sup>1</sup> La via Charlemagne - Patrimoines du Pays des Vallées des Gaves, de Lourdes à Gavarnie, Le Lavedan. Retrieved January 10, 2020 from: <http://www.patrimoines-lourdes-gavarnie.fr/circuits-d-histoire-et-de-legende/91-01-la-voie-charlemagne>

Some decades later, in 1917 our Blessed Lady appeared in another village, this time in Portugal. In the context of the horrendous First World War and on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, her message was a plea to return to God, a request for prayer and penance for the conversion of sinners, the first Saturday devotion, the consecration of Russia, devotion to her Immaculate Heart, the rosary, prophecies of future events, and the miracle of the Sun. This was her primary purpose for making another earthly visitation from heaven. But, of all the villages in Portugal, or Spain, or in the entire Christian world, why did she choose *that* one? Why Fatima? Let us look again at some history, this time from a Portuguese tradition.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, the Christians of Portugal were in the midst of reconquering their country from the Muslims. Following a skirmish in the area around Fatima, many prisoners were taken including the daughter of the Muslim commander. A Christian knight, Don Gonçalo Hermingues, fell in love with the young lady, Fatimah, who was named after Mohammed's favourite daughter. Gonçalo asked the Portuguese king Afonso I to marry the lady, to which Afonso responded: "So be it, on condition that she be converted to the Holy



Faith of Christ, and consent to be your wife.”

She was duly baptised and took the Christian name 'Oureana'.<sup>1</sup> The King offered the couple, for their wedding gift, a village, which was renamed Oureana. Over the centuries this name evolved to Ourém.<sup>2</sup> The bride died while still young, so the husband gave his life to God and entered the nearby Alcobça Cistercian abbey. The story continues that the monks later made a small monastic foundation in the hills nearby; the husband transferred the remains of his wife to this area, built a small chapel and named this spot 'Fatima' in her honour, using her original name since her Christian name was already used for another village. It was, of course, in that village of Fatima that our Lady appeared 800 years later.

This story comes to us from a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Portuguese text.<sup>3</sup> Is it

authentic or pure fiction? Without getting into a historiographical discussion, we may assume it is an embellished story based on some actual historical events, as is likely the case with the story of Lourdes. Be that as it may, what cannot be denied is that Fatima and Lourdes were Muslim-controlled villages that were retaken by Christians, and centuries before the two Marian apparitions accounts of the respective villages being named after Muslim converts were written down.

As we peer behind the scenes of the two great Marian apparitions of the last two centuries, we see an interesting connection. Our Lady of Lourdes and our Lady of Fatima, both the same mother of Christ, but two titles that seem to be connected with the conversion of two Muslims: a man named Mirat, and a woman named Fatima.

It appears, then, that our Lady wants to reach out to the lost children of the Islamic world, who in fact venerate Mary highly. By appearing in villages named after Muslim converts, she seems to be drawing their attention towards herself, so that she can direct them towards her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some say that Islam is a Christian heresy since it incorporates several Christian teachings, devotions and practices but in a distorted way. If we are to bring these lost sheep into the fold of our Good Shepherd, we can most effectively do this by calling upon the assistance of our Blessed Lady under her titles of the Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes, and the Virgin of Fatima. So, from time to time in our rosaries, let us keep in mind the hidden intention of our Lady: that the great number of Muslims all around the world who praise her so highly, may come to love what she loves, namely her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. □

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1 'The Golden One'

2 Ourém plays an important part in the apparitions of 1917.

3 It seems the legend was written by Frei Bernardo de Brito in “Crónica da

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Ordem de Cister” (Livro VI, Cap. I) in 1597: Lenda da Princesa Fátima, Retrieved January 10, 2020 from: <https://lendarium.org/en/apl/names-of-places/legend-of-princess-fatima/>

(Pictures: Lourdes Castle; Procession in Fatima.)



# Taking Oaths to Ungodly Leaders

By Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP

Are you quite sure you would not have taken the Hitler Oath? Recently released (January 2020), Terrence Malick's beautiful film 'A Hidden Life' raises this crucial question for our contemporary audience. It unfortunately fails to explain by what moral process the hero, Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, felt compelled to lay down his life rather than take the Wehrmacht Oath of loyalty to Adolf Hitler. Since scores of German Catholic soldiers acted otherwise without seemingly imperilling their faith, this issue is worth examining. Furthermore, in the 2020s, political correctness increasingly demands the concealing of our faith: how to combine civic safety with religious fidelity calls for some timely reflection. By God's grace, analysing the past can help us overcome what may be looming ahead of us.

Man has a duty to follow his well-informed conscience, both in private and in public. Throughout history, however, hostile governments have pressured Catholics into taking oaths at odds with their faith. When non-compliance leads to retaliation by the State ranging from the loss of employment to the loss of life, caution is even more necessary. On the one hand, a Catholic can never take an oath contradicting God's law. On the other hand, the objectionable wording of an oath might still allow for an interpretation compatible with the Catholic faith.



The *Code of Canon Law* of the Church states: "An oath, that is, the invocation of the divine name in witness to the truth, cannot be taken unless in truth, in judgment, and in justice." This definition first given by the 1917 Code (canon 1316) remained unchanged in the 1983 Code (canon 1199).

In his autobiography,<sup>1</sup> the Franciscan friar Gereon Goldman recalls how he was drafted as a young man in the Wehrmacht (i.e. the German regular army) under Adolf Hitler at the beginning of WWII. "There was the matter of our army oath. The night before, we learned that the form of attestation was without the name of God. At once it was clear to us that we could

*not go along with such an odd promise and consider it an oath ... It was affirmed that we swore by the honour of German blood to defend the Fatherland... We answered that an oath is made in the name of God and if his name is not mentioned one is not held by it... The next morning we were administered the old-fashioned*

*military oath, which in another time had had the name of God in it. It was that simple!"* The version of the oath first presented to Friar Goldman is unknown to Third Reich historians, though, who state that the oaths used by both the army and the SS made explicit reference to God.

Later assigned to the elite corps of the SS, Friar Goldman was required to make another promise as a condition to be promoted to SS officer: "I hereby declare that I am leaving the Catholic Church and make the firm resolve never again to enter the Franciscan Order or the Church." Although not formally an oath, this second commitment was clearly a renunciation of the Catholic faith. In this case, there was no way Friar Goldman could take it. He could only ask God for courage and undergo whatever detrimental

<sup>1</sup> Published in 2000 by Ignatius Press under the title *The Shadow of His Wings*, pp.37-38.

consequences would follow. On his refusing, the Catholic friar was expelled from the SS and sent back to the Wehrmacht.

Drafted in the same Third Reich army, Blessed Franz Jägerstätter (1907-1943) was executed by the Nazis for refusing to take the Wehrmacht Oath imposed from 2 August 1934 onwards. The Oath read: *“I swear to God this sacred oath that to the Leader of the German Reich and people, Adolf Hitler, supreme commander of the armed forces, I shall render unconditional obedience and that as a brave soldier I shall at all times be prepared to give my life for this oath.”* It differs from the one mentioned earlier about Friar Goldman, because it refers to God and to Hitler by name. Thousand of Catholic Germans drafted in the Wehrmacht took that oath, including Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg (1907-1944), the hero of the failed assassination attempt (*Valkyrie Plot*) against the Führer on 20 July 1944.

Apparently, Bl. Franz Jägerstätter understood the Oath as obliging strictly, whereas most other soldiers thought themselves bound by it only within the scope of natural law and the law of God. What did his priest and his bishop tell Jägerstätter, including the Vatican-approved Field Bishop Georg Werthmann and the hundreds of army chaplains who had had to take the Wehrmacht Oath as military personnel? Was the following precision ever invoked? *“The obligation arising from a promissory oath ceases... if the matter sworn to is substantially changed or if, after the circumstances have changed, it becomes either evil or entirely indifferent or, finally, impedes a*

*greater good.”* (1917 *Code of Canon Law*, canon 1319). As Hitler led his country and the world into an ever more lethal chaos, Colonel von Stauffenberg surely felt that circumstances had changed, unbinding him from his oath.

The main issue in the Wehrmacht Oath is the word “unconditional” defining the type of obedience due to Hitler. The (only) seven known Catholics who refused to take that oath must have understood the word

to virtue as a mere quality or to an ideal, but to Christ the divine Saviour and the personal embodiment of every virtue.

As late in the war as 1943, though, a strong opponent to the Nazi eugenic crimes like Bishop von Galen (later made a cardinal and beatified) still approved of drafted men serving in the Wehrmacht for the fatherland. Patriotism in itself is good – we are obliged by natural law to fulfil our duty towards our country. But in the



(Picture left: Friar Gereon Goldmann in Wehrmacht uniform; above: Claus von Stauffenberg with his children in 1940.)

“unconditional” literally, as many of our readers probably would, long after and far away from these events. The moral courage expressed by the few objectors when accepting the expected punishment for their moral stance is a witness to all. It reminds us in 2020 that man can and sometimes must give up everything out of fidelity to truth and justice. For Christians and Catholics in particular, such witness is not borne

case of an unjust war, a Catholic must seek an exemption on the basis of conscientious objection. As Catholics, we are conscientious in the social realm as well as in the private realm. Many German Catholic soldiers disapproved of Hitler’s wars while obeying the drafting orders. Was the fear of sanctions against them and their families the only reason why they complied? Why are we prone to



(Picture above: Signing of the 1933 Concordat between the Holy See and Germany; bottom: a Wehrmacht chaplain offers holy Mass; next page: St Thomas More on trial in the film *A Man for All Seasons*.)

decry their allegiance as compromise, eighty years later? Have moral distinctions become so much clearer to us under the rule of political correctness?

For most Catholic Germans who took the Wehrmacht Oath, the word “unconditional” could not preclude a residual freedom of interpretation, one must assume, even if only for the sake of mere common sense. What for instance if the Führer, under the spell of one of his pathological rages, issued a conflicting order such as bombing Berlin? Would not the officer suspend execution? To consider a similar case, Catholic clerics still take a solemn oath, putting their hands inside those of the bishop ordaining them, before whom they kneel after the medieval fashion. To the bishop’s question: “*Do you promise me and my successors respect and obedience?*”, the candidate replies: “*I promise*”. This promise is most solemn and yet it allows or even demands interpretation in certain cases. What indeed if that bishop were called Theodore McCarrick, the infamous (former) cardinal known to prey on candidates to the sacred priesthood?

Some of his demands would have had to have been resisted, without breaking one’s promise.

No Catholic is meant to blindly follow superiors since there is a set limit to their authority as constituted by the Church and by natural law and divine law. Thus, the intention with which a Catholic oath is formulated is entirely different from that of the Hitler oath. This is why the Catholic oath does not use the word “unconditional”.

With this in mind, let us look again

at Germany, where Hitler had legally taken office on 30 January 1933. The Concordat between the Holy See and the German Reich signed six months later on 20 July 1933 stipulated: “*Before bishops take possession of their dioceses they are to take an oath of loyalty either to the Reich governor of the state (Land) concerned or to the President of the Reich respectively, according to the following formula: ‘Before God and on the Holy Gospels I swear and promise, as becomes a bishop, loyalty to the German Reich and to the State (Land) of . . . I swear and promise to honour the legally constituted government and to cause the clergy of my diocese to honour it. With dutiful concern for the welfare and the interests of the German state, in the performance of the ecclesiastical office entrusted to me, I will endeavour to prevent everything injurious which might threaten it’*” (Article 16). This oath was authorised by the Holy See, not as felicitous *per se*, but as a chance to minimise the looming persecution through the acknowledgement of some rights of the Church in the Concordat signed with the Third Reich. Its phrasing, though, was





compatible with Catholic doctrine and with canon law.

Such was not the case in 12<sup>th</sup>-century England, when despotic King Henry II applied the full weight of the State upon the Church to subject her to his supreme authority. His *Constitutions of Clarendon* (A.D. 1164) were resisted by St Thomas Becket who insisted on adding the clause ‘*Salvo ordine meo,*’ i.e., ‘*Saving my order*’. Four hundred years later, another Lord Chancellor also called Thomas resisted another despotic King Henry. When Henry VIII became the self-styled ‘Supreme Head of the Church in England,’ St Thomas More tried for as long as possible to conceal his dissent under the caveat ‘*so far as the law of God allows*’ included in the Act of Supremacy. In *A man for All Seasons* (1960), playwright Robert Bolt ascribes to More the following comment: ‘*How far the law of God does allow it remains a matter of opinion, since the Act doesn’t state it.*’ When his son-in-law objects that this is a legal quibble, More answers: ‘*Call it what*

*you like, it’s there, thank God.*’

During the French Revolution, a schismatic oath was also imposed upon clerics. Once Pope Pius VI had condemned it, no bishop or priest could licitly have taken that oath, not even with the excuse of withdrawing mental assent while expressing verbal consent, as suggested by Cardinal de Lomenie. The *Code of Canon Law* states: “*An oath must be interpreted strictly according to the law and according to the intention of the person taking the oath or, if that person acts out of malice, according to the intention of the person to whom the oath is made*” (Can. 1204).

In Rome under the Republic and the Empire, the oath taken by soldiers had a religious connotation. It was called the ‘*sacramentum*’ and set the soldier apart as somehow consecrated to the armed service of the State. Breaking the oath was a transgression against the gods and punishable by death. Roman historian Vegetius reports that ‘*the soldiers swear that they shall*

*faithfully execute all that the Emperor commands, that they shall never desert the service, and that they shall not seek to avoid death for the Roman republic*’. It sounds very similar to the Wehrmacht Oath. In 286 A.D., at Agaunum in current Swiss Valais, the Christian legionaries of the Theban Legion famously refused to take the military oath and were executed, following their leading officer St Maurice.

We can observe that rare and extreme circumstances may allow for cunning, as when underground priests or laymen use disguises and equivocation to escape unjust State officials. But when their identity is proven and when the State urges them to deny their faith, simulation is not permissible. This is why Our Lord, at first keeping silent before the Sanhedrin, finally made an answer: ‘*The high priest asked him and said to him: Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God? And Jesus said to him: I am*’ (Mark 14:61-62). In such formal context, humans cannot escape the duty to use signs truthfully. Their gestures





and words must express their convictions. As a verbal sign, an oath falls within the same category. This truth is acknowledged *a contrario* even by abortion supporters, who in 2017 removed the prohibition of abortion (and euthanasia) from the 2,500-year-old Hippocratic Oath for physicians: “*I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan; and similarly I will not give a woman a pessary to cause an abortion.*” Doctors could no longer solemnly swear this, it was logically felt, since pregnancy, a parental blessing, had been turned into a womanly disease. To consider a last example, in the Catholic Church, an oath against modernism was required of “*all clergy, pastors, confessors, preachers, religious superiors, and professors in philosophical-theological seminaries*” from 1910 until 1967. Over half a century after its cessation, one wishes that this precise statement of orthodoxy might be offered again to help clergy and laity identify and avoid widespread errors.

After having taken wise advice and prayed well, if a Christian is in conscience convinced that an oath objectively contradicts his faith, he must not take it, and must endure the consequences, by God’s grace and for God’s glory. Rather than moaning against this obligation as burdensome, just men rejoice in it because it demonstrates the beautiful unity of human nature, body and soul, as designed by the Creator. It is because the material and spiritual components of our person are substantially one that we cannot claim a belief contrary to the signs we display. Above all, in a formal context, our external communication

is deemed by men and by God to express our internal persuasion.

To conclude, could it be that in some eighty years from now, Catholic historians might wonder how we, harmless believers, will have complied with the ungodly demands of political correctness? Will they comment in bewilderment on our incremental acquiescence, identifying the chronology of our so-called ‘societal emancipation’: first, sitting on buses and travelling on trains bearing the multicoloured emblem of anti-nature; then wearing it at work as mandatory shoe-laces

ongoing slaughter of the unborn, this ‘subhuman race’, and the termination of ‘worthless’ adult lives as in ‘good old’ eugenic Third Reich? These future Catholic historians may exonerate us, arguing that fear is a potent deterrent, whereas faith was severely weakened over the past generations... Like today you and I may think of Third Reich Catholic Germans, future generations may concede that we did not see from the start how evil the goal was. Or did we? They may absolve us. Will God? □



(Picture: After several years of legal battle, Christian bakery owners Daniel and Amy McArthur received a unanimous ruling from the UK’s highest court that they were entitled to decline baking a cake that spoke a message of support for same-sex marriage.)

and lapel pins; soon after, allowing for the same prideful flag to be raised in our customary family resorts; then taking our children to compulsory perversion classes; and eventually, welcoming in our homes active promoters of this anti-family ideology, while avoiding any criticism of it for fear of being reported by our own children, fined, sacked, tried, silenced, imprisoned and lynched – and all along, not moving lip or finger to denounce the

Further reading:

*Negotiating the Cross and the Swastika: Catholic Priests and Seminarians as German Soldiers, 1935-1945*, by Lauren N. Faulkner (accessible via <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:103/PDF/>).

*Wehrmacht Priests: Catholicism and the Nazi War of Annihilation*, by Lauren Faulkner Rossi.

*German Catholics and Hitler’s Wars: A Study in Social Control*, by Gordon C. Zahn (New York: Sheen and Ward, 1962). □

# Meditative Film ‘A Hidden Life’

By Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP

We recommend watching Terrence Malick’s latest film ‘A Hidden Life’ (released in the UK on 17 January 2020) about unsung hero, Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, who refused to fight for the Nazis in World War II. When the Austrian peasant farmer was faced with the threat of execution for treason, his unwavering faith and his love for his wife Fani and children kept his spirit alive.

This deeply poetical, familial (and lengthy) film raises many questions. What would *we* have done? Is there no way one could swear allegiance to save one’s family and one’s life? Whereas Nazi Germany is an easy – often stereotyped – depiction of evil, questioning our ‘democratic’ 2020s is more challenging because *we* can be held accountable. Is it possible that we are compromising, as ordinary German folks did under Hitler? When does prudence end, and when does resistance become necessary? In the film, because of their moral stance, Franz and his family are ostracised by their fellow-villagers. Are we aware and fearful of a similar risk incurred if we stand up for truth and virtue? More precisely, are we standing up, or are we trying to keep a low profile for as long as we can? Dare we name the forces of oppression in 2020, even though they wear no swastikas on their arms?

The Catholic faith of Franz is manifest in the film, but less explicit than was the case in his life. After a turbulent (and even sinful) youth, he



started taking his faith more and more seriously. Family life made him an exemplary Catholic husband and father. He became the village sacristan. The film should have included at least one holy Mass (there are delightful scenes in his mountain village church). Still, what a pleasant surprise to see a Hollywood blockbuster film depicting the Catholic faith with such accuracy, respect and beauty (the Corpus Christi procession is a little jewel)!

The most precious gift offered us by film director Terrence Malick in ‘A Hidden Life’ is his depiction of a deeply Catholic home. In Franz’s farm, parents, grandmother, sister-in-law and children are not spared hardship (they work very hard in the fields, stables, barns and gardens), but they grow in moral stature through their trials embraced in faith

and through relying on God’s grace. Aged 94, Fani attended the beatification ceremony of her husband in St Mary’s Cathedral in Linz, Austria, in 2007. This beatification was dear to the heart of Pope Benedict XVI, whose home village was near St Radegund across the border, and who shared the devotion of local Catholics for the nearby Marian shrine of Altötting.

The closing title card reads “...*the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.*” (George Eliot, *Middlemarch*).

No doubt this film can encourage modern families to hold strong when struggling with education, chastity and fidelity. It can also touch those among our contemporaries who as yet haven’t had the grace of experiencing Catholic family life. Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, pray for us!

Further reading: *Franz Jagerstatter: Letters and Writings from Prison*, Orbis Books. □

# On Pilgrimage to Italy

Compiled by Paige McGuirk from reports by several fellow-pilgrims from North America.

Some may ask, why go on a pilgrimage so far from home? My fellow pilgrims and I may not have known the answer to this question as we lifted off on our respective flights, but we would know it with the certainty of our souls upon returning.

A pilgrimage is a form of prayer, which often results in a rich tapestry of pivotal, and seemingly insignificant, events, artefacts, and places that work to confirm our Faith internally and to the world. Much of the history of the Church took place in the Holy Land and in Europe. Where better to embark on a pilgrimage than the original Christendom, where a multitude of saints have lived, walked, and prayed? Thus, in association with the FSSP, we set out on a pilgrimage through Italy in late October of 2019.

When the advertisement for the pilgrimage was received in the mail, many of us had similar feelings on our decision to go. Lucille Saulnier, who made the trip from Canada with her two sons Michael and Hector, stated, “I knew this pilgrimage



(Picture: Pilgrims at Cortes d'Avalos, where St Thomas Aquinas was imprisoned by his family until escaping: this was a highlight of our pilgrimage organised on behalf of the Confraternity of St Peter, the international prayer network of the Priestly Fraternity of St Peter for priestly vocations and ministry – cf [www.fssp.org/en/help-us/confraternity-of-saint-peter/](http://www.fssp.org/en/help-us/confraternity-of-saint-peter/). Next page: Assisi.)

would be an opportunity of a lifetime.” Lucille, still vibrant and lively in her faith at 85, was unable to dismiss God’s gentle and loving nudge.

One of the key points of the itinerary was a sung procession through the streets of Rome, Italy in thanksgiving to Pope Benedict XVI for his Apostolic Letter *Summorum Pontificum* on the sacredness of the Ancient Mass. This would take place after Adoration and a recitation of the Holy Rosary to then end with a Pontifical Latin High Mass in St Peter’s Basilica. This

offering moved many of those in the congregation, including myself, to tears.

Lucille recounts how Christ stirred her heart in these moments:

As I was leaving the area where the Pontifical High Mass had just ended, I gazed at the faces of the many tourists that were beyond this area, looking on as spectators, and tears came to my eyes. I realized, but for the grace of God, just 7 short years ago I was one of those spectators. When on a Lenten Retreat, I knocked on the door of a Latin



Mass....and He opened to me.... *seek and ye shall find*. He died out of love for each one of us...and is waiting for all of us to return to Him.

We all seemed to be immediately drawn to the idea of a trip which would hold our Catholic Faith as the centre and driving force of our sight-seeing. Such a trip allowed us to experience ‘up close and personal’ the rich history of the Church in Europe. How unreal it seemed to be walking the streets where saints had trod! This gave life to our Faith in a new and tangible way.

My roommate on the trip, Margi Ross, expressed of her then *fourth* visit to Italy, “I just can’t get enough of Rome and all the history of our Roman Catholic faith! As a recent, middle-aged convert, I felt cheated not growing up learning about the saints and I guess I’m making up for lost time.”

Intimacy with those who knew *God* intimately...what a desire to hold in our hearts!

Over the years, my initial inclination to visit Europe may have stemmed from the romantic image Europe is

usually portrayed in. However, I have come to discover that the romance of Europe is not found in the architecture or even in the people; it is found in the deep sense of Christ’s presence, which permeates the streets, if only through the witness of the saints honoured there and the faithful who travel to honour them. What a blessing, to take part in such a beautiful veneration of Jesus Christ and His saints!

This perspective was heightened with each daily Latin Mass, offered by Fr. Armand de Malleray, FSSP. One instance being when we made a stop in Cingoli, Italy to visit a chapel containing the incorrupt body of St. Sperandia, a Benedictine Nun who died in 1276. Mass that day was said on the altar upon which the body of the saint was displayed behind a glass. Again, it moved me to tears.

The daily offering of the Traditional Mass was a significant blessing we had the privilege of receiving. It truly focused our intentions on God and set a joyful and grateful tone for each day. Fixing our eyes on Him, everything we did throughout the

day would be offered as a prayer to Him.

Wishing to remain anonymous, one of the women elaborated on this experience:

It is the Holy Mass of the saints that we visit. It is in the language of the Church. It has a beauty and focuses completely on Our Lord. There is a silence during the Mass which makes true prayer possible. One can hear His voice in their heart. It is fitting.

Her teenage daughter also revealed her love for the Mass as she explained:

I much prefer the beauty and reverence of the traditional liturgy, so deeply rooted in the truths of the Catholic Faith, as it imparts to my soul a certain peace and quietude, as well as strengthening the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. It definitely added to the richness of this pilgrimage.

Perhaps the most impactful moment of the trip for many of us was found at our stop in Manoppello, Italy within a ‘small’ basilica, (when compared to the scale of Rome’s.)





*Basilica del Volto Santo*, or the Basilica of the Holy Face, houses a cloth which was placed atop the *Shroud of Turin* at Jesus' burial. Miraculously, this cloth bares the image of Christ's risen Face, though it did not come in direct contact with His face as the *Shroud of Turin* or *Veronica's Veil* would have. And yet, upon a cloth woven with fibres finer than a strand of hair from an infant's head, we beheld His Holy Countenance. The image is not painted upon the cloth, but is of the fibres themselves.

How miraculous it was to see the Risen Face of Jesus as Mary Magdalen, His Blessed Mother, and the apostles would have after His resurrection!

Sister Blandina Schlomer, a German Scholar in iconography, was able to provide us with an explanation on the origin and history of the cloth while offering a tour of the basilica.

"Of all the places we visited from Rome to Assisi, the place that touched me most was at the *Basilica of The Holy Face...*" Hector Saulnier recounted, "It was miraculous for us to be able to look upon the face of our Saviour."

Another pilgrim shared, "The image of Christ's face, at Manoppello, with His smile, was perhaps the most moving. Although I did not realize it until later, after I had arrived home."

In a later expression of joy at this touching exhibit, Margi wrote, "Who wouldn't want to gaze upon the face of Our Risen Lord as long as possible!"

While still in Rome, how humbled and speechless we were when we ascended, on our knees, the Holy Stairs, *Scala Sancta*, which St. Helena brought to Rome, Italy in



326 AD. Our group was also able to venerate other relics of Christ's Passion, such as a piece of the True Cross and the remaining section of the pillar Christ was scourged upon.

How fitting it was, with Christmas only two months away, to also venerate the remnants of the humble, wooden manger in which was once laid the Infant Child, born in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph of Galilee. The Child who would save us from our own sin. This was housed in the *Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore*, the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, Our Lady of Snows.

There was an expanse of beauty to take in, from the small, framed icons placed on building corners throughout Italy, to the grandeur of the many churches and basilicas we visited.

As imaged by Michael Saulnier:

Though the amount of information from our guides was often overwhelming, I would not want to change or reduce what we saw.... Many times, I felt it was important to just listen quietly, to try and absorb everything. Sort of like being Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, while Martha was busy preparing for the guests... I found that each night

I had to meditate on what we learned and try to digest it all.

Shared experiences such as those mentioned above, allowed all of us on the trip to form connections rooted in more than the base of compatible personalities. We formed connections that are unbreakable within any lifespan on earth, for we will always be united in Jesus Christ and His church, and in the many graces He showered upon us in the trip's ten-day span.

"I found it beautiful to see God working in each of us as we shared ourselves and our experiences." Margi confided.

Despite this development of friendships with my fellow pilgrims, I was not prepared for the many spiritual friends I would encounter; the saints. With each shrine visited and story heard, I was able to bond with the long dead men and women, who were formed into greatness through God's grace. They too are united with us in our Love for Christ and His Catholic Church. As told by one pilgrim:

In a country with such a rich Catholic heritage as Italy, I cannot, at present, think of anything more inspiring than being capable not only to walk and pray in the very same places as so many holy persons and saints, but even to beg their intercession before their blessed remains.

God often works where we least expect; in people, places, and in good, clean fun, which was certainly found in the wonderful dynamic of our group! The depth to which we were touched by this trip, cannot be told in words. We must express it then with the meagre ones above, which do little to capture how our

souls were moved by grace toward an endless longing for God.

Considering our experiences, the answer to the question posed at the beginning of the article is this: His is a romance worth travelling the

world to encounter. The good news for us is He offers it wherever we are. Cast away the anxieties of this world, for He is already come to take each of us home. With joy, let us run out to meet our Saviour! □

(Picture left: Holy Face of Manopello; below: holy Mass before the incorrupt body of St Sperandia, in Cingoli.)





# Concerning Art, Music and Man (Part 1)

By Fr Alex Stewart, FSSP

Today's modern culture is bursting at the seams with various things that can hinder the moral and spiritual growth of individuals and even of whole societies. So many factors today seem subtly engineered to distract us from the things we need to do as Catholics in order to grow in holiness and in the love of the Divine Child we have just welcomed into our cribs and into our hearts. It is often difficult for us to discern what is and what is not good for us in this regard and so, to this end, it can help us to use some sound philosophical principles from the Church's perennial tradition to be able to make solid judgments regarding the many pitfalls that we find in our culture.

Of all the great distractions presented to us in this technologically advanced age, there are few that have the accessibility and profound influence of music. Here is one form of art that seems to surround us at almost every moment of our waking lives, from the television, mobile phone, in the car, the music played in stores and cafes, there often

seems to be no escape from this form of entertainment. Regarding the universal acceptability of music, we need only remind ourselves that, up until recent times, if you wanted to listen to music you had to either have the ability to play an instrument yourself, or attend a live performance of, say, a concert or show. With the advent of recorded

music and its digitization, there is almost no obstacle to the instant access to literally millions of pieces of music of whatever type and quality. It is not uncommon to sit in a waiting room, or stand at a bus stop, and find that everyone around us is wearing headphones. In this digital age, most of our contemporaries are plugged in, and



we can only assume that they are not listening to Palestrina or Byrd.

Given the now universal access to music, it is worth asking whether such a widespread activity can have detrimental effects on its subjects? Is there such a thing as good and bad music, or is all just down to a matter of taste? If there is such a thing, how can we identify it? What principles can we apply, and what knowledge can we gain in order to understand it, and our interaction with it, better? It is certain from history that various philosophers took the subject of music and its effects very seriously indeed. We find many references of great interest in the Greek philosophers regarding what they saw as the moral power of music. Music was seen to be able to move the people to virtue or vice, and misuse of music was often dealt with severely. There seems to be an irony in the fact that, today, almost every living human being on the planet can have access to an unlimited supply of music and there is hardly ever any reference to whether it can be harmful or not.

In order for us to understand more clearly the possible impact that music can have on man and society we need to look at the being that is man, as described by the traditional Catholic philosophy, and also what that same philosophy says about music. Man is a composite being, a being composed of a material element, the body, and an immaterial element, the soul.

Man's soul has powers or faculties, and these faculties include his intellect, his will, and his appetites. In synoptic form we often say that the intellect knows, and the will loves, meaning that intellect understands things, and the will moves man toward those things that he perceives are good for him, and away from those he perceives are bad for him. Man's moral life encompasses both of these powers, for we can see that it is possible for us to know that something is wrong intellectually, but still do it. This doing is a result of the action of the will.

St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that an

in themselves (although affected by original sin) and have material effects in so much as they can involve bodily responses (the classic examples being the watering of the mouth when we think of our favourite food, or the increased heart rate when we are angry).

Our classical Scholastic philosophy divides the appetites into the concupiscible and the irascible. These terms need not cause us confusion, the concupiscible appetite is that power of the soul that moves us towards material, sensible things (remember the red Ferrari and the chocolate cake?). The passions, or bodily responses, of the



appetite is “nothing other than inclination of the desiring of something”. We move ourselves toward something because we perceive it as a ‘good’. (By using the term good here we are not meaning something morally good, but just something that the appetite is attracted to, whether it be chocolate cake, a red Ferrari, a new job, or a good night's sleep). The appetites are the powers of the soul that move us towards different goods. They are morally indifferent

concupiscible appetite are love and joy, when we think of or are united to that thing we desire, and sorrow and hate, when cannot attain it, or are confronted by something we do not like.

The irascible appetite is concerned with the ‘good’ that is difficult to obtain, and helps us to continue to pursue and hold on to it in adversity. The passions, or physical reactions of the irascible appetite, are hope, despair, courage, fear and anger.



Both the concupiscible and irascible appetites must be regulated by moral virtue to direct them. So in the case of the concupiscible appetite, our movement towards sensible goods, the virtue that regulates the appetite is temperance to curb the attractions and direct them to what is good, and the irascible appetite is regulated by the virtue of fortitude, to support it and strengthen it in adversity. This so called ontological structure of man (the being of man) forms the basis of how we are to understand man in his interaction with art and music particularly (and is also the basis for the Catholic understanding of man in moral theology).

Seminary professors, in describing the appetites and their effect on man's moral life, will often use the analogy of the chariot. The chariot driver is reason, trying to direct the

chariot along the road, while the horses are the appetites. If the appetites are under the domain of reason, if they are controlled by virtue, the driver will be able to keep the horses and the chariot on the right track. If the appetites are not controlled by virtue, they pull the chariot this way and that, even off the road.

We turn from the ontological make-up of man, to music. What is it and how do we define it? There are plenty of definitions of music in various dictionaries and on the internet. For our purposes, let us first look at art in general, and stick with the foundational definitions of our Catholic philosophy. Of the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, the virtue of prudence is described as right reason in doing things, it steers

man's actions between excess and defect and guides the other virtues. Art is a part of prudence and is described as right reason in making things, the making of physical things, or in physical action (carpentry, piano, dance, painting etc.) Both prudence and art entail an ordering by the intellect to some action.

We divide art, a part of the virtue of prudence, into fine art, and servile (or mechanical) art. The latter encompasses things made for some sort of use of man, the making of a chair, or baking a cake (there's that chocolate cake again!). The fine arts are those things made or done simply for man's delight and enjoyment (painting, sculpture, dance, poetry, music). When we talk of the effects of the arts, we can see that the effects of the servile arts are





(Picture left: computer rendition of *The Charioteer of Delphi*, a bronze statue from antiquity.  
Above: Catholic Mel Gibson directs his film *The Passion of the Christ*.)

the made things, artefacts, visible tangible things. In the effects of the fine arts, there may be a physical created thing as a result, but the most profound effects are in the soul. The fine arts are able to move the soul of man in different ways, and this is has great significance for our understanding of music.

We often think of art as an imitation of nature: a painting can imitate a scene, music can imitate the sound of a speeding train, a sculpted statue can imitate a Greek mythological hero. Movies are one of the most powerful forms of art because they are able, through imitation, to move man in very profound ways. By watching movies we are able to be placed in situations that we would never ordinarily be able to experience: the dramatic bank robbery, a damaged space-station, the exploration of the deep ocean. Movies are able to move the viewer to experience joy, sorrow, fear and

happiness; they can invoke sympathy and anger. Unlike other forms of fine art, movies also use several mediums, through sight, sound and literary forms (in the scenario and dialogues).

The finality, or goal, of a movie is to affect the viewer, to move him in some way or other, and this also true of other, shall we say, less powerful forms of art. But good art should move the soul in the right direction, to be elevated in some way and not be brought down or debased. This is not to say that all art should explicitly move man to holiness: God gives good wholesome secular pursuits to man for his enjoyment, recreation and rest, but it must not dispose man to vice and sin.

In Greek art and culture, men were moved to imitate the heroes depicted in the statues and the literature. The art sought to move the viewer to virtue by portraying the heroes in

beautiful and idealistic ways. In contrast, much of the modern art that is produced seems to move men to what is less than them, by ugliness, vice and base subjects. From a moral point of view it is permitted for art to portray evil (the execution of St. Thomas More, for example) but it must always show evil as evil, and can never show evil as good, or even as neutral.

The fine arts, then, can dispose man towards good or evil, by the types of imitation and the artistic mechanisms that it uses. As Fr Basil Nortz tells us, art does not cause virtue or vice in someone, but it can dispose us to either the one or the other.

So much for art in general and its power to move the soul or man in different ways. We will next look at music in particular.

[To be continued.] □

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(Picture: 11 men attended our Vocation Weekend in Warrington last January. That we might do more for them and for souls, [please help us](#) raise the missing £140,000 to complete the purchase of Priory Court.)

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