

Triumph of the Heart

THE PARTICIPATION OF THE SAINTS
IN MARY'S COREDEMPTION
AS A SOURCE OF RECONCILIATION
AND UNITY

Family of Mary

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The Participation of the Saints in Mary's Coredemption as a source of Reconciliation and Unity

by Fr. Paul Maria Sigl

Since we, the "Family of Mary Coredemptrix", desire to share with you as much as possible our Marian spirituality, we have highlighted in this issue some interesting saints who understood and lived the spirit of coredemption and therefore have so much to say to us about it. The Third International Symposium on Marian Coredemption, hosted by the Franciscans of the Immaculate FI and lead by American Mariologist Fr. Peter Fehlner FI, took place on August 21, 2002 at Downside Abbey in England. Fr. Paul Maria Sigl held a conference there for theologians, mariologists and faithful from the US, England, and different European cities which we are publishing now for your enjoyment. May the example of these great men and women help and console you in your daily life.

*I*n Guayaquil, the Marian shrine in Ecuador, Pope John Paul II said on January 31, 1985, "The motherly heart of Mary shared the deepest desire of Christ 'to gather into one the dispersed children of God' (Jn 11:52). Since she suffered for the Church, Mary deserved to become the mother of the disciples of her Son, the Mother of their unity."

Mary is also the Mother of Unity because she is the Coredemptrix. United with her, all of us are also called to become a source of reconciliation and peace through our suffering out of love. This is the theme of my conference, "*The Participation of the Saints in Mary's Coredemption as a Source of Reconciliation and Unity*".

Whenever hateful, unbelieving, or hardened people find their way back to God and open themselves up to His forgiveness, so too were there always holy men and women who prayed and suffered for the grace of their conversion. In his bull proclaiming the Great Jubilee, Pope John Paul II wrote, "*The Christian is not alone*

on the path of conversion... This establishes among the faithful a marvellous exchange of spiritual gifts, in virtue of which the holiness of one benefits others in a way far exceeding the harm which the sin of one has inflicted upon others.

There are people who leave in their wake a surfeit of love, of suffering borne well, of purity and truth, which involves and sustains others."

What I would like to show in my conference I will not prove so much with theological arguments, but rather through concrete examples from the lives of great men and women. What I would like to say, I rather let the saints say by quoting their words born and enlightened through suffering.

In a certain sense, you would have to rewrite the books of World and Church History and to show that not statesmen but saints decisively cooperated in the salvation of the Church and entire nations in a hidden or visible way.

An offering for unity with the Oriental Church

St. Lidwina of Schiedam
(1380-1433)

The first saint that I would like to mention is Lidwina. The name 'Lidwina' means "the one crying in pain". For 38 years, St. Lidwina of Holland was continuously ill, and her life of suffering is without a doubt one of the most touching in the whole history of the Church.

Everything began so inconspicuously. The 15-year-old Lidwina fell while ice-skating and broke a rib. This injury was the beginning of her long Way of the Cross. "First, an abscess inside her formed which ruptured only after one year... Then, her incurable abscess infected the neighboring organs; worms came out of her wounds... Her right arm and right shoulder were completely rotted and dislocated." Her right eye went blind; her sickly stomach no longer accepted any solid food. Terrible boils broke out all over her body; blood constantly flowed from her nose, mouth and eyes. Ultimately, her whole body became like one wound, rotting away entirely and seemed to be split in two. Nevertheless, a pleasant odor exuded from her wounds.

The condition of St. Lidwina's body and soul was exactly the same as the mystical body of the Church of her time during the Western Schism (1378-1417). Christianity at the time was not only split by the Oriental Schism but now, in addition, by having two popes and later even three. "Even within each diocese, abbey, parish, and family the supporters of one pope or the other stood against one another. An indescribable confusion emerged, and often a great conflict of conscience, because hardly anyone

knew anymore who was the legitimate pope. St. Vincent Ferrer, for example, held to the pope in Avignon while St. Catherine of Siena stood by Urban in Rome ... The Church seemed to be falling apart. Never before she had to endure such a burden." On top of that, disputes over the Faith with Wyclif and Hus and religious wars tore Christianity apart.

Thus, visible to everyone, Lidwina carried on her body in a coredeeming manner the wounds of the split Church. Through her suffering she was able to help the Church regain unity at the Council of Constance (1414-1418).

*J*esus even granted her the stigmata as a special mark. In visions, her expiatory vocation for the unity of the Church was often shown to her under the symbol of a pretty rose bush which at first was small, but became always larger. An angel let her understand that only then when all the buds had bloomed would Lidwina's coredeeming vocation be complete. Her painful agony lasted the same length of time as the Western Schism, 38 years. When she died in 1433 at the age of 53, another miracle took place, "Her body ... which was covered with boils and which corroded by decay, shone with uncorrupted beauty and health and emitted a pleasant odor."

They suffered for the Reunification of the Orthodox Church with Rome

St. Josaphat (1580-1623)

*W*ith Josaphat we encounter a saint who suffered especially to overcome the Oriental Schism. When Josaphat was consecrated Archbishop of Polotsk, Belarus, he zealously developed a very fruitful apostolate in order to win the Orthodox, known as the ‘schismatics’, for the unity with Peter in Rome. In doing so, he ran into fierce opposition, and was cruelly persecuted as a ‘unioner’ by the Orthodox priests and faithful. In this great spiritual fight, the supplication for unity became his continuous prayer of the heart. Thus, on icy winter nights, Josaphat often went barefoot, wearing only a penance shirt, through the cemetery to a rock where he scourged himself until his feet froze in his own blood, and all the while he prayed, *“Lord and God, take away the separation and grant unification. Lord Jesus, grant us holy unity that we all may be one!”*

His homilies and writings and his wellknown meekness and goodness brought many back to the Union and his enemies, with good reason, called him the *“thief of souls.”*

In the end, however, a secret committee was formed to assassinate the young, 42-year old archbishop. On November 8, 1622, when he arrived at the city of Witebsk, he was aware of the danger and began his last homily with the words, *“The hour comes when he who kills believes he does a service to God. You residents of*

Witebsk want to kill me.... Oh, if I could only offer my life for you, for holy unity.” Four days later, on November 12, he consciously gave his life for unity. After the early morning Mass, incited adversaries burst yelling into his apartment. Josaphat, who knew that his hour had come, blessed the intruders. Even so, they beat the archbishop, who held his hands crossed over his chest in prayer, with clubs and split his head open with a butcher’s ax. The infuriated crowd defiled the dead body and finally drowned him in the river. When the saint’s body was retrieved days later, it showed no signs of decay. The body remained incorrupt for two months while they had him laid out in Polozk, the city he served as archbishop. Large crowds came to the Josaphat’s open casket and of the 74 men guilty for his death, all but one became Catholic. Even the Basilian monk and schismatic bishop Smotrytski, who started the whole rebellion and was ultimately responsible for the murder of Josaphat, converted five years later and requested acceptance in the Church united with Rome.

In the fight for ecumenism, Pope John XXIII named St. Josaphat the patron for the reunification of the Orthodox Christians with Rome. Pope Paul VI had the martyr’s incorrupt body transferred to St. Peter’s in 1963, during the Second Vatican Council. His body is a permanent sign of the way to true ecumenism.

St. Leopold Mandić

(1866-1942)

A very special and unique saint for unity is the Capuchin priest Leopold Mandić. Many knew of Fr. Leopold's desire to write a book about Mary as Coredemptrix of Mankind and as Mediatrix of all Graces. Since he had pastoral responsibility in the confessional, it never became a reality. Unfortunately, the notes he had prepared were lost.

The decisive moment of grace in his vocation happened on June 18, 1887, when he was still a student in Padua. Fifty years later, he wrote about it on a Marian prayer card, *"It is now fifty years since I first heard the voice of God calling me to pray and to work for the return of the separated Orientals to unity with the Catholics."* From this moment on, everything he did became a mission for the unity of the separated churches, especially for the conversion and return of the Slavs and Russians to the Catholic Church. He accepted the great sacrifice that he never received permission to go to the Orient. He had understood very deeply that the Lord desired the sacrificial life of a confessor as a coredeeming ransom for the salvation of the separated Orientals. He gladly said, *"Each soul which desires my priestly assistance is my Orient."*

By the way, his right hand is incorrupt. He blessed with this hand hundreds of thousands of times and gave absolution. When Padua was bombed during the Second World War, not only was a statue of the Immaculate Conception spared, but also his confessional cell. On another occasion he wrote,

"Today... when celebrating Holy Mass, I offered myself to our Lord Jesus Christ for the return of the separated Orientals to Catholic unity."

Ultimately, from the year 1905 on, Fr. Leopold made the Oriental mission his holy duty and said, *"Through a vow I unite myself with the Virgin Mother of God... I unite myself with her work for the salvation of the Orientals."* Until his death he vocally renewed his vow to the Coredemptrix hundreds of times. He also loved to write down his vow on little sheets of paper and prayer cards. If he did not have time to rewrite the vow he simply put the current date underneath. Some of the 66 remaining pictures are filled with such dates. On one of them it is written, *"I, Brother Leopold Maria Mandić Zarević, believe and confess that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, as Coredemptrix of Mankind, is the moral reason for all grace because we all have received from her abundance. Therefore, in order to fulfill my priestly ministry according to her sending for the Oriental people... I vow to give my all in every moment, to the best of my ability, with the entire offering of myself as I have decided, for the return of the separated Orient to Catholic unity."*

One year before his death, full of optimism and filled with the intentions of his heart, Fr. Leopold wrote, *"I constantly have the Orient before my eyes. I felt how the Lord invites me to celebrate the holy mysteries so that... his great promise can be fulfilled, 'Unum ovile et unus Pastor'. Without a doubt it will happen."*

Ecumenism of the Saints and of the Martyrs

Bl. Peter Paul Gojdich
(1888-1960)

*L*et us take a look at the most recent Church history, in the time of atheistic Communist persecution. Threatened by Communist tyranny, Bishop Gojdic, the Greek-Catholic bishop from the East Slovakian diocese of Preshov, gave the following courageous words at Easter in 1949, *“Suffering and struggles will not break us believers, they will not separate us from His Church. On the contrary! They will unite us even more closely with Him, the Resurrected.”* In 1950, the situation became even more acute. During the night from the 13th to the 14th of April 260 monasteries, and soon thereafter 750 cloisters, in Slovakia were liquidated. The 2,000 priests and religious and more than 10,000 nuns were brought into concentration camps. Then the bishops too were arrested.

On Good Friday 1950, they tried to persuade Bishop Gojdic to change over to the Orthodox Church. The offer was seductive; if Gojdic would renounce his unity with Rome, separate himself from the pope, and join the Orthodox Church he would immediately become the dignified Patriarch of Prague. The bishop refused, *“I am already 62-years-old and offer everything I own, my bishop’s seat as well, but under no condition will I ever give up my Faith. ... You do not ever need to come again regarding this matter.”* By choosing a way of loyal unity with Rome, he chose a true Way of the Cross. Ten years of imprisonment were the high price Bishop Gojdic paid as a true martyr of unity.

In prison, he was most horribly tortured in an effort to force him to sign a false admission of guilt. A guard who was able to flee to Austria in 1952 recalls, *“As often as we came to get him we found him praying on his knees before his table. He prayed when he was led through the hallways and even in the interrogation room. Whenever he was beaten or insulted he never defended himself, but his lips continued to whisper words of prayer and his eyes looked with compassion at the torturers.”* Guards and fellow prisoners report that at times they saw the stigmata on Bishop Gojdic. They testified that he sometimes visited dying priest in their prison cell to hear their confession. In 1952, finally, Bishop Gojdic was condemned along with two Roman Catholic brothers in the Faith, Bishop John Vojtassak and Bishop Michal Buzalka. This trial was unique in the whole history of all Communist show trials. Never and no where, not even in the Soviet Union, had the Communists dared to condemn three bishops at the same time. Gojdic received a life sentence. Once again that same year they offered him a patriarchal seat in the Orthodox Church. Like always, his decisive response was, *“It is out of the question!”* After ten years of imprisonment and indescribable tortures, this martyr of unity died as prisoner #681 having given the blessing to all friends and enemies with a happy smile.

On November 4, 2001, Pope John Paul II beatified him.

Bishop Necsey (1892-1968)

I would gladly like to mention about another Slovak bishop also, Msgr. Eduard Necsey, from Nitra, who lived under house arrest for 18 years continuously guarded by the police. He received all his strength to remain faithful to the unity with Christ and His Church especially from the Holy Eucharist, the sacrament of unity. The Eucharist grace grew so strong in him that a long-time friend, Bishop Hlouch from the Czech Republic, said, “When you were with him, you had the impression that he was always in adoration and therefore you went away

from him like from a tabernacle.” The Czechoslovakian Communist government permitted, as an exception, that the bishop could leave the country for the Second Vatican Council in Rome. At the time, one of the Council Fathers, Msgr. Dell’Aqua, said about him, “*Five minutes with Bishop Necsey were enough to know that you were dealing with a saint.*” He died on June 19, 1968, with the words, “*I offer up my suffering and death for the Holy Father and for peace in the world.*” The secret police could not prevent 30,000 faithful from coming to his funeral.

Bl. Alojzije Cardinal Stepinac (1898-1960)

*T*here would be a long list of similar heroic shepherds in Eastern Europe who were willing to suffer martyrdom for the sake of unity with the Roman Catholic Church; from Blessed Alojzije Cardinal Stepinac of Zagreb, up to the martyr, Cardinal Alexandru Todea, the symbolic figure of the Catholic Catacomb Church of Rumania. Cardinal Todea’s 14 years of indescribable suffering in different prisons and 27 years of strict house arrest could not break the bond of faithfulness to Peter in Rome. When Pope John Paul II visited Rumania in 1999, he bent down and, full of gratitude, embraced the aged Cardinal, who, moved to tears, was sitting in his wheelchair. He died on May 22, 2002, just

a few days before his 90th birthday. In view of the unity which all Christians yearn for, Pope John Paul II wrote a beautiful thought in his Apostolic Letter Tertio Millennio Adveniente, “*The Church of the first millennium was born of the blood of the martyrs: ‘Sanguis martyrum - semen christianorum’... At the end of the second millennium, the Church has once again become a Church of martyrs. ... The witness to Christ borne even to the shedding of blood has become a common inheritance of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants... Perhaps the most convincing form of ecumenism is the ecumenism of the saints and of the martyrs.*”

They offered their lives for non-believers...

St. Pierre-Louis-Marie Chanel
(1803-1841)

I would also like to mention the French Marist missionary Pierre Louis Marie Chanel who, like Damian de Veuster, was called to the South Pacific. Begrudgingly, they allowed Bishop Pompallier to bring 33-year-old Pierre Chanel to the new mission on the South Sea island Futuna. They were reluctant because they liked him so much; his bishop described him as, *“a priest with a heart of gold and a the innocent faith of a child and led the life of an angel.”*

After a long discussion among the cannibals, who had never heard anything about Christ, he and a lay brother were accepted by the chief of the island Niuliki. In spite of dedicated work among the savages, their presence was only tolerated. *“In such a difficult mission we have to be saints,”* Pierre Chanel encouraged his fellow brother. In 1839, he recounted his sparse success, *“twenty baptisms—four were adults, the rest, children, and all in the danger of death—they where the entire harvest that I was able to reap in my 18 months.”* Gradually, many inhabitants of the island became more confident in him, and they ultimately called him, *“the man with a good heart.”*

The chief, Niuliki, and his council were afraid that they would lose their reputation before the people. The missionaries and their faithful were

persecuted and tortured. Finally, when the son of the chief, Meitale, converted, the chief, who wanted to extinguish anything .

Christian, became a fatal enemy of Pierre Chanel. In April 1841, three natives came to the missionary’s hut, beat him on the head with a club and stabbed him in the chest with a lance; but Pierre Chanel, who entrusted all his missionary work to Our Lady and always prayed for the grace of martyrdom, offered no resistance. He only repeated over and over, *“This is good for me.”* One of them grabbed a hoe and split open his head.

The offering of the saint’s life broke all resistance on the island Futuna. The inhabitants asked another priest to pour *“the holy water”* over them. A short three years after the coredeeming offering of the first South Pacific martyr the Word of the Lord was fulfilled, *“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit”* (Jn 12:24). The following missionaries on Futuna were able to bring in such a rich harvest that one of them wrote to France in 1849, *“It is a paradise here where we are, in the midst of the newly baptized whose zeal fills us with sweet consolation. I do not believe that there are two happier missionaries in the whole world as us.”*

St. Alexander Sauli
(1534-1593)

*A*lexander Sauli, at the age of only 35, was consecrated Bishop of Aléria, Corsica, by his spiritual son and former student, the

31-year-old Archbishop of Milan, Charles Borromeo. What a challenge! Through repeated attacks by Algerian pirates, through bloody re-

venge, plagues and famine, the diocese was like a desert. *“You did not dare work the fields. More than 60 had been deserted and left abandoned. In a period of 30 years 28,000 horrendous murders had been committed. Upon his arrival, the saint could not even find two inhabitable rooms. In the city which served as the seat of his diocese, only the walls of the cathedral and the fort remained standing, everything else had been deserted and burned to the ground.”* Yet the young bishop understood how to reconcile the hardened and hate filled hearts of the people of Corsica with God and with each other. In less than 25 years, through his priestly self-offering, he sewed unity among his flock. It was clear to everyone that Alexander’s entire love consisted in suffering for the conversion of his people and in giving his life for the reconciliation of families fighting hopelessly against each other. Only one example of many was when, in 1576 after Alexander Sauli had been bishop for seven years already, two rival partisan groups were heavily armed and ready to fight. Recognizing the fatal danger, Alexander threw himself between the two parties seeking revenge with a pleading request to seek a peaceful solution. He was interrupted, however, by the shouting, *“We want blood, only blood! No words!”* Only after an even more insistent plea

of the bishop, the men reluctantly laid down their weapons. The saint took the hands of the two leaders and led them to a nearby chapel where he invited them to shake hands and make a sign of peace. Without any desire for reconciliation the two looked at him and returned to their people, who were already waiting with unsheathed swords for the command to attack. In this moment, something quite unusual happened. Bishop Sauli knelt down in front of those seeking revenge and with a voice stifled by tears, he turned to the enemy battle groups, *“My sons, I am the guilty one! Take your vengeance out on me! Do you want blood? Look, take mine! Take it, every bit of it, but make peace.”* No one could resist either his readiness to give himself up or the power of grace. Each one of them put down his weapon in embarrassment, went into the chapel, knelt down before the altar and asked for forgiveness. The readiness for peace between the two groups was so great that they made an oath to always help one another from this hour on. In addition, the people, who were shaking at first out of fear but then participated with amazement and grateful joy in the miracle of reconciliation, cheered their spiritual father who was venerated even during his life as the *“Guardian Angel and Patron of Corsica.”*

St. Edith Stein – Expiation for the Jewish People

*T*he holy Carmelite convert Edith Stein suffered and died in the same Auschwitz concentration camp as St. Maximilian Kolbe. The great missionary St. Paul writes to us with moving words about his readiness to be separated from Christ through damnation if this would only help his Jewish brothers to be united with Christ. *“I have great sorrow and constant anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and separated from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kin according to the flesh”* (Rm 9:2-3).

Edith Stein, Sr. Teresa Benedicta, gave her life in the same spirit for her beloved Jewish peo

ple. It is hardly a coincidence in the vocation of Edith Stein that she was born on the Jewish feast of reconciliation. That was always of special importance for her.

Our limited time does not permit me to recount Edith Stein’s conversion from a Jewish-born atheist to a Catholic Carmelite. Here, we are much more interested in her coredeeming self-offering for her people.

In 1933, shortly before she entered the Carmel in Cologne, an acquaintance of hers, who knew nothing of her Jewish heritage, told her what

American newspapers were writing about the atrocities being committed against the Jews, "Now all of a sudden the truth began to dawn on me, that once again God had laid his heavy hand upon his people and the fate of this people was also my own." Edith Stein had deeply understood her coredeeming vocation because, when she wrote, "There exists a vocation to suffer with Christ and thus to cooperate in His work of redemption. When we are united with the Lord then we are members of the mystical body of Christ; Christ continues to live in his members and suffers in them continuously; and this suffering carried in union with the Lord is His suffering, placed within the great work of redemption, and therein fruitful. It is a basic thought in all religious life, but especially in the Carmel, to stand up for the sinner through free and joyful suffering and to cooperate in the redemption of humanity." Therefore, Sr. Benedicta asked her Mother Superior for permission to offer herself to God, "as an expiatory offering for true peace,"

and writes in full awareness, "Already now I joyfully accept the death which God intended for me. I asked to the Lord that He may accept my suffering and death ... as expiation for the lack of faith among the Jewish people and that the Lord may be accepted by His own people." Sr. Benedicta was in silent adoration on the afternoon of August 2, 1942 when the Gestapo came and, in less than ten minutes, pulled her and her sister Rosa Stein away from the Echter Carmel in the Netherlands. A woman was able to come close enough to the two that she clearly understood Sr. Benedicta's words to her crying sister, "Come, we are going for our people." Edith Stein consciously went this Way of the Cross together with the Coredeematrix because she had already understood earlier, "The Savior is not alone on the Way of the Cross ... Our Lady is the first example of all those who follow the Cross in all." "In the work of redemption, next to the new Adam, we once again see the new Eve as Coredeematrix."

Three Lives Offered for the Reunification of the Anglicans with Rome

St. Edmund Campion
(1540-1581)

Since the Third International Symposium on Marian Coredeemtion is taking place once again on English ground, it is a pleasure for me to mention at least three of the innumerable martyrs and confessors who gave their life for the reunification of the Anglican Church with Rome. The Jesuit priest Edmund Campion, John Henry Cardinal Newman and the Trappist Sister Gabriella dell'Unità. Only after he was ordained an Anglican dea-

con, the 29-year-old Edmund Campion became aware, through studying the great Fathers of the Church, how much the Church of England was going astray from the tradition of the Faith. After having experienced the trial and execution of Blessed John Storey, he decided to flee from England to the mainland in order to become a Catholic priest. Hearing about the Jesuit's fruitful work, he entered their order. Campion and his fellow country-

man, Robert Persons, then received the papal command in 1580 to return once again to England and to work there as the first Jesuit missionaries. Both went with the full readiness to suffer and even die for this sublime goal. Always in disguise and under persecution, Fr. Campion traveled in a short time to all the counties of the land and wrote the superior general in Rome, *“Each day I am traveling somewhere. The harvest is wonderfully large... In the long run though, I am unable to avoid the hands of the heretics... Occasionally, I read in letters the news that they already caught Campion and then when I arrive somewhere I hear so much about it, that I am so afraid that I lose my fear.”* His famous work ‘Decem Rationes’ (Ten Reasons), in which he defends the truth of the Catholic Faith, sold out 400,000 copies in a short period of time.

Ultimately, betrayed by a certain Eliot, he was thrown in the Tower of London (July 15, 1581), where he had to endure unspeakable tortures. Yet he knew for what he was suffering—for unity, for the return of the Anglicans to the bosom of Mother Church. When Fr. Edmund Campion, together with two other witnesses to the Faith, Alexander Briant and Ralph Sherwin, was, before a large crowd of people, hanged in the gallows and terribly quartered, something happened which makes apparent the life-giving connection between coredeeming suffering and conversion. Campion’s blood squirted like a *“living testament”* on a young man named Henry Walpole, a poet. From this second on, he began another life. He sailed across the sea, became a Jesuit and, 13 years later, suffered for his Faith in the gallows of York the same death as Fr. Edmund Campion.

Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-1890)

With venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman we meet a pioneer and prophetic voice of the Second Vatican Council. One of his most significant contributions in this regard was his Marian theology and spirituality, his understanding of Mary’s cooperation in the „*economia salutis*“. Jean Guittou, a good friend of Paul VI’s, remarked once that Cardinal Newman should be considered the „Doctor Marianus“ of the nineteenth century. No wonder. He did not hesitate to speak about Mary as Coredemptrix.

I think he was able to enter into the mystery of coredemption not only because he was a great scholar, but also because his personal experience taught him so. Henry Newman did not have the stigmata, nor was he tortured in prisons and yet he suffered a martyrdom for

unity. Many years of agony began when he, faithful to his conscience, became Catholic. By making this step towards unity with the Catholic Church not only did he lose the love of his family but that of his friends too. Even in public, heavy criticisms, insults and ridicule awaited him. His path in the Catholic Church was a distressing tragedy. *“I had more trials and suffering as a Catholic than as an Anglican. Nevertheless, not for a moment I wished to return.”* *“Sometimes the weight of the responsibility and abandonment lies so heavily upon me, that there could not be a greater pain.”* He suffered much because of misunderstandings, jealousy and spiteful rejection.

The mistrust often shown him by the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Manning and many other bishops was especially

humiliating for Newman. A Roman prelate of the time wrote, "Newman is the most dangerous man in England...his spirit has to be crushed."

Newman himself once pronounced these words filled with sorrow: "I have no friend at Rome, I have laboured in England, to be misrepresented, backbitten and scorned. I have laboured in Ireland, with a door ever shut in my face." This spiritual martyrdom for unity lasted twenty years. Newman's loyalty was remarkable! In his parochial sermon *Affliction, A School of Comfort* he describes the coredeeming value of suffering:

"When a man in whom dwells His grace is lying on the bed of suffering or when he has been stripped of his friends and is solitary, he has, in a peculiar way, tasted of the powers of the world to come, and exhorts and consoles with authority. ... at least we may have the blessed certainty that we are made instruments for the consolation of others ... at least we may allow ourselves to believe that we are at present evidently blessed by being made subservient to His purposes of mercy to others ... just as St. Paul

was consecrated by suffering to be an Apostle of Christ; by chastisements, by selfdenials for his brethren's sake, by his forlorn, solitary life."

Henry Newman lived unnoticed and practically forgotten as a modest priest and Latin teacher when, once again, unexpectedly he was slandered and attacked. He responded to Charles Kingsley's written accusation in his fascinating masterpiece *Apologia pro Vita sua*. In it, he recounted his entire career as a convert so sincere and convincing that from one moment to the next he was acclaimed all throughout England. "The *Apologia*, which concluded with a prayer for the reunification of the Faith, dispersed many prejudices against the Catholic Church and brought about a movement of conversion."

In February of 1878, when Leo XIII was elected pope, he was asked which line he would take up for his pontificate. He answered: "Wait until you have seen my first Cardinal. You will then understand what will be the specific characteristic of my pontificate." And "his Cardinal" was John Henry Newman.

Bl. Maria Gabriella dell'Unità

(1914 - 1939)

The life of the 25-year-old Maria Gabriella dell'Unità from Sardinia leads us to the Italian Trappist cloister in Grottaferrata. Through the encouragement of the French priest, Paul Couturier, a fervent apostle for unity, the Trappist nuns in Grottaferrata observe every year from January 18th to the 25th, so from the former Feast of the Chair of Peter to the Feast of the Conversion of Paul, the octave of prayer for unity among Christians. On Sunday, January 17, 1937, the abbess Madre Pia Gullini encouraged her sisters to make an effort during the upcoming Week of Unity, also through sacrifices, for this intention lying close to Jesus' heart. Urged by this request to make sacrifices for the reunification of Christians, 76-year-old Sr. Immacolata offered God her life. God accepted her offering, and

Sr. Immacolata died already one month later. When the week of prayer came the following year, 1938, it was now Sr. Maria Gabriella who, following an inner call, wanted to offer her life in the same way for the unity of Christians. She said to her abbess, "It seems to me that the Lord really wants this. I feel urged to do it, even though I do not want to think about it." With the permission of her superior, Sr. Maria Gabriella gave herself to the Lord in a silent act of self-offering and later admitted, "From that day on, I was never again without suffering." It began with a small irritation in her shoulder which quickly aggravated her general condition though, and the hospital diagnosed it as Tuberculosis. She wrote her superior how deeply she understood in the hospital "that the glorification of God and being a victim for the unity

does not consist of doing great things but rather in the complete offering of one's self." After six weeks in the hospital, the ill sister was allowed to return to the cloister. The Week of Unity came in 1939, as did a circular letter from Fr. Courturier. In his letter he shared that during this Octave, more and more people from all Christian confessions are united in prayer and even in the desire to give their lives "with the burning desire to finally find the way back to the unity of all Christians as Christ had desired." In Grottaferrata, only the abbess knew about Sr. Maria Gabriella offering her life. Towards the end of Lent, after 13 months of serious illness, as Gabriella awaited death with a gentle smile,

her spiritual mother asked her once again, "Do you offer it all for unity?" "Yes, everything," she clearly remarked. She died on April 23, 1939, Good Shepherd Sunday and it is written in the Gospel, "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ...and there will be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:11, 16b).

During the lifetime of Gabriella, the Trappist of Grottaferrata lived a close spiritual unity with the Benedictines of the Anglican abbey Nashdom. In a short period of time after her death, Gabriella became well known and loved through these Anglican Benedictines. They gladly call her "the little sister."

For the Conversion of their Murderer

Elisaveta Feodorova

(1864 - 1918)

Princess Elisabeth from Hessen, Germany was, with Empress Sissy from Austria, one of the most beautiful women of her time, and also a deep believer. Since she came from a protestant upbringing, only later converted to the Orthodox Church because of her conviction, and is little known in Catholic circles, I would also like to present this noble woman as a wonderful model of lived forgiveness and reconciliation.

Her famous grandma, Queen Victoria, raised Elisabeth, who was the older sister of the last Russian Czaritza, Alexandra Feodorovna Romanov. Even though the future German Emperor Wilhelm II was also among Elisabeth's suitors, she lovingly married the Great Russian Prince Sergej Aleksandrovic, the brother of the Czar, when she was 19.

She lived a beautifully harmonic marriage for 19 happy years. Yet the joyful and beneficent Elisaveta, as she was now called, would not be preserved from a terrible trial. On February

17, 1905, a bomb exploded not far from the apartment of the Great Prince and Princess. This planned assassination by revolutionary Ivan Kaljaev killed Great Prince Sergej, his body was literally torn to pieces. Elisaveta hurried immediately to the scene and, kneeling in the snow with immense self-control, silently salvaged the bloody pieces of her husband.

Elisaveta then did something that many in her time did not understand. She visited the assassin, her husband's murderer, in prison to bring him to repentance. "I have come to bring you my husband's forgiveness," she said calmly and she gave him a bible and a small icon. That was not enough however. Elisaveta sold all her jewelry and valuable possessions and used the money to found the Orthodox Marta-Mary Convent, a convent which was totally new and futuristic for Russia. Like her patron saint Elisabeth from Thuringen, she dedicated herself to the poor and the sick. This sister of the

Czaritza walked the streets of Moscow begging and taking care of the needy in the poor quarter. She was a revolution in the aristocracy and a problem for the police who had no idea how to protect the Great Princess.

On one side, Elisaveta was a member of the ruling family and on the other side a representative of the Church who disproved through her great religious and social influence the ideology that *“Religion is the opium of the people.”* This combination made her a double thorn in the Bolsheviks’ side. On the night between July 17 and 18, 1918, therefore, she was killed with Lenin’s approval in Siberia with other members of the Czarist family. They were all shoved into a 200-foot deep, unused well which had walls supported by beams. They pushed Elisaveta in first. She made the sign of the cross repeatedly and prayed continuously with a loud voice, *“Lord, forgive them! They know not what they do.”* Her relatives followed her.

The Great Princess fell about 50 feet before landing on one of the main beams. Later, they found next to her remains also those of a prince with whom she was deeply united spiritually. He was found with a bandage wrapped

around his head which Elisaveta, herself dying, had made for him with a piece of her clothing. A farmer testified later what took place. He clearly heard Elisaveta’s unceasing, loud prayers, and the severely wounded sang for a long time.

When the murderers heard that their victims were not dead, they dropped bombs in the well in order to cover up their crime. When this did not silence the singing and praying, they laid branches over the well and lit them on fire in order to suffocate the victims with smoke. One of the murders later told about the crime himself.

Their bodies were found in the beginning of October. The Great Princess Elisaveta was found with the three fingers of her right hand together as the Orthodox hold them for making the sign of the cross. After an adventurous journey, she was finally buried in the Garden of Olives in Jerusalem in 1921. A monastery is being built over the site of her murder and the convent that she founded in Moscow is being opened again, both as a sign of the forgiving love, God’s mercy, which Elisaveta Feodorovna lived so deeply that the Russian Orthodox Church canonized her in 1992.

Lord, forgive them!
They know not what they do.

St. Maria Goretti (1890-1902)

The Italian St. Maria Goretti is an especially nice example of how our response can have grace-filled effects on others. The daughter of large, poor land-working family, she was only 11 years old and had received her First Holy Communion just five weeks earlier when she was killed by her 20-year-old, corrupt neighbor Alessandro Serenelli because she would not do what he wanted. Even her murderer confessed, *"I knew her to be nothing but good."*

Critically injured with 14 deep stabbing wounds, which Alessandro had made with a 10-inch knife, and severe contusions from the foregone fight, she was brought dying to the hospital in Nettuno. She bravely endured an operation without anesthetic. With great pain she kept crying out, *"Mama, Madonna, aiutami!"* (Mama, Blessed Mother, help me!)

The hospital chaplain, who saw that Maria would not live long, brought her a cross and asked her the decisive question, *"Maria, will you forgive Alessandro with your whole heart, like Jesus forgave those who crucified him?"* Maria fought silently with herself for a few seconds and then she replied, *"Yes, I also forgive him out of love for Jesus, and I desire for him to be with me in paradise. May God forgive him because I have also forgiven him."*

These words of forgiveness were enough to prove the greatness of this holy child who continually repeated these words until the end.

What about Alessandro Serenelli? Eight years after the bloody attack, he converted in prison when he had a dream where Maria Goretti, in a field of flowers, offered him some white lilies which then burned up in his hand. When he was released from prison 32 years after the drama, he went and knocked on the door of Maria Goretti's mother. *"Do you remember me still, Assunta?"* *"Of course my son!"* *"Do you forgive me, Assunta?"* *"Maria forgave you. God forgave you! How could I not forgive you?"* At the Christmas Mass, they were seen in the Church of the Sorrowful Mother, kneeling side by side at the communion rail. Yes, Mama Assunta even brought him into her family circle. He did decades of penance with the Capuchins as *"Fra Stefano"* and wrote in an apology, *"I beg the world forgiveness for the evil deed which I committed against Martyr Maria Goretti and against purity."* Alessandro died in 1970 at age 88 fully reconciled with God.

In his impressive testament it is written, *"Maria Goretti, today a saint, was the good angel which providence placed at my side. Her words of forgiveness are still ingrained. She prayed for me, she made intercessions for me, for me her murderer! Thirty years of prison followed... Maria in that time was really my light, my protectress; with her help I behaved well and I tried to be honest when I left the prison... The Capuchins accepted me with seraphic love, not as a servant but as a brother... Now I wait patiently to see God, then to embrace my beloved, to be with my guardian angel and her lovely mama, Assunta."*

A Living Gospel of Suffering as TOTUS TUUS

Pope John Paul II.

You could make this list of saints as long as you want. However, I would like to add only our beloved Holy Father as a special, contemporary example. Thirteen years after the assassination attempt, he had to return once again to the Gemelli Clinic after a fall, and he said the following meaningful words at his May 29, 1994 Angelus address, *“Through Cardinal Wyszynski I understood that I have to lead the Church of Christ into this third millennium through prayer and different initiatives, yet I have recognized at the same time that this is not enough. She has to be led there through suffering, through the assassination attempt 13 years ago and with this new sacrifice...so that every family and the world can see that there exists, so to say, a higher Gospel, the Gospel of suffering with which we have to prepare ... the future, the third millennium. I wanted to add this thought*

... at the end of this Marian month, because I owe this gift to the Mother of God, and I thank her for it.”

We are all called to coredemption and our suffering carried in love becomes a source of grace. The Holy Father also shows this during the beatification of the two children from Fatima, Jacinta and Francesco. He extolled their heroic readiness to endure anything Our Lady desired, *“No mortification or penance seemed too great to save sinners.”*

John Paul II did not hesitate to apply the famous words of St. Paul to Jacinta, a child, *“She could well exclaim with St Paul: „I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church. (Col 1:24)”*

A dogma for which we must suffer The Coredemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate

To conclude, I absolutely want to refer to the important Messages of Amsterdam which I was permitted to speak about at the last two International Symposiums. On May 31, 2002, the Bishop of Haarlem-Amsterdam, His Excellency, Jozef Maria Punt, published a letter, to the delight of countless believers on all continents, in which he confirmed the supernatural

origin and thus the authenticity of the apparitions and the messages.

In these so-called Messages of Amsterdam, the Lady of All Nations asks for a dogma through which she should be honored and crowned as Coredemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate. The effect of such a dogmatic proclamation will

be beneficial for the Church and for the whole world, because it will grant the long yearned-for unity which all the saints in the history of the Church have pleaded and coredemptively suffered for. Unity will be granted through this dogma, because it will bring Mary our Mother precisely there where God placed her on Pentecost, in the Upper Room—in the midst of the Apostles as Mother of the Church and all nations. Also, in this time, she will now unite the Church and the nations in the Holy Spirit, for she herself says, “Realize why I come as the Lady of All Nations. I come in order to bring all nations together in the Spirit, in the true Holy Spirit” (Dec. 8, 1952). “The Church, the sheep, have been scattered and still more will take to flight. The Lady of All Nations, however, will bring them back into one fold” (March 19, 1952). “This great day was chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ for the Lady of All Nations. She may bring her nations to unity. She may gather her nations into one large community” (May 31, 1955). In beautiful visions, the visionary Ida Peerdeman (1905-

1996) saw a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit and as a result the renewal of the Church, the reconciliation and unity among nations.

The great French mystic Marthe Robin (1902-1981) also saw this Pentecost. She called it “*the new Pentecost of Love*”. For this, fifty years she bore the wounds of the Lord and suffered a continuous passion. During all these years of coredemptive suffering she lived without nourishment, only from the strength of the Holy Eucharist. She died 21 years ago on February 6, 1981.

In Amsterdam, the MOTHER AND LADY OF ALL NATIONS gave a powerful pray together with her image which she asked to be spread throughout the world, as once the Miraculous Medal, as a preparation for the Dogma. I would like to conclude with this beautiful prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit:

*Lord Jesus Christ,
Son of the Father, send now Your Spirit over the earth.
Let the Holy Spirit live in the hearts of all nations,
that they may be preserved from degeneration,
disaster and war.
May the Lady of All Nations, who once was Mary,
be our Advocate.*

Amen.

Lord make of me someone according to your will

(St. Albert the Great)

*F*atima and Loreto – at these two important Marian shrines eight brothers from our spiritual family were ordained to the priesthood last year. All of them placed their priesthood under the special care of Our Lady.

On October 28, Archbishop John J. Myers from the Archdiocese of Newark (USA), in the presence of Bishop Paul Maria Hnilica, administered the sacrament of holy orders to two Americans and one Slovak: Fr. Gregory White and his brother Fr. Gabriele Maria White and Fr. Juan Maria Tulla.

A few weeks later, on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12, another five deacons were ordained in Loreto at the hands of Bishop Paul Maria Hnilica. Bishop Edward Kojnok from the Diocese of Roznava (Slovakia) also

made a special trip. It was especially impressive, in the same place where Mary first spoke her fiat and where God became man, to hear of each of them say yes: Fr. Bonaventura Garofalo (USA), Fr. Francesco DePuydt (USA), Fr. Georg Josef Erhart (Germany), Fr. Maximilian Maria Schwarzbauer (Austria) and Fr. Albert Maria Welnitz (Slovakia).

More than 700 relatives and friends came in from all over the world. Many among them had been praying and making sacrifices for years for these newly ordained priests.

The Bishop of Loreto, His Excellency Angelo Comastri, graciously greeted all those present. After the festive lunch, he expressed his joy for the newly ordained and told us we are always welcome in Loreto.

We have you to thank!

*W*hen someone had said to me before I was 31 years old, “*You are going to be a priest some day...*” I would have answered, “*Not me, you’re crazy!*” Yet on June 4, 1991, God gave me such an extraordinary grace of conversion that it literally turned upside down all my previous values (esoteric) and goals (career).

It is still fascinating for me that God could reach me at a time when I was very successfully studying at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Germany, and that I did not need to have a crisis before I experienced Him in my life. Therefore I am convinced that my conversion was prayed for from the beginning with the aim being the priesthood. Only three weeks after my conversion, Jesus knocked with the desire of the priesthood on my heart when in prayer

I read the scripture passage, “*Some are incapable... because they have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this ought to accept it.*” (Mt. 19:12). I closed the Bible then and said to Jesus, “*I don’t get it!*” And yet I could never really push it out of my mind.

From 1988 to 1990 I lived in an apartment in Los Angeles where one of my neighbors was a nearly 90-year-old woman who lived alone. She was always telling me about the apparitions of Mary in Medjugorje and wanted to convince me to go there. She gave me Rosaries and told me that she prays for me. I thought back then only, “*Old ladies need that.*” Today I know that I probably have her to thank not only for my conversion but for a good part of my priesthood as well.

Two years later I was given the tremendous grace to decide for the priesthood. When I shared this with my parents, I heard my mom say to my dad a short time later, “*Your mother would be so happy now because she had always prayed that one of her 4 boys would desire to be a priest some day.*” Her first son died in the war and the other three, one of which was my father, decided to be married.

God let the grace from the prayers of my grandma, who died in 1969, bear fruit in her grandchildren. A special support for me during my two years of discernment was my prayer group in Munich. They felt early on after they had met me that perhaps Jesus would entrust a vocation to me to follow Him more closely, and they prayed for this intention without me knowing about it.

Fr. Georg Josef Erhart

*Look into My merciful heart
and reflect its mercy in your own heart and deeds*

Jesus to St. Faustina

*G*ladly I think back on the last telephone call with my grandfather who, on his deathbed and in tears, told me that he desired to offer up his illness that I may become a holy priest. I have no doubt that his suffering was a source of grace for me which made it possible on the day of my ordination to give my life to God in

a totally new way. In Loreto, in the same house where Mary gave her undivided yes to God’s plan, I also spoke my yes for the priesthood. May her self-offering become always more my self-offering so that, as it did in her life, the heart of Jesus may also begin to beat in my heart.

Fr. Maximilian Maria Schwarzbauer

*W*hen I celebrated my first Holy Mass, it was in the Holy House of Loreto with my family. It was in that very same house that my parents gave me away completely nine years before. They gave me back to God and entrusted me to him through the hands of His mother. But they also did much more. My parents were the ones who first fostered a vocation in me through their example and prayer. They have continued to support me over the years with their prayers and encouragement. The road to

my vocation has not been easy on them, but they have always borne me and helped me to stay faithful to the vocation that God has given me. Were it not for them, I would never have heard and answered the call of God, and were it not for them, my steps would have long ago faltered. It is therefore understandable that it was with tears in my eyes that I celebrated that first Mass with my family in the very place where they and Our Lady gave their yes to the will of God.

Fr. Francesco DePuydt

Our Lady accompanied, and I could even say taught me, during my entire preparation for the priesthood. Since I was a novice, I had the silent wish of one day being ordained a priest in Loreto since that is where Mary received the Divine High Priest. And my wish would be fulfilled! Here in the Holy House I was even able to celebrate my first Holy Mass.

I would especially like to thank my mother and father for their example and for their prayer. I still remember very well how

during the time of persecution they prayed with us children every evening. The roots of my priesthood are surely found there.

Since my decision to become a priest, Our Lady has been my whole surety and guarantee. I always trusted that I am loved and carried by her. Therefore I give her my priesthood and turn over my whole future to her.

Fr. Albert Maria Welnitz

Dear Mother of Saving Grace, I will do everything with confidence and without fear because you are my strength and boast in the Lord." I desire that these words of St. Bonaventura mark my whole priestly life.

I would like to thank my parents in a special way because, like many others, they have faithfully accompanied me with their prayers to this day of my ordination. We have a tradition in America where the bride at her wedding throws her bouquet into the crowd of girls who are her dear friends. Whoever catches it, we say, will be the next one to be married.

My mom laid her bouquet at the foot of the statue of Our Lady in the Church. By doing this, she entrusted her future children to our heavenly mother, and she prayed, "*If I ever have children, may they belong to you!*" She herself needed Our Lady's help so much when she was little because she was adopted twice. I am convinced that Mary answered my earthly mother's prayer by calling me to be her priest in the Family of Mary Coredeptrix.

Fr. Bonaventura Garofalo

When Yahweh revealed Jeremiah's vocation, the prophet answered fearfully, "*Ah, Lord God! I said, 'I know not how to speak; I am too young.' But the Lord answered me, 'Say not I am too young. To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak.'*" (Jer. 1:6).

This passage, which was the first reading at our ordination, gave me a great trust as I prepare to go on mission in a few weeks. I have entrusted all my priestly work in South America to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Fr. Juan Maria Tulla

*I*t was tremendous to be ordained in the Year of the Rosary, as declared by the Holy Father, in the month of the Rosary, October, at the shrine of the Queen of the Rosary, Fatima. It was special because the first ordinations in our community took place there 11 years ago, and it was the Feast of Apostles Simon and Jude, brothers, and I was with my brother Fr. Gabriele.

Through the example, prayers and love of him and the rest of my family, natural and spiritual, and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I am able to give thanks to God today that I am a priest.

Fr. Gregory White

*T*here are very few words, I suppose, that would suitably describe these special days of grace. It was such a beautiful gift to be ordained in Fatima, and that together with my brother Fr. Gregory and my dear friend Fr. Juan. We live a beautiful unity—something essential for all priests. It was also so wonderful that both of our

families could be there together. As for how I felt during the ceremony and the days following, and actually ever since the ordination: It was as if I had always been a priest. Celebrating Holy Mass and standing at the altar seemed to be the most normal thing for me. I guess when someone finds his place in the world, doing what he loves, he could not feel better.

Fr. Gabriele Maria White