

Triumph of the Heart

FAITH CARRIES US

Family of Mary

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*“Remain steadfast in the journey of faith...
remain united to God as branches to the vine.”*

Pope Francis, April 28, 2013

Blessed is she who believed!

*Dear Friends and Benefactors, as a sort of “sequel”
to last autumn’s issue on Faith, we would like to deepen once again
this theme so fitting to the “Year of Faith” which emeritus Pope Benedict XVI
declared from October 11, 2012 until November 24, 2013.*

Simon Peter, a simple fisherman, experienced on the Sea of Galilee how childlike Faith in Jesus’ word “Come!” became the sound foundation which led him, with a trusting look to the Lord, out onto the stormy sea.

Yet in an incomparably more perfect way the Blessed Mother lived each and every moment, even the bitterest hours on Calvary, an unshakable Faith in the sight of God. She rightly became for us all the “Mother of Faith” who carries us through the storms of life safely to Jesus. St. Louis de Montfort wrote in “True Devotion”, that Mary “is the safest, easiest, shortest and most

perfect way of approaching Jesus ... in order to belong entirely to him.”

The Italian Patron of the Youth, Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother, compiled in his love to Our Lady a so-called “Marian Creed” which he always carried close to his heart. We chose a few of the most beautiful lines from this very personal meditation, composed of some 150 Mariological doctrines with quotations from the saints and from the Fathers of the Church. Those who quietly meditate these inspired thoughts of the 23-year-old Passionist undoubtedly will be led closer to Jesus through Mary.

The Marian Creed

I believe, O Mary, that you are the mother of all men.

I believe that you are our life and, after God, the sole refuge of sinners.

*I believe that you are the strength of Christians, and their help, especially at the hour of death,
that following thee I will not deviate, praying to thee I will not despair,
if you remain I shall not fall, if you protect me I shall have no fear,
with you as my guide I shall not tire, you shall keep watch over me until I come to thee.*

*I believe that you are coredemptrix with Christ for our salvation,
that all the graces which God dispenses pass through your hands,
and that no one will enter Heaven except through thee
who are rightly called the “Gate of Heaven”.*

*I believe that as an advocate you do not refuse to defend even the cause of the most miserable.
 I believe that true devotion to thee is a most certain sign of eternal salvation.
 I believe that you are superior to all the saints and angels, and that God alone surpasses thee.
 I believe that you have more Faith than all men and angels,
 and that your beauty and excellence surpasses theirs.
 I believe that you alone did fulfill perfectly the precept: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"
 and that the very seraphim of Heaven can learn from your heart how to love God.
 I believe that if all the love which all mothers have for their children,
 all that all husbands and wives have for each other,
 all that all the Angels and Saints have for those who are devoted to them,
 were united in one, it would not equal the love that you have for even one soul.*

The Catechism of Our Lady

*God gives his favor and grace to everyone.
 He always does this through the Mediatrix of All Grace, Our Lady,
 whether this becomes visible or remains hidden.*

A powerful true story which took place in 1944 in the southern United States shows her motherly grace most distinctly, especially how Mary transmits the faith. Fr. Robert O'Leary S.V.D. (1911-1984), a Divine Word Missio-

ary in Mississippi, was directly involved in the events and gave testimony about them in a radio address during the 1960's. The priest, zealous to win souls, left this audio recording to posterity with the title:

"The Miraculous Conversion Story of Claude Newman"

*C*laude Newman (1923-1944), an African American, was taken away from his mother Floretta at the age of five and brought to Bovina, east of Vicksburg, Mississippi. He and his older brother were raised there by their grandmother, Ellen Newman.

Claude was still young when he started the hard work in the fields of the Ceres cotton plantation where Sid Cook, who married his grandmother

Ellen in 1939, also worked. When 19-year-old Claude then repeatedly saw his beloved grandmother beaten and abused by her husband, he shot his step-grandfather on the afternoon of December 19, 1942.

The runaway was caught a few weeks later and sentenced to death in the electric chair for the murder of Sid Cook. The following text is taken directly from the radio transcripts:

The Miraculous Medal

*W*hile in 1943 Newman was in jail awaiting the execution, (set for January 20, 1944), he

shared a cell-block with four other prisoners. One night, the five men were sitting around talking

and they ran out of conversation. Claude noticed a medal on a string around another prisoner's neck. He asked what it was, and the Catholic boy told him that it was a medal. Claude said, *"What is a medal?"*

The Catholic boy could not explain what a medal was or what its purpose was. At that point, and in anger, the Catholic boy snatched the medal from his own neck and threw it on the floor at Claude's feet with a curse and a cuss, telling him to *"take the thing"*.

Claude picked up the medal, and with permission from the prison attendants, placed it on a string around his own neck. To him it was simply a trinket, but he wanted to wear it. During the night, sleeping on top of his cot, he was awakened with a touch on his wrist. *"And there stood,"* as Claude told the priest later, *"the most beautiful woman that God ever created."*

At first he was very frightened. The Lady calmed down Claude, and then said to him, *"If you would like me to be your Mother, and you would like to be my child, send for a priest of the Catholic Church."* With that she

disappeared. He then started screaming that he *"wanted a Catholic priest"*.

Father O'Leary, the priest who tells the story, was called first thing the next morning. He arrived and found Claude who told him of what had happened the night before.

Then Claude, along with the other four men in his cell-block, asked for religious instruction, for catechism. Initially, Father O'Leary had difficulty believing the story. The other prisoners told the priest that everything in the story was true; but of course, they neither saw nor heard the vision of the Lady. Father O'Leary promised to teach them catechism, as they had requested.

He went back to his parish, told the rector what had happened, and returned to the prison the next day to give instruction. It was then that the priest learned that Claude Newman could neither read nor write at all. Claude had never been to school. And his ignorance of religion was even more profound. He knew nothing at all about religion. He did not know who Jesus was. He did not know anything except that there was a God. Claude began receiving instructions, and the other prisoners helped him with his studies.

His Blood washes us clean

Several weeks passed, and it came time when Father O'Leary said to the prisoners, *"Okay, boys, today I'm going to teach you about the Sacrament of Confession."*

"Oh, I know about that! The Lady told me," said Claude, *"that when we go to confession we are kneeling down not before a priest, but we're kneeling down by the Cross of her Son. And that when we are truly sorry for our sins, and we confess our sins, the blood he shed flows down over us and washes us free from all sins."*

Father O'Leary sat stunned with his mouth wide

open. Claude thought he was angry and said, *"Oh don't be angry, don't be angry, I didn't mean to blurt it out."* The priest said, *"I'm not angry. I'm just amazed. You have seen her again?"* Claude said, *"Come around the cell-block away from the others."*

When they were alone, Claude said to the priest, *"She told me that if you doubted me or showed hesitancy, I was to remind you that lying in a ditch in Holland, in 1940, you made a vow to her which she's still waiting for you to keep."* And, Father O'Leary recalls, *"Claude told me exactly what the vow was."* This convinced

Father O'Leary that Claude was telling the truth about his visions of Our Lady. They then returned to the catechism class on Confession. And Claude kept telling the other prisoners, "You should not be afraid to go to

confession. You're really telling God your sins, not this priest, or any priest. We're telling God our sins." Then Claude said, "You know, the Lady said we talk through the priest to God and God talks back to us through the priest."

Holy Communion only looks like a piece of bread

About a week later, Father O'Leary was preparing to teach the class about the Blessed Sacrament. Claude indicated that the Lady had also taught him about Holy Communion, and he asked if he could tell the priest what she said. Claude related, "The Lady told me that in Communion, I will only see what looks like a piece of bread. But she told me that THAT is really and truly

her Son. And that he will be with me just for a few moments as he was with her before he was born in Bethlehem. And that I should spend my time like she did, in all her time with him, in loving him, adoring him, thanking him, praising him and asking him for blessings. I shouldn't be bothered by anybody else or anything else. But I should spend those few minutes with him."

His last request

Eventually they finished the instructions, Claude was received into the Catholic Church (with the other four prisoners on January 16, 1944), and the time came for Claude to be executed. He was to be executed (four days later) at five minutes after twelve, midnight.

Sheriff Williamson asked him, "Claude, you have the privilege of a last request. What do you want?"

"Well," said Claude, "you're all shook up. The jailer is all shook up. But you don't understand. I'm not going to die. Just this body. I'm going to be with her. So, can I have a party?"

"What do you mean?" asked the sheriff.

"A party!" said Claude. "Will you give Father permission to bring in some cakes and ice cream and will you allow the prisoners on the second floor to be turned loose in the main room so that we can all be together and have a party?"

"Somebody might attack Father," cautioned the warden.

Claude turned to the men who were standing by and said, "Oh no, they won't. Will you fellas?"

So, the priest visited a wealthy patron of the parish, and she supplied the ice cream and cake. They had their party.

Afterwards, because Claude had requested it, they made a Holy Hour. The priest had brought prayer books from the Church and they all said together the Stations of the Cross. Afterwards, the men were put back in their cells. The priest went to the chapel to get the Blessed Sacrament so that he could give Claude Holy Communion. Father O'Leary returned to Claude's cell. Claude knelt on one side of the bars, the priest knelt on the other, and they prayed together as the clock ticked toward Claude's execution.

A sacrifice of love for a “helpless case”

*F*ifteen minutes before the execution, the sheriff came running up the stairs shouting, “*Reprieve, reprieve, the Governor has given a two-week reprieve!*”

Claude had not been aware that the sheriff and the District Attorney were trying to get a stay of execution for Claude to save his life. When Claude found out, he started to cry. The priest and the sheriff thought it was a reaction of joy

because he was not going to be executed. But Claude said, “*Oh you don’t know. If you ever looked into her face, and looked into her eyes, you wouldn’t want to live another day.*”

Claude then said, “*What have I done wrong these past weeks that God would refuse me my going home?*” Claude sobbed as one who was brokenhearted. Then Claude said, “*Why? Why must I still remain here for two weeks?*”

Make a sacrifice

*T*he priest had a sudden idea. He reminded Claude about James Hughs, a prisoner in the jail for murder, who hated Claude intensely. He had led a horribly immoral life and he too was sent to be executed. The priest said, “*Maybe Our Blessed Mother wants you to offer this denial of being with her for his conversion.*”

The priest continued, “*Why don’t you offer to God every moment you are separated from her for this prisoner so that he will not be separated from God for all eternity.*” Claude agreed, and asked the priest to teach him the words to make the offering. The priest com-

plied. The next day, Claude said to the priest, “*That prisoner hated me before, but Oh! Father, how he hates me now!*”

*T*wo weeks later, Claude was executed on February 4, 1944. Father O’Leary remarked, “*I’ve never seen anyone go to his death as joyfully and happily. Even the official witnesses and the newspaper reporters were amazed. They said they couldn’t understand how anyone could go and sit in the electric chair actually beaming with happiness.*”

Claude’s last words
to Father O’Leary were,

*“Father, I will remember you.
And whenever
you have a request,
ask me,
and I will ask her.”*

The news of Claude Newman’s death was reported on the day of his execution in the Vicksburg Evening News. His only comment was that he was ready to go.

Saved in the last minute

*T*wo months later, the white man, who had hated Claude, was to be executed. Father O'Leary said, *"This man was the filthiest, most immoral person I had ever come across. His hatred for God, for everything spiritual,"* said the priest, *"defied description."*

Just before his execution, the county doctor pleaded with this man to at least kneel down and say the Our Father before the sheriff would come for him. The prisoner spat in the doctor's face. When he was strapped into the electric chair, the sheriff said to him, *"If you have something to say, say it now."*

The condemned man started to blaspheme. All of a sudden the condemned man stopped, and his eyes became fixed on the corner of the room, and his face turned to one of absolute horror. He screamed. Turning to the sheriff, he then said, *"Sheriff, get me a priest!"*

*N*ow, Father O'Leary had been in the room because the law required a clergyman to be present at executions. The priest, however, had hidden himself behind some reporters because the condemned man had threatened to curse God if he saw a clergyman at all. Father O'Leary immedi-

ately went to the condemned man. The man said he had been a Catholic, but turned away from his religion when he was 18 because of his immoral life. The room was cleared of everyone else, and the priest heard the man's confession.

When everyone returned to the room, the sheriff asked the priest, *"What made him change his mind?"*

"I don't know," said Father O'Leary, *"I didn't ask him."*

The sheriff said, *"Well, I'll never sleep if I don't."* The Sheriff turned to the condemned man and asked, *"Son, what changed your mind?"*

*T*he prisoner responded, *"Remember that black man, Claude, who I hated so much? Well he's standing there, over in that corner. And behind him with one hand on each shoulder is the Blessed Mother. 'And Claude said to me, 'I offered my death in union with Christ on the Cross for your salvation. She has obtained for you this gift, to see your place in Hell if you do not repent.' I was shown my place in Hell, and that's when I screamed."*

Shortly thereafter James Hughs was executed; he converted literally in the last minute.

There is No Greater Love

Many married people unfortunately feel let down by their spouses when it comes to praying or going to Holy Mass together. It is very painful when the one we love, though he or she shares our life, is excluded from that which is most valuable, the faith. The story of Elizabeth Leseur (1866-1914) from France and her husband Felix should give us new courage.

Elizabeth was raised Catholic, the oldest of five children in the family of an influential lawyer in Paris. She was intelligent and loved music and literature. When she was 21 she met Felix Leseur (1861-1950), a medical student from a very pious family of lawyers. Everything seemed to indicate a perfect match. Felix was impressed by Elizabeth's joyful, witty character, and she wrote to her parents, *"I have found in Felix everything I have ever wished for in a husband."*

The wedding bells rang two years later. The night before, however, her husband-to-be confessed to her that he had not been a practicing Catholic for a long time; rather, he was a staunch atheist. His promise not to hinder her in practicing her faith gave her the hope that, with her help, he would find his way back to God. And so she accepted.

Dr. Leseur remained faithful to his promise for a little while and, with a sincere love, avoided hurting his wife with antireligious remarks. Nevertheless, he continued his participation in free-thinking circles which stirred up his hatred of the Catholic faith, and he soon became well known as the editor of an anti-clerical, atheistic newspaper in Paris. How the atheist would have loved to see Elizabeth share his views. So he increasingly made fun of her deepest convictions. *"I went to work assailing Elizabeth's Faith, to steal it away from her, and—may God forgive me—I nearly succeeded."*

The Leseurs' worldly life with many vacations

and plenty of entertainment was enticing to Elizabeth and gradually brought the young woman to slacken her religious practices. On top of that, she became absorbed in books whose ideas had disastrous effects on her Christian thinking. Finally, full of doubt, she completely gave up her religious lifestyle and her union with God.

Two years later, however, an entirely unexpected conversion took place. In 1898, when Elizabeth was 31 years old, she said to her husband one day, *"I don't have anything else to read. Please find something for me."* With the intention of extinguishing the last ember of Faith, Felix was all too happy to give her from his extensive atheistic library the book "The Life of Jesus" by the rationalist Renan.

Instead of going along with the faithless author's dissertations against the Bible, she began reading the Gospels again herself. Through the daily readings about the life and words of Jesus, she found her way back to the deep Faith of her youth.

Moreover, she began, as much as her family and social obligations allowed, a consistent spiritual life of prayer and study of the Bible and the saints. She started her own library and began keeping a spiritual diary in 1899. Felix fortified his mockery of Elizabeth's revived religiousness; she, on the other hand, resisted all differences of opinion with meekness, knowledge and persistence.

Show him the fruit

Astonishingly, despite all this, their marriage always remained loving and unconditional. Elizabeth was very attached to Felix, and she did all she could to be an attentive and affectionate wife. *“My obligation to my husband: deep love ... to hold back especially when it comes to matters of the faith which are still veiled to him. If a quiet hint is necessary ... it can only be once in a while, after careful consideration, with gentleness and a smile. Show him the fruit, but not the sap; my life, but not the Faith that transforms it; the light in me, but not the one who produces it; reveal God, without mentioning his name. I think this is the only way to hope for the conversion and the sanctification of my beloved companion.”* She complained about only two painful circumstances in their relationship: that they were unable to have children and that she could not share her faith with her husband and therefore suffered from a great loneliness in her soul.

Felix later discovered, *“My dear wife incessantly prayed for my return to the Catholic faith. Every day she offered up all her renuncements, trials and suffering and, in the end, even her death. She did all of this, however, in secret.”*

Elizabeth intensified her spiritual life. She sought silence and regularly participated in retreats. She received extraordinary strength and light from the Sacraments and prayer. Accepting her sufferings in body and soul helped the wife without children to mature and made her all the more sensitive and compassionate to the needs of others. The death of her sister in 1905 gave her a deep insight into the reality of suffering for somebody else. *“Thanks to this truth of the faith, even the loneliest being, the poorest soul bound to a bed with a painful illness ... can influence and, through God’s grace, reach people who would remain otherwise untouched by one’s efforts. ... None of our tears, none of our prayers are wasted, and they have a power that most people would never guess. Suffering is the highest form of activity.”*

That same year, she wrote Felix a note which he only discovered after her death: *“In 1905 I asked the almighty God to grant me enough suffering to purchase your soul. On the day I die, the price will have been paid. There is no greater love than when a woman gives her life for her husband.”*

You will become a Dominican priest!

Elizabeth was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1911. During a trip to Lourdes together the following year, she profoundly asked Our Lady in the grotto of the apparitions for the conversion of her husband. Two years before her death, she predicted to her atheist husband something stupendous: *“I am absolutely certain that when you find your way back to God, you will not stop along the way*

because you never do something halfheartedly. ... One day you will become a priest.” He responded, *“Elizabeth, you know how I feel. I swore to hate God and I will live and die in hate.”*

Yet secretly Dr. Leseur was increasingly impressed, in light of her pain and his own helplessness, by the strength his wife’s Faith gave her. *“When I saw how sick she was, and how she*

nevertheless endured a complaint from me with composure ... I was moved. ... Knowing that she drew this tremendous strength from her convictions, I ceased attacking them." He later explained, *"When I consider that I was crazy and criminal enough to attempt to destroy the Faith which she held so highly and that carried her so powerfully, to what a hell I would have abased her and damned myself besides!"*

Elizabeth suffered much in these last months, also from a spiritual darkness. She thankfully understood, however, that all this *"must come to purify and to transform. This divine work continues..."* Elizabeth began to lose consciousness in April 1914. Yet in a moment when she had come to her senses, she again repeated to her husband with firm conviction, *"Felix, when I am dead, you will convert and become a Dominican priest."* He let her receive Last Rites and on May 3, 47-year-old Elizabeth died peacefully in his arms.

 Only then did Dr. Leseur discover her diary and become aware how much he had caused her to suffer and how without wavering she very consciously prayed and sacrificed for his return to God for nine long years. While he was examining her writings, he also found the note offering her life for his conversion. He was touched, but he still thought it was just the thought of a pious woman. Shortly after the First World War broke out, the 53-year-old undertook a trip to Lourdes, more to write a book against the "alleged" miracles taking

place there than anything else. As he was sitting in the grotto of the apparitions before the statue of the Immaculate Conception meditating on the "heavenly beauty" of his own wife's soul, his eyes were suddenly opened to the truth and he clearly understood, *"she accepted and offered up her suffering ... above all for my conversion!"* His whole atheism swiftly collapsed, and by no merit of his own, he received the gift of Faith, as infused light! *"I confessed my mistakes to a priest and was reconciled with the Church."*

Back in Paris, he read over and over again his wife's diary with the pact she had made with God for his return to the faith and the spiritual testament which she had left him: *"Love souls; suffer and work for them. They deserve all our pain, all our efforts, all our sacrifices."*

In 1919, five years after her death, Felix did, in fact, enter the novitiate of the Dominicans and was ordained a priest in 1923 at the age of 62. During his remaining 27 years of priesthood as a retreat master, he also saw it as his mission to make known the life and work of his wife by publishing her diary and holding talks. Thanks to his efforts, the beatification process for Elizabeth Leseur has already been opened.

In 1924, Fr. Felix Leseur held a retreat in Belgium for Fulton Sheen who would later become a well-known American archbishop. At the retreat, Fr. Felix told him about his conversion and the life of his wife. In many of Sheen's addresses and television catechisms he recounted this impressive example when he spoke about married couples' role in sanctifying one another.

I don't Want a Coward for a Husband

*Over the years, we have presented you a number of witnesses to the faith
from countries behind the Iron Curtain.*

*Each one impressively shows how, through the grace of God,
their faithfulness was strengthened in their persecution.*

*It was no different in the life of a Romanian pastor,
Richard Wurmbbrand (1909-2001), and his wife Sabina.*

*R*ichard was born in the capital city Bucharest, the fourth son of a Jewish dentist and his wife. Following the early death of his father, the family fell into dire straits. His youth was full of bitterness and distance from God. Yet at the age of eight or nine he had a memorable encounter with Christ:

“Since I was raised by non-practicing Jewish parents, I never heard anything good or bad about Jesus. I did not know him at all. One day, as I was walking home with another boy, he stopped in front of a church and said, *‘Wait a minute for me. My father asked me to tell the priest something.’*

“I said, *‘I’ll go in with you.’* And so I went into a church for the first time. I was very impressed. The first thing I saw was an image of a man who had been crucified. I had no idea who this man was, but he must have been bad; otherwise, they would not have done that to him. I was often beaten as a child, and apparently I deserved it; but why was this man bleeding all over and held to a cross with nails? I also saw a picture of a beautiful

young woman who looked at me with great love. I was not used to such an affectionate expression. I was despised for the most part because I was a Jew, poorly dressed, and small and scraggly at that. I was not loved. But this woman loved me, and from that moment on I loved her too. I still ask myself today, why so many Christians never give Mary a loving thought. The Bible says, ‘All generations will call her blessed.’ Why do we not do it? The other boy spoke to the priest who then asked me, ‘What can I do for you, little man?’

“I was embarrassed because I thought perhaps I was not allowed to be in this strange place. I answered, *‘Nothing.’*

“He said, *‘That cannot be. I belong to Jesus who taught us not to let anyone pass us by without doing something good for them. It is summer and it’s hot outside. I’ll bring you a glass of cold water.’* Jesus—what an interesting being! Apparently all the other people I had met up until then did not know his teaching. I was overwhelmed. As I found out much later, it was an orthodox church and the priest’s name was Cavane.”

The prayer of an atheist

*T*he experience of continual impoverishment, the lack of any religious instruction whatsoever and the atheistic and Marxist books which

he devoured despite his deficient schooling made Richard a hardened atheist at the age of only 14. He hated anything to do with religion. Yet he

would have *“loved to know if somewhere in the middle of the universe a loving heart existed.”* Atheism brought him no peace, and he was sad that a God of love does not exist.

*R*ichard became a businessman, and with slyness and dishonesty he soon became wealthy. In the “Paris of the Balkans”, as they called Bucharest at that time, he started living a dissolute life. Even his marriage in 1936 to Sabina Oster—he was 27 and she was 23 and also of non-practicing Jewish descent—did not manage to stop his addiction to pleasure. Then the playboy contracted

tuberculosis, which back then was considered nearly incurable. Richard thought he was going to die.

At a sanatorium out in the country, he finally began to rest and reflect on his bad life. *“I had ridiculed, defamed, mocked and boasted. ... Now I was just lying here, and the tears came.”* He was torn and started to pray for the first time the prayer of an atheist: *“God, I know for sure that you do not exist. But if by chance you do exist, which I deny, then it is not my obligation to believe in you, rather it is your obligation to reveal yourself to me.”*

An old German carpenter

*T*o continue his recovery, the Wurmbrands took a vacation in a little mountain village in Siebenburgen in the spring of 1937. An elderly carpenter by the name of Christian Wolfkes lived there. For a long time he had prayed every day, *“O Lord, let me not die until I have led a Jew to Christ because Jesus came from the Jewish nation. Yet I am poor, old and sick. There aren't any Jews in my village. Bring one to my village and I will do my best to lead him to Christ.”* Now he met the young couple and recognized in them the answer to his most desired request. Wurmbrand relates, “After Wolfkes befriended me, he gave me a Bible one day. I had already read the Bible, but it never made an impression on me. The Bible I held in my hands now, however, was different than the ones before. ... Wolfkes and his wife prayed four hours on end for my conversion. So this Bible was not actually written with letters but with flames of love.

“It was so hard for me to read because tears flowed every time I started and I compared my bad life to the life of Jesus, my impurity to his purity, my hate to his love. Wolfkes let the Bible and his prayer work in my heart. He said nothing of it. He instinctively knew what many trained missionaries do not know—that the most efficient missionary methods are privacy, silence and concentrated prayer to give peace to the soul that one wants to win over.

“It was a long time before the old man came to visit me. He spoke simple words to me which came from his heart about things that a Jew should know: about the fulfillment of the messianic promise in Jesus, about the love that God still has for the Jews for the sake of their ancestral fathers who carried the faith. God opened my heart so that I was able to believe the Gospel. That is how this modest carpenter gave the first impulse to my conversion.”

My denomination is love!

*T*he concealed hostility against the Jews which was wide-spread in Romania at the time did not make it easy for him to find a Christian community that was willing to take him in. Finally he

stumbled upon the “Anglican Mission for the Jews” where he was baptized in 1938 at the age of 28. Shortly thereafter his only son, Mihai, was born. Sabina Wurmbrand was initially shocked by

her husband's change of heart, but a half year later she also asked to be baptized. The formerly convinced communist now dedicated himself to the new faith with great zeal.

For his mission, he studied to become an Anglican, then later a Lutheran, pastor and he was ordained. Nevertheless, like most Jewish converts in Bucharest, he followed the principle, *"My denomination is love. My brothers and sisters are all those who love one another, regardless*

of what denomination they profess."

A colleague once testified, *"Richard is the most gifted man I have ever met; he is truly a genius."* As a matter of fact, in just a few years, Richard amassed an unbelievable knowledge of the Bible and theology, and he mastered seven languages. While Richard could readily become enthusiastic about something, his calm and well-educated wife was often just the opposite.

Wurmbrands' little son Mihai was a great missionary. He wanted to tell everybody he met about Jesus. Once he noticed a man sitting on a bench in the park reading a book. Mihai asked him, "What are you reading?"

"A novel," the man replied.

"You should read the Bible."

"Why," he questioned.

"Because it tells you how to get to heaven. Do you see that big man over there? That's my dad. He can explain it to you better."

Wurmbrand explained the Holy Scripture to this man. It was Constantin Iloaid, who later became one of the greatest Christian poets of Romania. At the end of the revolution in 1989, as hundreds of thousands knelt down in the square before the Bucharest Opera to thank God for the miracle of their freedom, one of Iloaid's poems was read describing how to believe in God.

Now he is our brother!

*R*omania was occupied by the German army in 1941, and the Jews had much to suffer. The Wurmbrands did everything imaginable to console their "elderly brothers in faith", to help them flee and to lead as many as possible to their Messiah. In the process, they too were *"arrested several times, beaten and dragged before the Nazi judges."* Richard noted, *"We felt that it was our obligation out of love for our enemy to have a special edition of the Gospel according to St. John published and given to the German soldiers without charge."*

There was never a dull moment in Wurmbrand's life. One night Richard met a soldier named Borila, who was serving in the Romanian army which was allied with the German army. He bragged that he had killed hundreds of Jews with his own hands

in various concentration camps. The pastor was horrified by the fact that it may have been Borila who murdered his wife's family which had been executed in one of these camps.

After the initial rebellion in his heart against this criminal, he remembered the commandment about loving your enemy and he invited the soldier over to his house. After a while he said to him, *"If you peek through this curtain, you will see somebody sleeping in the next room. It is my wife, Sabina. Her parents, her sisters, her twelve-year-old brother and other family members were killed. You told me that you have killed hundreds of Jews in the concentration camps, including the one to which her family was brought. Perhaps you murdered them."*

Borila jumped up, his eyes ablaze as if he wanted to strangle the pastor. Yet, Wurmbrand calmed him down and proposed an experiment: *“I will wake up my wife and tell her who you are and what you have done. I can tell you what will happen: my wife will not reproach you in any way whatsoever. She will embrace you as though you are her brother. She will give you something to eat, the best what she has in the house.”* Then he continued, *“If my wife, a sinner like the rest of us, is able to forgive and love you, imagine how Jesus, who is perfect love, is able to forgive and love you!”*

He pushed the soldier to ask God for forgiveness whereby Borila finally admitted with dismay, *“I am a murderer; I have blood on my hands.”* Wurmbrand knelt down with him and prayed.

Borila, who had never prayed, continuously asked for forgiveness. Then the pastor went into the bedroom and woke up his wife. *“There is a man here you have to meet,”* he whispered to her. *“We believe he killed your family, but he has repented and now he is our brother.”* Sabina went out and offered the soldier her hand. They both cried and embraced one another. Afterwards, Sabina went into the kitchen and prepared them something to eat.

“The Nazi terror was bad,” Richard summarized, “but it was only a foretaste of the terror that would come with the communists. This time taught us ... that man’s spiritual strength can overcome even horrendous torments with God’s help. It also taught us the methods of working hidden in the community.”

A witness to Jesus for the Russians

“*Since* I repented so deeply for having been an atheist,” Wurmbrand reported, “I had no greater desire from the moment I turned back to God than to be a witness to Jesus for the Russians. My wish was fulfilled. During the national socialists’ occupation, when there were thousands of Russian prisoners of war in our country, we secretly did missionary work among them. It was a moving, terrifying work.

“I will never forget my first encounter with one of them. I asked him if he believed in God. He looked up at me as if he did not understand and said, *‘I don’t have orders to believe. If I receive such a command, then I will believe.’* Tears ran over my cheeks. Here was a man standing before me whose spirit was dead. He was a tool with no will of his own, ready to believe or not believe on command.

“I vowed to God to dedicate my life to these people that they might regain their personality and help them believe in God. I did not need to go to

Russia because as of August 23, 1944, more than one million Russian soldiers occupied Romania.”

*W*urmbrand continued to work as a clandestine pastor in the underground Church; he distributed the New Testament in cafes, bars and train stations. Many of his assistants were arrested in the process. He took advantage of every situation and used his whole ingenuity to lead Russian soldiers to Christ.

The number of conversions was astonishing, and with an impressive genuineness the converts themselves became courageous missionaries in the underground Church. “As far as religion goes, the Russians are completely ignorant. And yet it was as if they had sought the truth in their hearts for a long time, and now they accepted it with enthusiasm. They were raised atheist and believed that they are atheist just as many people think they were Christians, but in reality they are not.”

An officer

One day a Russian officer came to Wurmbrand. He did not have the faintest idea of God. The pastor began to read him the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' parables about love.

"When he heard these, he jumped for joy around the room and exclaimed, *'What a beautiful thing! How could I live without knowing this Christ?'* It was the first time I saw somebody with such exuberant joy about Jesus. Then I read Jesus' passion to him without first having prepared him for it. The officer sank down in his armchair and began to cry uncontrollably. He had believed in a savior and now he was dead.

"I looked at him and was ashamed that I called myself a Christian, even a pastor, and had believed until now that I could teach others but had

never participated in Christ's suffering like this Russian officer...

"Then I read him the story about the Resurrection. He did not know anything about it. He slapped himself on the thigh and let out a coarse, but I believe for him 'holy', swear word. He yelled out loud for joy: *'He lives!'* and started jumping around the room again, overcome with happiness. I said to him, *'Let's pray!'* He fell down on his knees with me and prayed the following: *'O God, you're such a good guy! If I was you and you were me, I never would have forgiven your sins, but you're really such a great guy. I love you with all my heart!'* I believe that all the angels in heaven paused for a moment to hear this perfect prayer of a Russian soldier."

Stand up and wash this disgrace from the face of Christ!

Shortly after the Red Army marched into Romania, the communists came to power. Richard continued his mission among them by distributing pamphlets camouflaged with Marxist cover pages. Sabina also worked fearlessly with him. In the beginning, the communists tried to win over the church leaders with deception, but in 1947, terror broke out.

Thousands who professed their faith were locked up or shot. Churches were barred and a minister of religion was appointed to control the pastors throughout the country. Those who resisted were arrested. The prisons were full of priests and the horror stories of their treatment spread across the whole land.

In a short time, four thousand priests, pastors and preachers from all religious confessions were called to the parliament in Bucharest for a so-

called "Confessions Congress". Intimidated and blinded, they named

Joseph Stalin, a mass murderer, as the honorary president. "One after another, whether bishop or priest, stood up in our parliament and publicly declared that communism and Christianity had the same foundations and that they could peacefully coexist. One religious person after the next found words of praise for communism and assured the new government the faithful cooperation of the Church.

"My wife sitting next to me said, *'Richard, stand up and wash this disgrace from the face of Christ!'* I said to my wife, *'If I do that, you will lose your husband.'*

She responded, *'I don't want a coward for a husband.'* So I stood up and spoke to this

congress, and I praised not the murderers of the Christians but rather Christ and God and said that we owe him first of all our fidelity. All comments during this congress were broadcast over the radio. I would have to pay for it later, but it was worth it.”

To protect the faithful from the cowardly compromises of Church dignitaries, Richard formed underground communities—the believing, suffering Church. Believers met in private homes, in the forest or up in the mountains.

Tortured for Christ

In 1948, at the age of 39, Pastor Wurmbrand was picked up on the street by the secret police on Sunday on his way to church, thrown into jail and interrogated and tortured for days. He spent three years in strict solitary confinement in an underground prison devoid of daylight.

Alone his constant dialog with the crucified and risen Lord and the deep meditation of his life and suffering saved the pastor from losing his mind. Due to his immense hunger, his spiritual weakness and torture, his only prayer soon became, *“Jesus, I love you.”*

He gave his torturers a selfless testimony of Christ’s love. *“When you step on a flower,”* Wurmbrand wrote, *“it repays you with its scent. In the same way, Christians repaid their torturers with love thus leading many of them to Christ.”*

Five more years of prison time followed in a communal cell. “For eight years, nobody knew whether I was dead or alive. The secret police visited my wife and told her they were fellow prisoners who had been released. They said that they had been present at my burial. Her heart was broken.” Yet Sabina refused to believe it.

She was also condemned to three years of prison and forced labor on the channel between the Donau River and the Black Sea, had to leave her nine-year-old son Mihai to his own means, and then she spent many years under house arrest. They offered her freedom if she would renounce her faith. Yet their efforts were in vain.

Under the condition of not being allowed to preach anymore, Wurmbrand was released in 1956, but arrested anew three years later. To get

their prisoners to renounce what they believed the tormentors tried every means: brainwashing, persuasion, threats and brutal violence until even the “stubborn” Christians broke down and denied their faith. Over the fourteen years of gruesome imprisonment, which he only survived by a miracle, Richard learned an “ecumenism of suffering” because in the cells the differences between confessions no longer played a role. They prayed together and consoled each other; they endured the same tortures and harassment for Christ and many gave their lives for him.

In 1966 Pastor Wurmbrand testified before a committee of the United States Senate in Washington D.C. about the situation of the Church in Romania. He became famous for taking off his shirt and showing the scars from his prison tortures. His atheist tormentors had declared, *“There is no God who protects you from us and who punishes us. We can do whatever we want with you.”* They tortured Wurmbrand continuously. They allowed him moments of rest only so that they could begin anew with their punishments: *“On top of it, they were proud of the fact that they felt no compassion. I learned something from them though: As they had made no room for Jesus in their hearts, so I decided also not to let Satan have the smallest place in mine.”*

When a general amnesty was declared in 1964, and the 55-year-old pastor was released and called home, his wife fainted. She had faithfully waited for him for years. In order to avoid

a threatened third arrest, Christians in the West were able to ransom the Wurmbrands from Romania the following year. With the task of being a voice in the free world for those suffering in the underground Church, they settled down in

California. From there, they worked untiringly through conferences and books with the organization they founded “The Voice of the Martyrs” to make people aware of the Christians’ suffering in Eastern Bloc countries.

Translated from: Richard Wurmbrand, *Gefoltert für Christus*, Stephanus Edition Verlags AG Seewis 1968/1986.

It was not until 1990, at the end of the Ceausescu Dictatorship, that Richard and Sabina were able to travel again to Romania after 25 years of exile. In an opinion poll in 2006, he was voted the fifth most famous Romanian. Richard Wurmbrand died in 2001 at the age of 92 in Los Angeles, a few months after his wife had passed away.

Led by Jesus to the Fullness of Faith

Martina Schmilewski from Hamburg, Germany tells us her touching story about how she, as a young Catholic family mother, became involved in esotericism and how, despite her good intentions, naively surrendered herself to demonic powers. She testifies today full of thankfulness how the power of Jesus’ merciful love freed her from the deception of occult entanglement and led her so deeply to the true faith that both of her sons also converted.

One of them, Jon, is now studying in Rome to be a missionary priest for the Family of Mary.

*I*t all started in 1991. My husband, our two sons and I led a completely normal and inconspicuous family life. My chores as mother and wife took all my time. Since my husband is Protestant, I became more and more lax in practicing my own Catholic faith. I stopped going to church and my prayers became few and far between. Yet back then I had sincerely planned to take more interest in my faith life at some later stage in my life. In this situation, our two-year-old son Tim and I fell ill with atopic eczema. Since we did not want to undergo a lengthy steroid treatment, with all its side effects, I took a friend’s advice and went

to visit a healer who, allegedly with divine power flowing through her hands, had great success in healing and, in the end, succeeded with the two of us as well. This very pleasant woman had consultations with me in which she spoke at length about the causes of illness and suffering and about the esoteric view of the world. I willingly participated in these conversations because it was something I had been very interested in since my youth. Fascinated by the wonderful healing of our eczema and due to a lacking knowledge of Holy Scripture, the theory of Karma, which the healer explained to me, seemed to be quite enlightening.

I came into contact with the Far East teachings about salvation—with energies, vibrations and energy blocks as the source of illness. I heard for the first time from the healer that chronic illness and strokes of fate could even be the consequences of lapses in our earlier lives, like the teaching of reincarnation presents.

Although I rejected this new point of view in the beginning, my inner objections eased more and more with time. I had no problem to combine Catholic teachings with the schools of thought from the Far East because, through the esoteric healing therapy, I was blinded and could no longer see the truth. I suddenly realized that many good friends whom I valued, Catholics and Protestants among them, were involved in various esoteric healing practices and so-called alternative medicine, and this encouraged me to put my faith in these practices as well.

Strengthened by my own visible healing, I wanted to learn more about the esoteric teachings and the effects of their healing methods. So I read many books on the subject and participated in events with people who have special psychic powers. It all fascinated me. I believed the esoteric explanations that illnesses were the result of disrupted energy equilibriums, obstacles, Karma and what the teachings about reincarnation stated. And so I

thought the Far East theory of Karma finally gave a satisfying answer to the question about the cause and the sense of suffering. Since esoteric literature makes use of many expressions from Christianity, I did not recognize anything heretical. In reality, however, I intellectually distanced myself further from my faith in Jesus Christ.

Esotericism teaches that man fully carries the divine in himself; he is god, so to say, and through his own efforts can reach perfection. This means nothing other than self-redemption. The creature is independent of the creator. Man no longer needs a redeemer, nor forgiveness, nor grace and no personal prayer. In the place of our Trinitarian God, with whom each child of God can have a personal and loving relationship, esotericism has an impersonal, cosmic image of God which is even called a “cosmic” or “universal” vitality. It is claimed that from the infiniteness of the cosmos a universal life-energy radiates which penetrates everything, maintains everything and with which man has to be in harmony in order to be healthy and happy. This can be achieved with the help of esoteric healing methods and exercises, through Yoga and Eastern meditation. According to esotericism, this “becoming one” with the cosmos is the greatest goal in life. As a rule, one needs several lives to reach it.

Esoteric healing methods with a Christian mask

*I*n December 2000 I found out that there was a new healer in our area who supposedly had special healing abilities. After the positive experience with our atopic eczema in 1991, I wanted to have her treat my allergies. She seemed serious and was a nice, down-to-earth woman as well as Christian, so I quickly was able to put my trust in her. Her therapeutic methods covered a wide range of esoteric practices: homeopathy, cell salts, Bach flower remedies, facial diagnosis, energy work, Reiki, talking to illnesses and various other esoteric healing methods. With her, I encountered anew this mixture of Eastern esoteric thinking

with my trusted Christian elements. She had great success due to her psychical abilities, and this all seemed “normal” to me.

She openly spoke about being in spiritual contact with angels who helped her to heal. Beyond that, she determined treatments and remedies by using a pendulum, and she had quick and visible success in healing. She explained to me that using the pendulum and spiritual interaction with the angels were both gifts given to her so that God can heal. This was all new to me. The healer often spoke about her belief in God. I saw her Bible and even a statue of Jesus in the room where she treated

her patients. Blinded by the Christian appearance of this woman, by the visible success in healing and by my own acceptance of the esoteric-Eastern school of thought, I let her treat me and my family. It was much too late before I realized that I was treading in the area of the occult with this woman because her psychic healing powers were in reality calling on the powers of darkness. Due to my lack of discernment, however, I had no doubt about her supposed “God-given gifts”.

At the time I believed that if healing took place, it must be good and must come from God. I did not know that the devil can also give the deception of an apparent healing. It seems that the original illness or problem is “healed”, but in reality it is just moved somewhere else. The bodily pains or the eczema disappears after the occult-esoteric treatment; but sometime later, maybe even years later, new problems arise which no longer affect the body alone but can adversely affect the soul and the spirit. Other bodily illnesses often occur, but also psychological problems: fears, nightmares, aggressiveness, fighting, disturbances in relationships with others and even disturbances in our relationship with God, like being blocked from prayer or a sudden aversion to divine things. The devil disguises his destructive intentions unnoticed through the apparent “gentle” esoteric healing methods. He feigns healing so that one wants to be involved, and then he gains power over them to harm their souls.

*M*any people try alternative medicines now instead of going to the doctors with their illnesses. My oldest son Jon suddenly started having unexplainable headaches, and so we let her treat

him. After a couple of treatment sessions, the healer very unexpectedly pressed the pendulum into my hand with the argument that now I had to learn how to use it. She wanted to take some time off with her newborn baby and was going to close her practice for three months. I should determine with the pendulum how long my son should take a very high dosage of a homeopathic remedy during her absence so that his treatment which had begun so successfully—and expensively—would not have to be interrupted.

*I*nitially, I felt a spontaneous aversion to using the pendulum myself. The healer tried to take away my concerns and resistance. She explained to me that using a pendulum is absolutely harmless and nothing special at all. In general, it is only a means of coming into contact with our subconscious which then tells us what the body or the soul needs. And I believed her. Besides, I had to decide quickly because she was available for only a few more days. Either I was to help my son by using the pendulum for the healing method which had worked until now or the expensive treatment could not be finished. Although everything in me wanted to resist, I nevertheless finally took the pendulum.

I was unaware that, alone by holding the pendulum, I had given evil a declaration of agreement that it could work in me. I did not know at the time that occult powers, namely demons, were behind the results given by the pendulum. After that, everything happened very quickly. I, too, suddenly had psychic powers. They were simply there!

Psychic powers

I continued my son’s treatment to the end, exactly as the healer explained to me. Jon was completely freed of his headaches, and with that, my aversion to using the **pendulum** disappeared entirely. I started using the pendulum as part of

my daily life. At first, I used it to determine medicines, groceries and everything else possible. It fascinated me how one is able to come into contact with his own subconscious.

Through certain questions which I asked and the

answers I received, I soon suspected that it was not solely the subconscious that was responsible for the results of the pendulum. I started swinging the pendulum over letters of the alphabet resulting in whole phrases with content which had meaning for my life. The pendulum became more important to me. The palms of my hands also started hurting, especially at night.

Very quickly I received another psychic power—warm waves passed through my right hand and it tingled in an unusual way. I suspected that, if I gave it the chance, it would write automatically because I had read about this psychical gift as well. With **automatic writing**, the human hand is led by an invisible, supernatural power causing it to write on its own. In the beginning it seemed a little creepy to me, but I had seen many strange

things with the healer which supposedly all came from God.

So I told Jesus that I wanted to pay very close attention to what my hand writes. If it was something bad or meaningless, I would no longer be involved with it. On the contrary, if something good or holy appeared on the paper, I wanted to see it as God's will, that he wanted to come into contact with me in this way. With naïve trust, I let my hand go. It wrote some words in a language unknown to me. The first legible phrase was, "*Honor, praise and all glory to our lord.*" For me, these words were a sign that it was something holy so I kept writing because I did not recognize who was meant by "our lord". I believed in my ignorance that it was a praise of my Trinitarian God.

My angel

Now an **angel** made a written presentation of himself. He told me his name and the high grade he held in the angels' hierarchy. He wrote with my hand that he had been sent to me by God, to accompany me and to lead me to sanctity.

God will give me the gift of healing with the aim of leading souls to Jesus, and he, my "angel", should help me with this task, teach me and protect me. He explained that God will give me the stigmata, the wounds of Christ, and that is the reason why the palms of my hands had so much pain during the night over the last several weeks.

Only later would I realize that this "angel" was in reality a demon who had disguised himself as

an angel of light. His behavior seemed friendly and dignified, even holy! The false angel dictated wonderful prayers and texts to me full of holy words, and so no doubt arose concerning his supposed divine origin.

In a very friendly manner, he gave me good advice and suggestions for my little daily problems which was extremely useful. He also explained that he was the one who always gave the answers when I used the pendulum. The communication and the daily contact with this angel usually took place through the pendulum, through automatic writing or through the psychic gift of **telepathy**, a silent, wordless communication between the angel and me which I also received.

You are not allowed to use the pendulum

*A*t this time, my family and I were sick more often than usual. Again and again we healed quickly though, thanks to God's supposed helper, who made suggestions for quick healing, and it always worked very well. Today I am completely convinced that these illnesses were caused by the evil spirit who then immediately showed me the fitting remedy so that I would become more involved with him, believe him unconditionally and then, through this deception, he would have more power over me.

This went on for a while before an inner voice told me, "*You are not allowed to use the pendulum!*" and the pendulum suddenly stopped swinging. As often as I tried, it did not move again from that moment on. In this time, the angel also withdrew, leaving me very confused. So I decided to ask the healer for some advice. She was the only person I knew with experience in such supernatural things. She explained to me that I was a soul with very special gifts, and all these abilities come from God. I should not worry about the immovable pendulum or the broken contact with the angel. Pauses in contact with "heaven"

are completely normal; she experienced it as well. Sometimes such things were just a test.

Since the pendulum did not work anymore, she advised me to make contact with the angel through a sort of divining rod called a "biotensor", which she gave me to try out. And as a matter of fact, the angel did come back into my life through it. He explained to me that he had to withdraw at God's request. It had all been a test for me. Now he was allowed to help me again and he wanted to train me soon to heal.

I still had not understood that it was Jesus who with the words, "You are not allowed to use the pendulum," had started to show me a way out because the demon was already at work destroying me, body and soul, with his power. I had no idea what was really happening though. Every explanation that this demon, disguised as an angel, presented seemed so convincing. Therefore I was so sure that it all must be coming from God. On top of it all, miraculous things happened before my eyes which seemed helpful and holy.

My training as a healer

*T*he alleged angel shared with me what I should learn, like healing with Bach flowers for example. At the bookstore I picked up the necessary books and also bought the necessary ingredients for healing, in this case vials of Bach flower essence. I only had to learn the basics about the various healing methods. The angel gave me clear instruction about what to do during the treatments. For each illness, I was shown exactly which healing method should be applied and how to apply it. So I was able to learn and practice many different healing methods in a very short time.

My training was primarily concentrated on homeopathy, cell salts, Bach flowers, various other energetic blossom essences, energy drops, angel drops and kinesiology. In addition, I received the ability to use the divining rod. I was even capable of healing through photographs or names written out on paper.

The supposed angel also compiled a collection of healing prayers which he dictated to me, seemingly Christian texts which appeared very pious. Some of the prayers contained additional signs made up of slashes and circles. Blessing with Rosaries was a main component for healing.

I was even supposed to use Holy Water for healing. This confusing mix of occultism and true goods of the faith was intended to remove any remaining spark of doubt with regards to the divine origin of these healing methods.

Now I know that I was basically practicing *white magic*, packaged in a Christian disguise with a Catholic cover. Satan evokes apparent healings and miracles with white magic to lure people, to draw them into his sphere of influence and to obtain an entitlement to their life. Yet every form of magic is a sin and a violation of the first Commandment.

Therefore the Catholic Church urgently warns us about it in the Catechism (see CCC 2113-2117, 2138).

My mistake was that I did not turn to a priest to receive help and instruction from the side of the Church. I did not have the courage because I did not know a priest whom I could trust. I was afraid of not being understood and possibly being labeled as mentally unstable and sent for medical treatment. So I arranged everything with God myself and pretty much kept my psychic abilities a secret. That is what my dark angel had told me to do. Only at the conclusion of my healing training should I make my abilities known and work publicly as a healer. Yet it turned out completely different: God knew about my ignorance and recognized my good intention of wanting to win souls for him through healing. Therefore in his mercy he led me back to himself.

My liberation from esotericism

My return to the Catholic Church and its teachings took place slowly and gently, and was accompanied by great confusion in my training as an esoteric healer.

Initially, I was excited about the psychic powers I possessed. We did not need a doctor anymore, and I believed I was a soul favored by God. Meanwhile the texts and proposals were dictated as “directly addressed by God”. Nevertheless my desire became ever greater to be just “normal” again. I simply wanted to lead a good, inconspicuous, Catholic life, so my psychic abilities became increasingly burdensome. I did not want them anymore. I believed, however, that healing was a divine task for me and I was afraid of refusing God something by stopping. This became a true suffering in my soul. My Faith life grew in intensity and depth. I started regularly going to Holy Mass again and, after more than 20 years, started going to Confession. The more actively I practiced the Catholic faith, however, the more difficult it was for me to reconcile the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the esoteric teachings about energy and meridians, vibrations and power streams,

Karma and essences.

Yet the cunning angel assured me time and again that my vocation was still to win over souls through healing in order to lead them to Jesus and his Church. Esoteric healing, he said, was merely a “means to an end” determined by God for me as a Catholic to reach this goal in our day and age. My training as a healer was now nearly complete and the time to start working publicly as a healer drew ever closer. Yet in my heart, esoteric healing and an authentic Catholic life no longer seemed to coincide. I fell into a great conflict in my soul. I pleaded for weeks—often on my knees and sometimes in tears—to Jesus and Mary that they preserve me from false paths and show me clearly the will of God.

Slowly but surely an aversion to anything esoteric grew in me, especially against esoteric means of healing. I started to feel a very great love for the Catholic Church, though earlier I had found many faults, and I recognized that Holy Scripture simply is not compatible with the teaching of esotericism. Unbelievably, my crafty angel supported me in every desire that God placed in my heart,

so much so that I never took him to be a demon. If I had the desire to go more often to Confession, for example, he strengthened me in this resolve. I should have no reason to suspect with whom I was really dealing. For three and a half years, the demon disguised himself as an “angel of light” without ever giving himself away. To me he acted like a holy friend, always ready to help, friendly and dignified; he never pressured me or forced me to do something he wanted. Everything seemed good and holy.

Since I really wanted nothing other than to seek the will of God, he, in his goodness, gave me the saving thought of having my charisma confirmed by a priest. Only with a sure sign from the side of the Church did I want to accept esoteric healing as God’s desired “means to an end”. After praying for a long time, I finally met a priest whom I could trust. He warned me about the refined deceptions of the devil and advised me to pray that God might send me a gifted priest who, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, could give me clarity.

Fr. James Manjackal comes from Kerala, India. A missionary of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, he gives retreats in more than 85 countries around the world. He holds conferences and leads healing services with great success. Today he lives in Bangalore and works untiringly for the evangelization of Christians and non-Christians alike. Some of his books have been translated into English: “Prayer Does Wonders”, “He Touched and Healed Me” and “Behold I Knock”.

Although I destroyed all the esoteric objects, ingredients, books and CDs after the retreat, the treacherous angel was still able to attack me exteriorly for a time. The devil’s services and healing success do not come for free. He demands a price, sooner or later! Now he showed his true face. He does not want our joy and our salvation. Nevertheless, Jesus was especially close to me at that time. After all these experiences which I had let myself into, I have now oriented my life completely toward Jesus Christ, my Savior and Redeemer. He not only freed me from the bonds of Satan, but additionally gave me the gift of a whole new depth of Faith. I discovered the necessity of reading Holy Scripture and the beauty of prayer, especially Eucharistic adoration. I received the desire and the joy of going to Holy Mass every day, and that revived for me the meaning of the Holy Eucharist. My heart

That priest was Fr. James Manjackal. I signed up for one of his retreats in Hamburg in 2004. I expected the crucial help from the charismatic priest. My hand started tingling again very strongly three days before the retreat. This signified that the disguised angel wanted to communicate something to me in writing. I hoped that God wanted to reveal something important to me before the retreat started. What I then wrote down though was the decisive turning point in my life and the conclusion of the cleverly laid trap into which the devil had led me. The text read, *“I am a demon. Now I have to leave you and so I reveal myself to you in order to scare you. You never could have healed. Everything was in vain.”*

Fr. James confirmed that this angel was an evil spirit and that I now had to renounce Satan with my whole will and renew my faith in Jesus Christ. By the power of his authority and in the name of Jesus Christ, Fr. James broke the demonic ties. The final liberation was given to me through Confession and a sincere contrition.

was opened wide for the love of Our Lady and so I received the desire to learn how to pray the Rosary and meditate on Jesus’ life with Mary. I also began to reconsider my attitude toward the Holy Father and it became clear to me that I wanted to change some things in the way I lived my life. As a result, I stopped taking the Pill and respected the Catholic teachings as they are presented in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. It was much easier than I thought. Today, I am a very happy Catholic, and I would like to tell everybody about the beauty and fullness of our faith.

The active practice of our faith in the Church is the best protection against the pitfalls of the devil who first presents himself as an angel of light, but who sooner or later has to show his true face. I want to thank God, my Savior, until the end of my life, give him all honor and love him more each day.

*“Actually it should always be
a Year of Faith”*

*Joachim Cardinal Meisner, Archbishop of Cologne,
in a kath.net-interview on April 20, 2012*