



A Catholic Magazine on the Holy Angels | Vol 7 • issue 3 • 2016 | £ 2,00 € 2,50 \$ 5,00 | ISSN 2081-5077

The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

Year of Mercy

**Sins against
the Holy Spirit**

**God heals
through St Michael**

**Divine Mercy
in Papua New Guinea**

Angels of the hospital wards

**A new heart from
Merciful Jesus**

There is no top limit to trust, and this word 'trust' was one of the key words in the diary of St Faustina.



It is pleasing to God that the soul has living faith and living trust. Therefore, it is important to feed our soul by reading the writings of St Faustina because by not feeding our souls we will become weaker day by day spiritually. Faith comes from hearing; so when people do not listen to the word of God or if we do not read spiritual books, people can become influenced by the secular world of today. We have to protect and defend our souls from it by persevering in prayer, faith and trust. Trust is a dynamic active word.

St Faustina wanted everyone to experience the love of God and each word written in the Diary is so precious. One of the most frequent words written is 'love', her love for God and His love for us and all of mankind.

St Faustina did not fear Jesus because she knew of his mercy first hand.

Jesus loves us and is helping us to grow in trust and mercy. In His goodness He instructed St Michael to protect St Faustina because of her special mission on earth to write the Diary, which is the main source of knowledge of the Divine Mercy.

In the diary the angels are mentioned at least 70 times. St John Paul II wrote "I have a particular devotion to my guardian angel. I have prayed to him since my childhood.

My guardian angel knows what I do. My faith in his presence and care is deep. St Michael the Archangel, St Gabriel and St Raphael are those angels I often call out for in my prayers."

There is a renewal of interest in St Michael the Archangel and many people want to become followers of the devotion to him and become knights.

Jesus wanted St Faustina to become a knight and fight for the salvation of souls. If you become more advanced in the Divine Mercy spirit, it makes you become more courageous and you know then that this is a spiritual fight and it is not easy. St Faustina had a daily battle. The first rule of the spiritual fight is to have faith in victory. Many people are taking up this battle and we can call on God because of our trust in Him and that we trust that St Michael will help us. Jesus I trust in you.

I assure you of the constant daily prayers of the priests of the Congregation of St Michael the Archangel for all our readers and their families. Please let others know about this magazine and help us to distribute it all over the world.

God bless you.

Fr Peter Prusakiewicz CSMA
Marki, Nr Warsaw, Poland

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The Angels

Messengers from a loving God

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Joy and Mercy

Pope Francis visited Krakow, Poland from 27th to 31st July 2016 for the occasion of the World Youth Day. He celebrated Mass at Jasna Gora Monastery in Czestochowa, Poland's most revered pilgrimage site. His Holiness also visited the former Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

People availed themselves to designated areas for confession, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Way of the Cross. There were conferences held in churches throughout Kraków led by bishops and archbishops, worshipping God through prayers, praise, music and art.

Pope Francis held an evening prayer vigil preceding the concluding

Mass celebration at the Campus Misericordie in Brzegi near Krakow where nearly three million people, mainly international youth, gathered to hear his address and pray in communion with Catholics from almost 200 countries around the world. It was announced that Panama will be the host of the next WYD in 2019.



The Year of Mercy and sins against the Holy Spirit

In the Bull *Misericordiae vultus* announcing the Extraordinary Year of Mercy (8 Dec 2015 – 20 Nov 2016), Pope Francis wrote: “During Lent in this Holy Year, I intend to send out Missionaries of Mercy. They will be a sign of the Church’s maternal concern for the People of God, to allow it to enter into the richness of this mystery which is fundamental to our Faith. These will be priests who will be granted the authority to forgive sins reserved for the Holy See, in order to emphasise the significance of their mission.”

The Holy Father has sent Missionaries of Mercy into the world who have extraordinary authority to release people from sin and punishment. What are the particular snares of sin from which sinners are to be released? No doubt both the missionaries and penitents will learn the answers to these questions in due course. To be honest, every priest knows that this will not be a power which he does not possess at present. Such power and authority has been an integral part of the sacramental priesthood from its inception. It will genuinely be a time of a particularly generous outpouring of Divine Mercy to sinners. It is worth asking the question how the new powers granted to these Missionaries of the Sacrament of Reconciliation by Christ’s Representative relate to the sins which Jesus himself said could not be forgiven: “And so I tell you,

every one of men’s sins and blasphemies will be forgiven, but blasphemies against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either in this world or in the next” (Matthew 12:31-31).

What about these sins? What about these sinners?

Most importantly, we need to answer the question of what is a sin against the Holy Spirit? Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation on sin and reconciliation, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, answered this question as follows: “Jesus himself speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which will not be forgiven because it is a stubborn rejection of, and failure to convert towards the love of the Father of Mercy. It is obvious that we are here concerned with an extreme and radical case of rejection of God and His Grace and



■ The Holy Spirit as a dove, by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, in the apse of St Peter’s Basilica

therefore of opposition to the very concept of redemption, by means of which a person consciously chooses to exclude themselves from the path of forgiveness”. The Catechism of the Catholic Church throws further light on the words of Jesus: The Mercy of God knows no bounds, but the person who consciously does not accept Divine Mercy with a penitent heart rejects the forgiveness of his/her sins and the salvation which is the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Pope John Paul II, *Dominum et vivificantem* 46). Such hardness of heart may lead to a final lack of penitence and to everlasting damnation (1864).

Is it therefore one sin or more than one?

To answer this question Pope John Paul II referred to the best brain on this subject, that is St Thomas Aquinas. St Thomas, on the other hand, refers to St Augustine in setting out six sins against the Holy Spirit (*Summa Theologica* II 9.14. a2). What they have in common is the rejection of a fundamental truth about God or man, made in God's image and likeness:

1. DESPAIR. This is an attitude which rejects Divine Mercy. A person fails to believe that God loves them even in the most tragic situations. The most painful consequence is the very negation of life – suicide.

2. CONCEIT (conceited audacity). This sin is based on the rejection of a belief in a Just God. Such a person is fully aware that he/she persists in sin but has no intention of amendment. They seem to be saying: "I have sinned once again but I have come to no harm".

3. LACK OF PENANCE. This is a failure to take sins from the past seriously. The lack of a spirit to penitence can even render the sacrament of penance invalid. Such a person seems to be saying: "It is my business to sin and God's to forgive me".

4. STUBBORNNESS AND OBEDURACY. This attitude is to do with past sin, to situations where a person is living in mortal sin which is a source of scandal and outrage to many, but, despite this, has no intention to amendment.

5. OPPOSITION TO REVEALED TRUTH. This is the attitude of a person who is living in an unethical manner

but who justifies this sin by attacking revealed truth. St Paul described such people as follows: "The anger of God is being revealed from heaven against all the impiety and depravity of men who keep truth imprisoned in their wickedness. For what can be known about God is perfectly plain to them since God himself has made it plain. Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity – however invisible – have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made. That is why such people are without excuse: they know God and yet refused to honour him as God or to thank him; instead they made nonsense out of logic and their empty minds were darkened. The more they called themselves philosophers, the more stupid they grew" (Romans 1: 18-22).

6. JEALOUSY OF GRACES GRANTED TO OTHER PEOPLE. St Thomas reiterates the view of St Augustine that this is a distinctly devilish sin, with which the devil tempted Adam and Eve in Paradise: "You will be like gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Satan, who has lost heaven, will be forever jealous of people who can attain it. What is more, St Thomas Aquinas writes that jealousy directed against our fellow man or woman "always acts to restrict the growth of grace throughout the entire world". It is jealousy which lies behind attacks directed against the Church, against priests and religious, against fervent Catholics and is behind the persecution of Christians in general.

Is there a possibility that such sins will be forgiven in the Extraordinary Year of Mercy?

Pope Francis makes no mention of these in his exhortation *Misericordiae*

vultus. He does not do so, because not even the Pope can alter the words of Jesus. The Pope does, however, call us to show mercy to our neighbour, an attitude most akin to God's attitude to us. The Holy Father reminds us that "Blessed are the merciful for they shall have mercy shown them" (Matthew 5:7). This blessing should be our inspiration in this Holy Year. We note that in the Bible, the word mercy is key to describing God's attitude to us. God's children should love in the same way as the Father loves us. As he is merciful, so we are also called to show mercy to one another. The main plank of the life of the Church is mercy".

What then is the fate of those who sin against the Holy Spirit?

Once again, Pope John Paul II addresses words of encouragement to us: "We should entertain the hope – he teaches us – that there are few who will wish to remain in revolt against God, who, nevertheless, as St John says, is greater than our hearts and is fully capable of overcoming our psychological and spiritual objections. As St Thomas Aquinas wrote, we cannot maintain doubts (to the potential salvation) of anyone in this life, taking into account God's mercy and omnipotence. Despite all this, faced with the problem of the meeting of a rebellious human will with a God of limitless justice, it is difficult not to experience redemptive feelings of fear and trembling, as suggested of St Paul, while the words of Jesus regarding sin which cannot be forgiven, reinforces the belief in the existence of sins which can bring eternal damnation to the sinner" (*Reconciliatio et paenitentia* 170).

Fr Ryszard Andrzejewski CSMA

Angels of the hospital wards

Picket lines, strikes and low pay is the picture of nurses frequently presented by the media. We seldom consider how nurses feel after spending 12-hour shifts working with people who are sick and dying. Who else has the opportunity to observe the mystery of people's passing into the next world at such close quarters?

What made you want to serve the sick and suffering? Was it a decision of the head or of the heart, motivated perhaps by faith or a sense of vocation?

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

Today I realise that it was all part of God's plan, although I have only become conscious of this in looking back. I very much wanted to be a nurse, even as a small child in my third or fourth year of primary school. It was unfortunate, however, that just when I was finishing primary school was the very time when we in Poland were closing sixth form colleges which specialised in nursing. I therefore went to a general sixth form college, following which I wanted to study psychology but didn't get a university place. And so, motivated primarily by practical considerations, I went to nursing college instead. I realised that, after just two and a half years, I would already be qualified and have a career and could go on to study psychology once I had a job as a nurse. Divine Providence, however, dictated otherwise, and I remained as a nurse. I think this was part of God's plan and

am now glad that things turned out as they did, as I am very fulfilled in my career.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

Much the same is true of me. Looking back, I think that God wished me to take this particular path. I have certainly never regretted my choice or wanted to change my profession, although there have obviously been moments when I have had enough, but that is just how things are in life.

Sister Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

I can't separate my calling as a nurse from that of my calling as a religious. It is part and parcel of the charism of my order, the Sisters of St Francis of the Suffering. My sense of having a vocation to the consecrated life came very early, and I entered the order after my eighth year of primary education. I clearly remember one of the Franciscan sisters visiting my school at our school retreat. She spoke very movingly and convincingly, telling us that the religious life was a wonderful adventure lived out with God. I wanted to get a taste of that adventure. I was aware of what I

was taking on and that the charism of my order was working with the sick. It was only many years later that my mother dared to tell me that she had prayed that one of her children would choose the consecrated life, and that she had most clearly visualised me in that role (laughs).

Does the experience of constant contact with human suffering and death, and the despair of families following the loss of their loved ones, not weaken your belief in the goodness of God?

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

It is probably hard for a person with a deep and true faith to lose that faith in such a situation. Working on a cancer ward, I constantly observe people passing from this world to the next. Few people have the chance to participate so closely in this mystery. It can be difficult and harrowing, but I am always consoled by the thought that for that particular patient, their suffering is at an end. It is often harder to watch the grief of those who are left behind.



■ Magdalena Swierczewska



■ Sr Teresa Toczydlowska



■ Agnieszka Toczydlowska

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

The dual vocation to nursing as well as to the consecrated life means that I try to see Christ in each suffering person. I start each day with a prayer for the nurses and doctors with whom I work, for the patients and families I will meet that day. I entrust them all to God. That is an effective protection against the temptations of discouragement and of falling in to a routine.

Obviously, we do encounter many difficult situations. Our patients' loved ones frequently ask the question "Why?" to which we do not have a good answer, although, as a nun, I try to lift their spirits and direct their thoughts to the Will of God, which is unfathomable to us, as human beings. There are times when I cry in sympathy with a suffering person.

Where do you find the strenght not to get stressed or depressed when dealing with work?

Magdalena Swierczewska:

I try to leave all distressing images behind once I step out of the hospital gates, but it's obviously not quite that simple. I can't forget the face of the husband whose 28 year old wife died on our ward while 7 months pregnant. We

managed to save the child. That poor man didn't know whether he should be happy at the birth of the baby or cry at the loss of his wife. Such situations, when we are fighting to save a person's life, attempting resuscitation for up to two hours, while the family stands waiting outside the doors, is the hardest part of our work. As nurses, we daily encounter complete strangers at the most difficult and most intimate moments of their lives, facing suffering, death and a sense of powerlessness. In order not to become over burdened, we need to entrust this whole baggage to God and ask Him to take it off our shoulders and give us the strength to carry it.

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

My faith is also a source of strength for me. I also to try to talk with my family and friends. Although I may seem to come home absolutely shattered after the end of a shift, that's not necessarily true. I do think that nurses should be given access to psychological support. That is not something which people talk much about but it would be extremely valuable.

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

Things are a bit easier for me than for Agnieszka, as I always have the

support of my congregation, where we share each other's problems and then pray together about them.

Where do your responsibilities as a nurse actually end, as on top of all your clinical duties, such as giving injections and the like, they also include providing psychological support to people?

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

We try to take the time to reassure patients, help sort out any minor problems and ensure they understand simple nursing procedures. We want to show their loved ones that a hospital is not just a place where you need to sit frightened in a corner while procedures are being carried out around you. On the other hand, we should not, and actually have no right to tell people that "Things will be all right". It is the doctors' responsibility to give out information and we keep strictly to this rule. We have to be extremely careful what we say, as a person who wants to hear good or bad news will hear it, regardless of the words we actually use.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

On the other hand, one word can sometimes be enough to change the

way a patient feels about themselves. I once asked an elderly man on the ward: “How are you, love?”, and this grown man burst into tears. In all of his 70 years, nobody had ever told him that he was loved. I have been careful to tell people that ever since.

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

Everyone is aware of the daily realities of our profession. There are too few nurses and too many patients on the wards. This means that they value it all the more if we take the time to listen to what they have to tell us. Every once in a while, I have even been called an angel (she laughs).

I was just coming to that... (laughter)

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

I’m unfortunately far from being an angel (laughter). I do, however, try to create a warm atmosphere and to make patients feel that they are important to me. I get the impression that patients are aware of this. It’s very important for patients to feel that people remember them and that they are not simply lost in the crowd.

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

In the very first hospital I worked in, in Rabka, I was known as “the black angel”. Patients frequently passed away on my watch, almost as if they had waited for me to come on duty.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

A certain old lady woke up after her operation to see myself and my colleague, dressed in white, and initially took us for angels (laughter). Many people have small statues of angels by their beds. Consciously or otherwise, they invite the angels to join in their illness and suffering.

Do patients show their gratitude for the care that you show them?

Magdalena Swierczewska:

Very frequently. Sometimes their children make thank-you cards, draw us pictures or write poems. There are the other more “aggressive” families, however, who blame us for all that is wrong with their loved ones. I can understand their feelings, although, despite our best efforts, there are times that we can do nothing to help our patients. It is not the case, however, that we are no longer moved by someone’s death and that we then simply go on our break and forget about it.

Patients themselves must sometimes also be aggressive and vulgar towards you. How do you manage to see Christ in such people?

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

There are times when it is more difficult to recognise Christ in such

patients. It is also true that the person insulting us is often not fully aware of the impact of his/her actions, which are the result of their illness, intense physical and psychological pain to which people react in very different ways.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

I have been called the worst names many a time. That’s a particular characteristic of working on a neurosurgical ward. People who have never had much contact with hospital wards are probably unaware of the number of bruises nurses get from their patients. It’s not something that’s talked about. We need to pray very hard for the grace of humility in order to cope in such situations, to remember that the patients’ illness is the cause of their reactions.

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

We need to remember too, that there are particular “demons of the night”. When you’re caring for a patient at 2 or 3 in the morning who, because of their illness, doesn’t even



■ Agnieszka (first on the left) and Sr Teresa (first on the right) during a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Jasna Gora, Czestochowa, Poland

know where they are or that they are being aggressive, and your greatest wish at that moment is simply to be in your own bed, the situation appears very differently to you than it would during the day. I do remember that the patients' behaviour is not specifically directed against me and that anybody then in my place would be treated the same. I always try to remember that I am the one who is better off in that situation and has a duty of care, as it is not me who is ill and dependent on others. That is not to say that there have not been occasions when I have felt like turning on my heel and leaving the ward there and then.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

I have noticed that God does, on the whole, take the "good people" to himself. I frequently hear it said of someone who has passed away: "What a good person they were". On the other hand, it is alcoholics and other people who are not living by God's standards who are given another chance to improve, even if their state of health seems hopeless.

Does suffering mean that sick people turn more frequently to God, or are they more likely to turn away from Him?

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

Many of our patients have rosaries, missals or prayer books with them. It is only infrequently that people do not want to speak about God at all. It is not unusual for patients to arrange to pray together, often saying the Chaplet to the Divine Mercy.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

I have seen people in hospital turning back to God when facing a difficult operation or serious

illness, after many years away from Him. I now frequently see patients with pictures of the Divine Mercy. Relatives frequently leave them by patients' beds as a kind of sacramental. I do think, though, that more people could benefit from receiving the Sacrament of the Sick, the anointing with holy oils. There are still many people in our community who associate it with Extreme Unction, to be given to the dying, when nobody wants to be reminded of death. On the other hand, I recently had a patient who refused to go for his operation for the removal of a brain tumour until the priest came to give him this sacrament. All the theatre staff simply had to be kept waiting until the priest had come and gone. As for the patient, he went home completely better after the operation, despite the fact that his prognosis had not been at all good. That just proves that it may be worth it...

Do you also pray for your patients?

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

Obviously! Every day on my way to work, I pray to the Holy Spirit – I've this really good prayer app on my phone! I ask for the gift of discernment for the coming day and ask that I may be of use to others. I also always pray for any patient who is dying. I once decided to make the Novena of Our Lady of Pompeii for a particular young man whose suffering and that of his parents particularly touched me. I don't know what happened to him as he was moved to another hospital, but I continued my novena to the end. I hope that he came out of the illness, and, if not, that my prayer helped him in the next world.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

I also always pray on my way to work. I ask God to grant me the necessary graces to help in my contact with the patients He will place in my path. If a patient is taking a long time to die, I ask for the grace of a good death for him/her. When he/she dies, I say an "Eternal rest..." for his/her soul. I encourage the families of the dying to pray and to arrange for the patient to receive the Sacrament of the Sick.

Do you see your work as service in the spirit of that Mercy which we are celebrating this year?

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

Our work certainly counts as a work of Mercy, although we don't necessarily think about it on a daily basis. Perhaps the Extraordinary Year of Mercy announced by Pope Francis is a good time to become more aware of the full meaning of this Mercy. It is certainly an honour that Christ should wish to manifest His Mercy through our hands.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

I don't think about this every day either. I don't come onto the ward and tell myself: "Right, I'll need to be merciful now". There are times when, for instance, a patient is under the influence of alcohol, that I'm forced to be more forceful in my treatment of him/her, but I do that for their own safety.

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

This Extraordinary Year of Mercy provides a good opportunity to show a different side of nursing. The media here in Poland associate it with picket lines, strikes and low wages, which gives it a very negative profile. Nursing is above all a chance to do good to others.

So, is it true that people do not enter the nursing profession by chance?

Magdalena Swierczewska:

If I was looking for a job where I simply did eight hours work and then went home, I could certainly find one which took less out of me psychologically.

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

People who don't have a real feeling for the job tend to leave it sooner or later. Obviously, you can't generalise, but in my experience it is people with a real calling who remain in the job.

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

There are some people who do become embittered. There are several reasons for this: low wages, family problems and many more. Here again, things are a bit easier for those in a religious order. Being part of a religious congregation does make certain demands of you, but it does allow you freedom from other worries, such as how you will feed, house and provide for your children, or worries about your relationship with your husband. My own problems don't overwhelm my concerns for my patients. When you become overwhelmed by your own problems, as a nurse, this also impacts on your patients and colleagues.

I think that all of you couldn't imagine a life outside nursing, seeing as you even spend your holidays providing medical aid at pilgrimages...

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

That is true (laughter). But even our pilgrimages on foot take on a different dimension. When all the other pilgrims are putting up their tents and

preparing supper, our work is just beginning. That's when we get down to bursting their blisters (laughter).

What qualities are essential to the job?

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

You need to love people. That's all.

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

To be able to respect each person you meet.

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

To have a strong moral backbone. To have honesty and integrity. To be able to admit to your mistakes and to be responsible. To always be ready to learn.

Have you come across instances of people, in your job, whose chances of recovery seemed hopeless and for whom medicine could do no more, who then miraculously recovered?

Agnieszka Toczydlowska:

I have come across such cases. I cared for a patient who seemed likely to be brain dead. He was being prepared as a donor for transplants. All of a sudden, his condition began to quite inexplicably improve from day to day. When the commission whose job it is to make the final decision about whether the patient is suitable as an organ donor turned up, it had to write the words: "The patient does not give his consent" on the documents (laughter).

There was also an instance of a patient in the early stage of pregnancy who was found to have a brain tumour. Standard treatment involves radiotherapy, at a stage when even X-rays are considered dangerous to the developing embryo. Doctors

recommended an abortion, to which the patient refused her consent. A special kind of protective shield was prepared, which was supposed to guard the unborn child against the effects of the radiotherapy. The tumour was eventually removed and the child was born healthy, which was a miracle in itself. Such cases have taught me never to lose hope and certainly never to take hope away from our patients.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

I also had a young woman with an aneurysm and whose condition seemed medically hopeless, who came back to perfect health. I have seen people who had three on the Glasgow Coma Scale who have nevertheless recovered. Three on the Glasgow Coma Scale indicates brain death! How else can you describe this except as a miracle? There was even a patient who recovered consciousness and recounted what we had been talking about when he was supposedly unconscious. Since then we've been a lot more careful what we talk about (laughter)!

Sr Teresa Toczydlowska CSFA:

There's a story I could tell you. We once had a patient by the name of Renata, who comes from Radom. She may even be reading this article. Complications following an operation had damaged her digestive tract and had caused infection in her internal organs. The situation was, humanly speaking, hopeless, and staff expected her to die as a result. Her family, however, did not stop praying for her, and had asked all their friends and acquaintances to pray as well. Renata left the hospital on her own two feet. Her wounds, which, by rights, could not have healed, nevertheless did so. This was most certainly a miracle - humanly speaking,



■ The Creation of Adam, a fresco painting by Michaelangelo, c.1512.

it is entirely impossible for the body in such a condition to recover.

What have all your years of service among the sick taught you?

Agnieszka Toczydłowska:

Humility, humility and once again, humility.

Sr Teresa Toczydłowska CSFA:

If we stop ourselves from succumbing to routine, we are daily confronted with situations from which we can learn something new. Above all, we gain a sense of perspective and learn patience.

Agnieszka Toczydłowska:

We live in a world where everyone is constantly rushing. People don't think that everything can be cut off in one moment. In my line of work, I encounter such situations on a daily basis. I've acquired a sense of perspective on everyday troubles, which pale into insignificance by contrast with the suffering which I witness daily. I can't understand any more how you

can become offended at another person – life is simply too short, too beautiful and too unrepeatable to waste time on such things. Your earnings or career are not important – it is the people around you that matter. When I'm with people from outside the hospital environment, I sometimes feel as if I'm speaking to people from another planet. Life is short and we should live each day as if it were our last. That is a very valuable insight which I have gained from spending time with sick people.

Magdalena Swierczewska:

Even in these last few days I've come across a situation which has given me much food for thought. Over Christmas we had a 42 year old patient on the ward, the father of a family, who died on 25 December. His wife had recorded their 5 year old in his nursery school nativity play on her tablet and was showing it to him. She had very much hoped that her husband would live to see Christmas. She cried a lot at his death. It struck me that we don't value the fact that

we can spend Christmas together in our families. Obviously, I did also wonder why God couldn't have waited one more day, but I do believe that it is part of His plan.

My daily difficulties pale into insignificance by comparison with those faced by others. Matthew's Gospel says that: "Each day has enough trouble of its' own" (Matthew 6:34). There is no point in worrying about tomorrow, as, if we have an aneurysm, we can collapse and die today. After the sudden death of one young man, it occurred to me to arrange for my family to have access to my bank account. I phone my mother at least once a day to tell her that I love her. After all, I don't know if I will be able to tell her that tomorrow or whether she will be there to hear it. I constantly hear patients telling me that they regret not having the time to tell people things which are important.

Karol Wojciechek was speaking to **Sr Teresa Toczydłowska CSFA, Agnieszka Toczydłowska and Magdalena Swierczewska**



■ The park where Jesus revealed himself to young Helenka Kowalska, Lodz, Poland



■ Devotionals on a tree commemorating the revelations of St Faustina, Lodz, Poland.

In the footsteps of St Faustina

The Venice Park

On Saint Faustina's journey through life there are many important places in villages, towns and cities where the Apostle of the Divine Mercy stayed.

At that time as many as three Kowalski sisters were in service, each of them in a different place: Helenka (later to be St Faustina) and Gienia in houses facing each other in Abramowskiego Street and Natalka in a house in Nawrot Street. In order to talk they most frequently met at the Cathedral of Lodz after Holy Mass on Sundays, they did not have time for that during weekdays.

As regards that part of Helenka Kowalska's life, the most important event took place in the Venice Park (today Slowacki's Park). At the end of the 19th century it was created by the owner of a mill. The park was called the Venice because it encompassed land with ponds which were linked by canals and supplied with water from the nearby Jasien River. At that time it was a recreation centre providing

entertainment for the inhabitants of Lodz and the surrounding area. In the mornings it was children's playground; in the afternoons bands played in the concert bowl and plays were staged in the summer theatre. In the evenings, adults had fun with dance music and other various attractions. To enter this place for dancing tickets had to be bought. One evening in July 1924 three Kowalski sisters, their friend

Lucyna Strzelecka (later to become Sr Julita in the congregation of the Grey Ursuline sisters) and Jesus Himself went to such a dance. As her sister Natalia recalled, Helenka “was wearing a pink cretonne dress, with frills on the side. Her hair was swept back – she had a plait as thick as her arm. She was a very shapely and cheerful girl and others could find her appealing.”

Sister Faustina wrote in her ‘Diary’: “As I began to dance, I suddenly saw Jesus at my side, Jesus racked with pain, stripped of His clothing, all covered with wounds, who spoke these words to me: ‘How long shall I put up with you and how long will you keep putting Me off?’ At that moment the charming music stopped [and] the company I was with vanished from my sight; there remained Jesus and I” (Diary 9).

Pretending to have a headache, she left her companions behind quickly. She went to the nearest church, the Cathedral of St Stanislaw Kostka, where, paying no attention to the people, she fell prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament and asked the Lord to tell her what she should do next. She heard the following answer: “Go at once to Warsaw; you will enter a convent there” (Diary 10). It was this event that made her leave Lodz.

Today Helenka Kowalska – St Faustina – has been the patron saint of Lodz since 2005.

Sr M. Elizabeth Siepak O.L.M

Taken from the book
“In the footsteps of St Faustina”

From Lebanon to heaven

Youssef (Joseph) Antoun (Anthony) Maklouf, the future Saint Charbel, came into the world on the 8th of May, 1828 in the Lebanese village of Beqaakafra, 1,600 metres above sea level.

His parents were humble, poor people, Maronite Catholics (Maronites have been faithful to the Roman Catholic Church for many centuries, as a result of which they have often been persecuted). When Joseph was only 4 years old, his father died.

Even as a child, Joseph Anthony was already known for his piety and closeness to God. When he was 14, he was assigned the task of looking after the sheep. On his way to the pasture, he would frequently enter a hillside grotto surrounded by fragrant cedars. One day he left a picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the grotto in order to help him to pray, recite the Rosary and meditate there. His friends began referring to it as the “Holy Grotto”.

A great devotion to the Virgin Mary

As a child, Joseph Anthony had a particular devotion to the Mother of God and enjoyed taking part in the celebration of various Marian Feast Days, the Feast of the Assumption in particular. He called Mary “Our Lady of Light” or “Our Lady of Lebanon”.



■ St Charbel

The Virgin Mary had obviously a particular place in the heart of Charbel the monk. Also in the heart of the entire Maronite Church, which considers her as a singular figure in the theology of salvation, as Christ became man in order to endow us with His Mercy. In order for Christ to become man, Mary was chosen to be His Mother. Mary is called blessed amongst women because she said “Yes” with faith and gave birth to Jesus, the Saviour of the world. According to St Charbel, Mary has been perfectly endowed by God and has already attained perfection of body and soul. Her Assumption is also an assurance of our own Resurrection.

In the Anaphora, the central section of the liturgy of the Eucharist in the Maronite Church, the priest utters the words: “Mary, you are pure and fill the earth with Christ’s fragrance. You are a cloud which casts dewfall over the entire universe”. During the liturgy on Wednesdays, one of the Maronite prayers uses the words: “Mary, radiant lily and fragrant rose, the aroma of Your sanctity fills the entire universe. Pray for us, that we may become the sweet fragrance of Christ over the entire world”. When reciting the Litany of Loreto, after the invocation “Mystical Rose” the Lebanese faithful add: “Cedar of Lebanon”.

Sudden disappearance

At the age of 23, Joseph Anthony secretly left the family home and entered the Maronite monastery in Maifuq. When his mother realised where he had gone, she went to the monastery and, when she saw her son, called out to him: “Son, please come home”, to which he replied: “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I would be in my Father’s house?” His mother replied: “If you have taken the decision to enter a monastery, do all that is in your power to become a saint. Otherwise, come straight back home.” “I’ll do as you say” retorted Joseph.

After a year, Joseph was transferred to the monastery at Annaya and there began the second year of his noviciate. There he was given the name in religion of Charbel. He then commenced his theological studies in the monastery of St Cyprian in Kfifan and after progressing to his ordination in the centre of the Maronite



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■ St Maron's monastery on the Annaya Mount where St Charbel spent 17 years before he was permitted to go to a hermitage

patriarchate, in 1859, he returned to the monastery of St Maron in Annaya, where he remained until 1875.

The mysterious hermit

In 1875, with the permission of his superiors, Charbel moved to a hermit's cell by the monastery of Sts Peter and Paul, which was situated at 1,400 metres above sea level. He lived in a cell measuring 6 square metres, where he lived an extraordinarily ascetic life: he wore the same habit all year round regardless of the heat of the summer sun or of the severe winter cold, which was

not unusual at such an altitude. He hid his face behind his cowl and wore a hair shirt under his habit. He slept for only three hours at night, lying on a goatskin with a hard piece of wood under his pillow. He ate only one modest meal a day. He did not eat any meat or fruit, despite the abundance in which these were available, given that he worked in a vineyard. Most of his time, however, was spent in prayer, rosary in hand.

Many “mysterious” occurrences associated with him were noted, even during his lifetime. One day a snake, a viper, was seen in the vineyard, seemingly intent on attacking the brothers working there. In a manner reminiscent of St Francis of Assisi, Charbel addressed the snake: “Viper, please

leave the vineyard immediately.” The obedient reptile left immediately. Charbel made effective use of holy water against both locusts and illnesses, the effects were generally immediate. His intercession brought many people back to health.

One of the lay servants of the monastery once deliberately brought him water instead of oil for his lamp and retreated to observe the effect of his trick. As he watched Charbel poured the water into his lamp and lit it. The horrified and by then, penitent, servant, ran to the superior to tell him what had occurred. Charbel’s fellow monks considered all these things as signs from heaven.

His final days

The eremite spent 23 years of his life living in the cell. On the 16th of December, 1898, Charbel said Mass as usual, and, during the prayer, said: “Father of truth. Here is Your Son – an offering to Your glory. Accept this offering”. After uttering these words, he suffered a stroke and became paralysed. He died eight days later, on Christmas Eve.

His fellow monks then went to Charbel’s cell in order to pray and to kiss his hands. Many of them spent the entire frosty night in prayer, kneeling beside his body, in spite of the cold. One of them then suddenly said: “If we are suffering so much spending just one night here, how could Fr Charbel have been capable of spending 23 years here?” He had patiently endured the exhaustion, hunger and poverty, heat and cold.

Charbel’s body, which had not been embalmed, was then dressed in his habit and buried directly in the ground, without a coffin, according to Maronite

tradition. An unusual occurrence took place after the funeral. At sunset, there appeared a bright light above Charbel’s grave, which was brighter than daylight and which shone continually for a period of 45 nights! As a result of this, hordes of pilgrims together with the curious and also including Muslims, would gather each night at his grave. It was said among them that Charbel was a saint.

At the people’s request, the superior at the monastery had Charbel’s body moved from the cemetery to the monastery and so, a few months after his death the body was exhumed. The body was found with no rigor mortis. It was

at the temperature of a living person and totally incorrupt, in spite of several heavy downpours of rain in the period since the funeral had taken place.

The body was washed, dressed in a new religious habit, laid in a coffin and placed in the monastery chapel. Soon afterwards a fragrant moisture was discovered, at the bottom of the coffin, described as consisting of sweat and blood, in which pieces of cloth were then soaked and given to the faithful as relics. There was so much moisture, that the decision was taken to remove the inner organs and thoroughly dry out the body. In spite of these procedures, the exudate continued. At this



■ Letters coming from around the world with requests and gratitude for prayer and intercession



■ St Charbel's family house transformed into a chapel

news, large crowds of pilgrims from all over Lebanon and other countries of the Near East began to arrive at the monastery at Annaya. Local people, many of whom had received Holy Communion from the hands of this extraordinary monk, told pilgrims of his holy life, long hours spent at prayer and hard work, of his mildness and humility. Many healings also occurred as a result of the application of the exuded moisture from Charbel's body.

The road to canonisation

Already in 1925, the Maronite Church, which had remained in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, began earnest efforts to petition Pope Pius XI for Charbel's beatification. In 1927, that is, 29 years after his death, the monk's body was examined thoroughly by a special commission of enquiry. To the commission's surprise, the body was still found to be warm and incorrupt. It was then decided to lay the body in a metal casket, which was placed behind a tombstone in the chapel wall. 23 years later, the oily exudate was again discovered to be seeping from the stone tombstone. As a result a Church commission again opened the coffin and found the body in the same incorrupt state as in the past.

On the 5th of December, 1965, at the end of Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI beatified Father Charbel, following confirmation by the Church of two miraculous healings through his intercession. His canonisation took place on the 9th of October 1977, following official confirmation of the healing of Mariam Awad from cancer of the stomach and from secondary

cancers which had already spread to her vital organs.

One of the greatest miracles took place after St Charbel's canonisation, however. This was the healing of Nohat-al-Hami. She had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage and hemiplegia – paralysis on the left side of her body. She also required an urgent operation to the neck. Given the seriousness of her condition, no Lebanese surgeon was prepared to undertake such an operation and transport to another country was extremely risky. Her son therefore made the pilgrimage to Annaya in order to petition St Charbel to intercede for his sick mother. At home Nohat also prayed to Our Lady and to St Charbel, after which she fell asleep. In her dream she saw two monks, probably St Charbel and Fr Maron, the first patriarch of the Maronites. Charbel introduced himself to the sick woman, saying that he had come to operate on her. The other monk helped her to sit up in bed following the operation and said: "We have carried out the operation. Now you can get up, walk around and take a drink".

Nohat awoke, got up from bed by herself and went up to the mirror. She then saw two surgical incisions from which could be seen surgical stitches. Nohat's neck and clothing were blood-stained. Later laboratory tests showed the blood on her body and clothing to have no blood group! St Charbel appeared to Nohat in her dreams a second time. He then asked her to make a pilgrimage to his cell on the 22nd of every month, in memory of the healing, and to hear Mass there. "There" he told her "I am always present", adding that he had left the surgical incisions on her neck at the Lord's Will, in order that those who see them and particularly those who were far from Him and from the Church, should return to the ways of faith.



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■ Mrs Nohat-al-Hami miraculously operated during a dream in 1993 by St Charbel and St Maron. Two dark scars on her neck are witnesses of the miracle.

Return to the faith

Nohat's testimony and the testimonies of the thousands of people healed through the intercession of St Charbel have resulted in many people returning to God as well as a belief in the powerful intercession of this saint, knowledge of whom has long since extended far beyond the Lebanon.

Around 4 million people each year make the pilgrimage to St Charbel's grave at Annaya, people of all ages, social classes and even of other religions. Thousands of letters reach the monastery every year from all corners of the world. The monastery has a record of over 24,000 miracles which have taken place by means of St Charbel's intercession. Among those healed there have also been orthodox believers from Russia and Ukraine, people with no faith and even Muslims. The majority of these are physical healings but there are also many spiritual healings. Many penitents return to God through the intercession of St Charbel.

Grzegorz Rajchel, Poland

New Divine Mercy Shrine in the bush

On Monday 19th October 2015, a small group of pilgrims from Sydney accompanied by two priests from CSMA departed to Papua New Guinea (PNG) to witness the opening and blessing of the new Divine Mercy Shrine. This shrine was a project spearheaded by Fr Bogdan Swierczewski CSMA, who, after the death of the great Pope John Paul II promoted devotion to the Divine Mercy in his parish of Kuli.



■ Divine Mercy Shrine in Rukus, Papua New Guinea

The following is a recount of that journey:

On *day 2* we went to visit the parish of Kindeng where Fr Jozef Pekala CSMA is the parish priest. The people greeted us with their traditional song, dance and colourful costumes typical of PNG. After some speeches the local parishioners treated us to lunch 'mumu' style.



Day 3: On this day we went to visit the Divine Mercy Shrine in Rukus. The shrine is located approximately 40 minutes away from the CSMA Mother House in Mt Hagen and is close by the parish of Kuli. However, we had to travel over almost five kilometres of rocky, broken road and we were glad to finally arrive. We were awestruck to see this Divine Mercy Shrine which is a majestic building in the midst of the dusty cleared ground, surrounded by a beautiful and peaceful mountainous paradise.

As we entered the church, there our Lord Jesus stood, tall and prominent in the Divine Mercy image. His Hand raised in constant blessing. On either side of Him was His holy servants, St Faustina and St John Paul II.

That day many tribes from local and distant villages arrived with song and dance, presenting their gifts for the shrine to Fr Bogdan. Mass was scheduled for 3pm. However, around

2pm a great torrent of rain fell, washing the ground. Then when the rain stopped Mass went ahead as scheduled, even though the dark clouds hovered over us. During Mass, beautifully and timely, as though the Lord stretched out His Mighty Hand, the sun broke through, shining its warm light upon us and all the people present. It was a beautiful moment.

Day 4: This day Thursday 22nd October 2015 was the feast day of St John Paul II and it was to begin with the blessing of St John Paul II High School, Muk, PNG. Early in the morning on their way to Rukus, the Most Reverends Nuncio Archbishop Michael Banach and Archbishop Douglas Young of the Mt Hagen diocese, stopped to visit Muk, a small village/outstation of Kuli parish. They were welcomed by a parade of song and dance from the local youth group, leading to a colourful platform where a blessing ceremony

and official naming of the school was conducted.

For some years now, the people from the high mountains of the Kuli parish made a huge effort in offering up the ground, collecting funds and by working hard building a Catholic high school for their children. With the help of the parish priest, Fr Bogdan Swierczewski, they had received permission and a promise from the local archbishop that as soon as possible, the school would be incorporated into the Catholic diocese system.

Blessing and official opening of The Divine Mercy Shrine.

After leaving Muk, the archbishops walked two kilometres to the entrance



gate of the Divine Mercy Shrine at Rukus. They were chaperoned by the local villagers in loud song, drumming and dancing. There was such a joyful spirit in the air. Everyone was so happy and full of love and enthusiasm for this Divine Mercy Shrine.

What started as an idea to build a small chapel, nine years later, now stands a church that is an architectural marvel. So, finally the moment had arrived for it to be opened and blessed. It was a moment of great pride but also of great faith for all. This was God's work. The people had trusted in Jesus and He had provided the tools, resources and manpower to achieve it, and what a great achievement it is.

Once the archbishops arrived at Rukus, all preparations went ahead for the commencement of Mass. Mass was held outdoors to cater for the many people who came to celebrate. Present were many bishops, clergy, various religious nuns and representatives of congregations from all over PNG, plus crowds of people from local and distant parishes. Some had come as a pilgrimage to the shrine, walking for days through rugged terrain and thick forests. Approximately 3000 people attended Mass that day.

During Mass, Nuncio Archbishop Michael Banach entered the church to carry out the ancient ritual of the Consecration and Sacerdotal Blessing.

He commenced with a prayer then poured holy oils on the four corners and the centre of the bare altar. With his right hand he rubbed the oil onto the cement surface and when finished, he went around the church with Archbishop Young and Fr Bogdan and taking it in turns, they rubbed oil on the four walls of the church in the form of a cross. On completion, Nuncio Archbishop Banach incensed the altar and then the whole church.

Day 5: Today a luncheon was held for the Most Reverends Nuncio Archbishop Michael Banach, Archbishop Young and Fr Nicholas Guidi (Secretary to Nuncio) at the CSMA monastery in Mt Hagen. For dessert, a 'Names Day' cake had been arranged for the Nuncio to celebrate the Feast of St Michael. This gave him an opportunity to share his strong connection with the saint.

He said: "My name is Michael and I have always had a devotion to St Michael. A few years ago I was given the appointment of Nuncio of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands Region. To my surprise, I discovered that the Patron Saint of Papua New Guinea is St Michael, but I never thought I would come across a religious Congregation of St Michael the Archangel with missionary priests working in my region. Now I have had the pleasure to open and bless



one of their churches and have done so with great joy in my heart.”

After lunch, a gift of a handcrafted crucifix by a local artist was given to the nuncio from the CSMA in thanks-giving for his time with them and his kind works.

Day 6: Today we went back to Rukus and celebrated Mass in the Divine Mercy Shrine with the Michaelite Fathers. A choir singing in Latin from one of the local villages was present giving a special atmosphere during Mass.

After Mass, Fr Bogdan thanked the local people for all their help and

support for this project. He was overcome with emotion that together they had come so far. He was pleased to see the shrine blessed and he then introduced Rose, who was the first woman to bring the devotion to the village of Rukus. Rose was also overwhelmed with emotion and was so grateful to Fr Bogdan, the people and to God. Fr Bogdan then introduced Michael, the supervisor of the project who spoke his thanks to all.

Day 7: We celebrated Mass in the St Michael the Archangel Chapel of the CSMA monastery. After saying our goodbyes, we departed Mt Hagen

Airport destined for Port Moresby on our return to Sydney.

Our journey to the Divine Mercy Shrine in PNG had ended, but may this special place flourish as a place of pilgrimage, not only among the people of Papua New Guinea but to people from all over the whole world. As the Lord Jesus said to Sr Faustina back in 1931, “I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and then throughout the world” (Diary 47).

May His Will be done. Jesus I trust in You. St Faustina, St John Paul II pray for us.

By **Caterina Raccosta**, Australia

RELIGIOUS ORDERS

The Michaelites in numbers

The Congregation of St Michael the Archangel numbers 330 members: one bishop, two hundred sixty six priests, forty clerical students, seventeen brothers and six novices. They work in seventeen countries such as Argentina, Paraguay, Italy, Switzerland, the USA, Canada, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Germany,

Austria, Aruba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Ukraine, Belarus Poland. They run two orphanages, several oratories and youth centres, five schools and one hundred and one parishes (twenty three in Poland, five in Belarus, three in Ukraine, seven in Paraguay and Argentina, sixteen in Italy and Switzerland, six in the USA and

Canada, eight in Australia, sixteen in Germany, eighteen in the Dominican Republic, Aruba, Curaçao and Puerto Rico. Blessed Fr Bronislaw Markiewicz is a patron of over thirty elementary and secondary schools as well as colleges. The Congregation consists of two provinces, three vice-provinces and one delegacy.



■ The Michaelite Fathers with archbishop Mieczyslaw Mokrzycki during the General Chapter in the Cathedral of Przemyśl

Proclaiming Divine Mercy

The Church Seeks To Put Mercy into Practice



Jesus Christ taught that man not only receives and experiences the mercy of God, but that he is also called “to practice mercy” towards others: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” The Church sees in these words a call to action, and she tries to practice mercy. All the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount indicate the way of conversion and of reform of life, but the one referring to those who are merciful is particularly eloquent in this regard. Man attains to the merciful love of God, His mercy, to the extent that he himself is interiorly transformed in the spirit of that love towards his neighbour.

This authentically evangelical process is not just a spiritual transformation realised once and for all: it is a whole lifestyle, an essential and continuous characteristic of the Christian vocation. It consists in the constant discovery and persevering practice of love as a unifying and also elevating power despite all difficulties of a psychological or social nature: it is a question, in fact, of a merciful love which, by its essence,

is a creative love. In reciprocal relationships between persons merciful love is never a unilateral act or process. Even in the cases in which everything would seem to indicate that only one party is giving and offering, and the other only receiving and taking (for example, in the case of a physician giving treatment, a teacher teaching, parents supporting and bringing up their children, a benefactor helping the needy), in reality the one who gives is always also a beneficiary. In any case, he too can easily find himself in the position of the one who receives, who obtains a benefit, who experiences merciful love; he too can find himself the object of mercy.

In this sense Christ crucified is for us the loftiest model, inspiration and encouragement. When we base ourselves on this disquieting model, we are able with all humility to show mercy to others, knowing that Christ accepts it as if it were shown to Himself. On the basis of this model, we must also continually purify all our actions and all our intentions in which mercy is understood and practiced

in a unilateral way, as a good done to others. An act of merciful love is only really such when we are deeply convinced at the moment that we perform it that we are at the same time receiving mercy from the people who are accepting it from us. If this bilateral and reciprocal quality is absent, our actions are not yet true acts of mercy, nor has there yet been fully completed in us that conversion to which Christ has shown us the way by His words and example, even to the cross, nor are we yet sharing fully in the magnificent source of merciful love that has been revealed to us by Him.

Thus, the way which Christ showed to us in the Sermon on the Mount with the beatitude regarding those who are merciful is much richer than what we sometimes find in ordinary human opinions about mercy. These opinions see mercy as a unilateral act or process, presupposing and maintaining a certain distance between the one practicing mercy and the one benefitting from it, between the one who does good and the one who receives it. Hence the attempt to free interpersonal

and social relationships from mercy and to base them solely on justice. However, such opinions about mercy fail to see the fundamental link between mercy and justice spoken of by the whole biblical tradition, and above all by the messianic mission of Jesus Christ. True mercy is, so to speak, the most profound source of justice. If justice is in itself suitable for “arbitration” between people concerning the reciprocal distribution of objective goods in an equitable manner, love and only love (including that kindly love that we call “mercy”) is capable of restoring man to Himself.

Mercy that is truly Christian is also, in a certain sense, the most perfect incarnation of “equality” between people, and therefore also the most perfect incarnation of justice as well, insofar as justice aims at the same result in its own sphere. However, the equality brought by justice is limited to the realm of objective and extrinsic goods, while love and mercy bring it about that people meet one another in that value which is man himself, with the dignity that is proper to him. At the same time, “equality” of people through “patient and kind” love does not take away differences: the person who gives becomes more generous when he feels at the same time benefitted by the person accepting his gift; and vice versa, the person who accepts the gift with the awareness that, in accepting it, he too is doing good is in his own way serving the great cause of the dignity of the person; and this contributes to uniting people in a more profound manner.

Thus, mercy becomes an indispensable element for shaping mutual relationships between people, in a spirit of deepest respect for what is human, and in a spirit of mutual

brotherhood. It is impossible to establish this bond between people, if they wish to regulate their mutual relationships solely according to the measure of justice. In every sphere of interpersonal relationships justice must, so to speak, be “corrected” to a considerable extent by that love which, as St Paul proclaims, “is patient and kind” or, in other words, possesses the characteristics of that merciful love which is so much of the essence of the Gospel and Christianity. Let us remember, furthermore, that merciful love also means the cordial tenderness and sensitivity so eloquently spoken of in the parable of the prodigal son, and also in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin. Consequently, merciful love is supremely indispensable between those who are closest to one another: between husbands and wives, between parents and children, between friends; and it is indispensable in education and in pastoral work.

Its sphere of action, however, is not limited to this. If Paul VI more than once indicated the ‘civilization of love’ as the goal towards which all efforts in the cultural and social fields as well as in the economic and political fields should tend, it must be added that this good will never be reached if in our thinking and acting concerning the vast and complex spheres of human society we stop at the criterion of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” and do not try to transform it in its essence, by complementing it with another spirit. Certainly, the Second Vatican Council also leads us in this direction, when it speaks repeatedly of the need to make the world more human, and says that the realisation of this task is precisely the mission of the Church in the modern world.

Taken from **www.vatican.va**
 Encyclical *Dives In Misericordia*
 Pope John Paul II
 13th November 1980



Angels sit with us at the table

How can we reconcile the concept of angels in our sophisticated technological society?

“Well Angela, as we sit here at this table, there are not two of us, there are four of us, your guardian angel is here and my guardian angel is here!”

I jumped at this new information and looked at the apparently empty chairs to our left and right with renewed respect. Fr Peter’s words were truth, he spoke them with authority. I did not doubt him and have not since doubted this knowledge of my guardian angel, and of the knowledge of the support of St Michael in my own life. It was, it can be said, a life changing moment, a gift, the gift of the knowledge of my guardian angel. It is a gift that as I transcribe the interview with Fr Peter, I hope I can now bestow on you the reader, for as you sit reading this article, wherever you may be, knowing that your guardian angel is next to you. Maybe you were told this as a child by your grandmother, as I was, but had since shrugged off the knowledge as a childish thing. But these are difficult times, and they may get more difficult before they get better, we need all the help we can get, and knowing and working with our guardian angels is one way we can more surely align our lives to God’s will for us.

How do we know about the angels?

We know very little about the angels, we only know five or ten percent



about them. Only three angels were named in the Bible, St Michael, St Gabriel and St Raphael. They lead us to God. If angels could envy us they would envy two abilities that humans have, first is suffering for God and the second is the ability to receive Communion.

Angels are the servants of God, a whole devotion exists to St Michael the Archangel as a protector, a ‘soul guard’. We could only know more about him if we were to interview St Michael or ask God himself.

Where has this knowledge come from?

What we do know, we learn from revelation, the teaching of the saints and personal experience. We know that they are spiritual beings, persons with angelic power. They are organised in military-like hierarchies,

like God’s S.A.S. but that stands for a Spiritual Army of Soldiers. Angels are mentioned in 300 places in the Bible from the first Book of Genesis all the way through to Revelations. They minister to us all the time and also adore God. Sometimes they have been described as having two faces, one turned to God and singing his praises, the other turned to us, watching over us and guarding our souls. Even non-church goers believe in angels. There is belief in angels all around us, people know by instinct of their existence, they know intuitively, they know in their hearts. If you ask them some will say they ‘somehow know’ and others will have had some experience, some enlightenment.

We can read a story about human interaction with angels in the Book of Tobias in the Bible. We can also read about the angels in the writings of the

saints, St Faustina could see the angels. For example, she was on a train journey, for she often travelled (she was sent from one convent to another, hardly spending much more than a year in the same place as her superiors wanted as many of the sisters to be exposed to her as possible) and she wrote in her diary that she could see angels above every church, guarding the churches. But most of us never see our angels, they remain hidden.

What is the angel's role?

The angels are sent to us to help us, and we are encouraged to take advantage of their power. In the introductory rites of the Holy Mass we ask the angels to pray for us. If you

had a very powerful friend sitting next to you, of course you would ask their help with your problems, and so it is with the angels, we ask them to help us with difficulties, and they are very happy that we ask them, for they love to be appreciated in this way. Even in asking your guardian angel for help, you focus your mind on your problem and how to solve it, so it is a good way of working things out for yourself too.

Are all angels good?

Sadly no, there are fallen angels, the Devil is one such angel. We must discern between paths that will lead us into danger, and those that bring us closer to God. We have to be very

careful, if some plan of action or new enterprise is taking you away from the Church and from a life of prayer, you can be sure it is not sent from God. There are also a lot of people who will promise to reveal your angel, but they will sell you small statues or cards, and these have no angelic powers, this is what we call 'Discount Spirituality', it has no value. We can only find the Truth in the Church, and through the Church's teachings, a sure guide is to read the Bible and the writings of the saints.

Fr **Peter Prusakiewicz** CSMA
was interviewed by **Angela Sargent**,
editor of Upon This Rock magazine,
Gibraltar, 2014



■ Abraham and the Three Angels by Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, 1656

Novena to St Michael the Archangel

The feast of St Michael the Archangel is on the 29th September. May we prepare for that event with a nine-day novena to the Prince of Heavenly Hosts. Do not hesitate: ask him for blessings for you and your family.

First day

Most glorious archangel, St Michael, who full of faith, humility, gratitude and love, far from adhering to the suggestions of the rebellious Lucifer or of being intimidated by the sight of his numerous followers, rose at once against him, and animating the remainder of the heavenly court to defend the cause of God, gained a complete victory over him. Obtain for me, I beg of you, the grace to discover all the snares, and resist all the attacks of these angels of darkness, so that triumphing after your example over them, I may merit to shine one day on that seat of glory from which they were precipitated never to rise again.
Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, etc.
Litany to St Michael.

Second day

Most glorious archangel, St Michael, who, appointed by God the guardian of all the Hebrew people as His instrument, consoled them in their afflictions, enlightened them in their

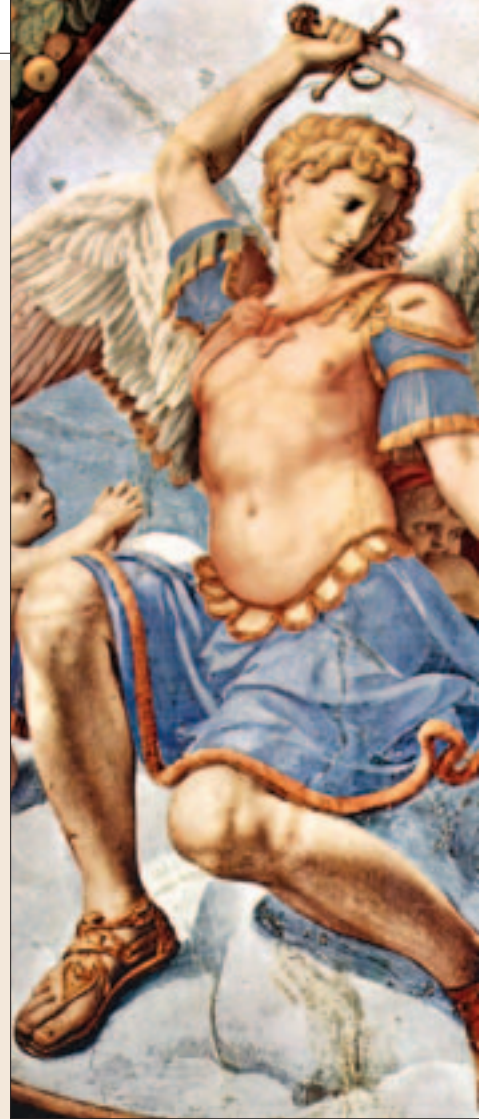
doubts, provided for all their wants, even so far as to divide the seas, to rain down manna from the clouds, and to draw water from the rocks, I implore of you to enlighten, console, defend, and assist my soul in all its necessities, that overcoming all the obstacles which are met at every step in the perilous desert of this world, I may arrive safely in that kingdom of peace and delight, of which the land promised to Abraham was but a shadow.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, etc.

Litany to St Michael.

Third day

Most glorious archangel, St Michael, who, constituted the head and defender of the Catholic Church, rendered her always triumphant over the blindness of the Gentiles by the preaching of the Apostles; the cruelty of tyrants, by the firmness of her martyrs; the malice of heretics, by the wisdom of her doctors; the evil customs of the world, by the purity of her virgins, the sanctity of her Pontificate



and the penitence of her confessors; defend her continually from the assaults of her enemies, deliver her from the scandal of her unworthy sons, so that showing herself always peaceful and glorious, we shall continue to hold most firmly our belief in her dogmas, and persevere until death in the observance of her precepts.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, etc.

Litany to St Michael.

Fourth day

Most glorious archangel, St Michael, who stands beside our altars to bear to the throne of the Eternal Majesty our prayers and our sacrifices, assist me, I implore of you, in all the exercises of Christian piety, that I may



■ St Michael fighting the Devil by Agnolo Bronzino, 1541. Fresco in the vault of the Chapel of Eleonora of Toledo, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy.

perform them with constancy, recollection, and faith, so that they may merit to be presented by your hands to the Most High, and to be accepted by Him as incense of grateful sweetness.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, etc.

Litany to St Michael.

Fifth day

Most glorious archangel, St Michael, at whose feet the most sublime dignity of this earth bows down in humiliation, look with an eye of mercy on my miserable soul overruled by so many passions, stained by so many sins, and obtain for me grace

to overcome the former and detest the latter, that having once risen to a new life I may never again fall into so unhappy a state.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, etc.

Litany to St Michael.

Sixth day

Most glorious archangel, St Michael, who, being the terror of the devils, is destined by the Divine goodness to defend us from their assaults in the last combat, console me, I implore of you, in that dreadful moment with your sweet presence, help me with your invincible power to overcome all my enemies, that saved through your means from sin and hell, I may praise your power and mercy for all eternity.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, etc.

Litany to St Michael.

Seventh day

Most glorious archangel, St Michael, who with more than paternal eagerness descends compassionately into the suffering Kingdom of Purgatory to free the souls of the elect, and transport them with you into eternal happiness, obtain for me that by leading a holy and fervent life I may merit to be exempt from those fearful pains; but if for unknown faults or not having made sufficient atonement in this life I shall be condemned to suffer there for some time, plead then my cause before our Lord, and inspire all my friends to offer suffrages for me, that as soon as possible I may fly to heaven to shine with that most holy light which was promised to Abraham and all his descendants.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, etc.

Litany to St Michael.

Eighth day

Most glorious archangel, St Michael, who art destined to sound the trumpet announcing the General Judgment, and to precede the Son of Man with His Cross in the great valley, obtain that the Lord may anticipate it for me by a judgment of goodness and mercy in this life, chastising me beforehand for my sins, that my body may rise with the just to a blessed and glorious immortality, and my spirit be consoled at the sight of the Lord Jesus, who shall form the joy and consolation of all the elect.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, etc.

Litany to St Michael.

Ninth day

Most glorious archangel, St Michael, who, constituted the governor of all mankind, are in a special manner the guardian of the Catholic Church and of her visible head, bring back into the bosom of this elect Spouse of Jesus Christ all the wandering sheep, non-believers, Jews, schismatics and sinners, that all, united in one common sheepfold, may together sing for all eternity the sovereign mercy. Preserve the Church in the way of sanctity, and defend from all enemies the infallible interpreter of her will, her vicar on earth, the Roman Pontiff, that always, obedient to the voice of that universal pastor, none may stray from the path of salvation, but all, increasing every day in justice, both subjects and superiors, peoples and leaders, may form on earth that society of peaceful and indissoluble concord which is the image, the prelude, and the pledge of that perfect and eternal society which all the blessed in heaven compose with Jesus Christ.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, etc.

Litany to St Michael.



God heals through St Michael

On November 15th when I visited my friend Dorota who was in hospital, she had tears in her eyes. She had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. When I returned home, I called my son who is a doctor and I was shocked by what he said – “This is the end, she could have only six months.” In this dreadful state of mind I went to pray at the statue of St Michael the Archangel in my parish of Our Lady of Beautiful Love in Tarchomin, Warsaw.

The night that followed was dark indeed, I did not sleep, I cried, I prayed and in the morning I went to the beginning of the services in the church. I knelt before the statue of St Michael and felt that I had to go to confession. During Mass I had the feeling that I should entrust this matter to St Michael and to book a Mass for Dorota's intention, for her healing. I approached Father Mariusz, he accepted my request and the Mass was booked in for one hour's time. I ran home to get my husband. The parish priest said “Through the intercession of St Michael the Archangel, we pray for Dorota's healing from pancreatic cancer.”

I also prayed fervently and asked St Michael to cut out the sick part with his sword. After the Eucharist I felt at peace, all these bad negative feelings regarding the cancer had left me. I prayed before St Michael the Archangel all afternoon until 9 pm.

On November 17th I asked the Dominicans for a novena for Dorota's intention. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima and St Michael the

Archangel, for healing from cancer. I attended these Masses every day and offered my communion for Dorota's healing.

After a consultation at the hospital the doctor agreed to perform an operation and Dorota was sent home and would be contacted once an available slot became free. Unfortunately her surgery ward was in the process of being refurbished and this caused ongoing delays. During this time, I asked for further novenas to be said in intercession to St Michael the Archangel.

On November 28th I travelled to Piaseczno to Our Lady of the Rosary's Church, to pray before the statue of St Michael the Archangel for Dorota for a long time. The priest at this church was unable to have a Mass said for me on this day so I put my written intention and offering on the plate, with all my heart and trust in St Michael. Later I went over to the statue for a long while and thanked him before saying goodbye.

At 5.00am on November 28th, I left home and went to pray to St Michael

the Archangel in Stara Iwiczna. Arriving at 7:30 am in time to pray the canonical hours. It was here that I heard these words that touched me, during the general Mass with the renewal of our Baptismal Promises and at the end of Mass an individual blessing. I had bought a scapular of St Michael the Archangel and a medal for Dorota; I had it blessed, filled the form and the priest put it symbolically on me and I put it on Dorota.

The wait for the operation was never ending so I continued to book additional novenas to St Michael the Archangel for His intercession. Dorota felt an improvement in her health and her appetite returned with her putting on 4 kilograms in weight. Finally she was called to the hospital – the operation was scheduled for January 30th but was again postponed, this time to Monday February 3rd. After opening the abdominal cavity it was discovered that there was no tumour present. The doctors stated in the operation description: “The head of the pancreas is soft with no palpable tumour.” Dorota recovered her strength and health very quickly.

On February 10th, when I was walking to pray with St Michael the Archangel at the sanctuary of Blessed Father Jerzy Popieluszko in Zoliborz, Dorota returned home full of health to her four small children.

Who is like God!

Anna, Poland



This whole testimony is in tribute to Jesus in His wonderful Divine Mercy. It is also in tribute to my brother Frankie, for allowing me to publish his astonishing story.

A new heart from Merciful Jesus

My name is Joe Livingstone, and I am Frankie's eldest brother. The testimony begins on the night of 7th November 1998. I received a phone call to immediately go to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. My brother Frankie had suffered a massive heart attack and the doctors were saying he would not make it through the night. So, the family gathered outside the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital. Gradually, as the minutes passed, everybody would try and visit Frankie in his private room.

As time went by, everyone was grieving about what could happen. It was then that I was prompted to go to his room. I was quite alarmed on entering the room; as I could barely see Frankie for all the tubes, life support machines and monitors.

I asked Frankie to lift a finger, if he could hear me. He lifted his finger; I then asked him if I could say a prayer for him called the "Divine Mercy Chaplet", asked if this was ok. He lifted his finger. I was happy now

in the knowledge that I could proceed with the prayer, knowing that we were alone together. I then said the full Divine Mercy Chaplet; I felt a lovely peace as the Chaplet was recited. On completion of the prayer, I went outside to my distraught family members, happy in the knowledge that I had completed the special chaplet – without any interruptions and also pleased that it was completed discreetly.

After a while, everyone went home knowing that Frankie was still "hanging on". Over the next few days and weeks, a miracle began to unfold. Here is my brother's own words of what happened while he was at Celtic Park, a football stadium in the Parkhead area of Glasgow and the home ground of Celtic Football Club.

My life was slipping away

"On 7th November 1998 I suffered three heart attacks in one day and

was left close to death, with only 30% function in my heart. I was at the Celtic versus Dundee game and had my first heart attack during the game. I was very lucky as two doctors were able to help me until the ambulance arrived. I was taken to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, which is close to Parkhead Stadium, so that helped to save time. For the next few days I was kept in intensive care and I was slipping in and out of consciousness. The doctors and nurses battled for the rest of the month to keep me alive. I was given the Last Rites twice during this time. The doctor told my wife first, that my only hope was a transplant as they could not repair my heart. This was something I never even thought about; I assumed I might need a bypass at worst. When the surgeon told me that I needed a heart transplant I was in deep shock as I was entering into the unknown. Over the next couple of days I was getting weaker and weaker, I could not think straight, I was thinking that my life was slipping away; I was surrounded

by my family and friends. I really do not remember much and I was very confused, I was on oxygen 24/7 and a great deal of strong medication in the hope that my condition would stabilize.

"About the first week in December I was given an assessment to check if I suitable for a transplant and it was good news, they said yes. The nurse said I would be going on the transplant waiting list, all our prayers were answered and on Christmas Day 1998 I received the call at 7.30 pm to say a heart had become available. The operation was carried out that night, it was a total success and I am still here nearly 20 years later to tell the story. There is not a day that goes by when I don't think about the donor family and the second chance they gave me, they will always be in my prayers.

My gratitude

"Words cannot express my gratitude to the doctors and nurses who saved my life and to my wife, daughter and my family for all their support. I would also like to thank the donor family".

My brother Frankie is now 61 years old and I place him, his late wife June and daughter Joanne under the protection of Our Lord in His Divine Mercy. I thank my brother for the love he has shown me. I love him too and I will continue to thank Jesus, for the years we have still had Frankie in our midst.

Joe Livingston
Glasgow, Scotland

USA

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11:00 – Coffee/Tea
11:30 – Conference with questions
12:45 – Lunch Break
13:45 – Talk 2
15:00 – Divine Mercy Hour
(confession available)
16:00 – Final talk
Health and safety – Limited spaces,
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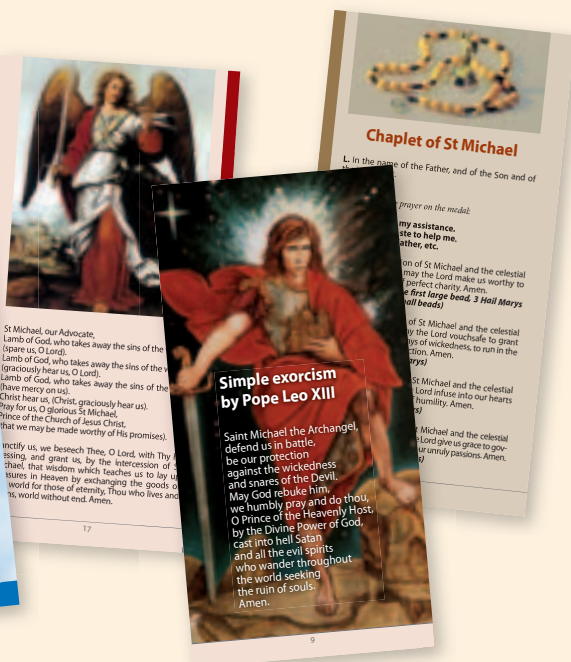
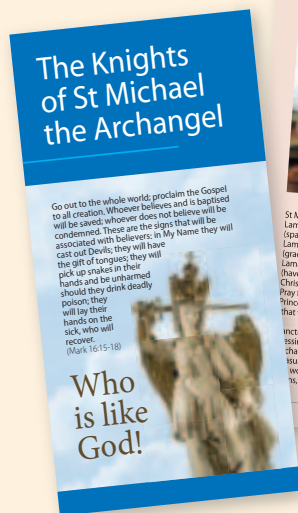
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POEM



Mercy

Mercy! What is it?
Can we feel it?
How can we get it?

Mercy! Is it forgiveness?
Is it Love?
Is it a Grace from Heaven above?

I want to know
So tell me please!
Could Mercy be all of these?

Mercy! Can we feel this special gift?
Can we smell touch or taste it?
Or do we for granted take it?

Can we share it?
Can we pass on Mercy to others?
Strangers, sisters or brothers?

Is it free?
Can we get it all of the time?
From God is the Mercy Divine?

Now I clearly see!
Divine Mercy showered on me
And from my sins makes me free!

It's never too late for His Mercy!
Right up to the very last.
We only have to ask!

Allison Black, Scotland



Chaplet of St Michael

L. In the name of the Father, and of
the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
A. *Amen*

Say the following prayer on the medal:

*O God, come to my assistance.
O Lord, make haste to help me.
Glory be to the Father, etc.*

1. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Seraphim, may the Lord make us worthy to burn with the fire of perfect charity. Amen.
(1 Our Father on the first large bead, 3 Hail Marys on the next three small beads)

PRAYERS

2. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Cherubim, may the Lord vouchsafe to grant us grace to leave the ways of wickedness, to run in the paths of Christian perfection. Amen.
(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

3. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Thrones, may the Lord infuse into our hearts a true and sincere spirit of humility. Amen.
(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

4. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Dominions, may the Lord give us grace to govern our senses and subdue our unruly passions. Amen.
(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

5. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Powers, may the Lord vouchsafe to protect our souls against the snares and temptations of the Devil. Amen.
(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

6. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Virtues, may the Lord deliver us from evil and suffer us not to fall into temptation. Amen.
(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

7. By the intercession of St Michael and the Celestial Choir of Principalities, may God fill our souls with a true spirit of obedience. Amen.
(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

8. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Archangels, may the Lord give us perseverance in faith and in all good works, in order that we gain the glory of Paradise. Amen.
(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

9. By the intercession of St Michael and the celestial Choir of Angels, may the Lord grant us to be protected by them in this mortal life and conducted hereafter to eternal glory. Amen.
(1 Our Father, 3 Hail Marys)

Recite on the next four beads:

- 1 Our Father in honour
of St Michael
1 Our Father in honour
of St Gabriel
1 Our Father in honour
of St Raphael
1 Our Father in honour
of our Guardian Angel

O glorious prince, St Michael, chief and commander of the heavenly hosts, guardian of souls, vanquisher of rebel spirits, servant in the house of the Divine King, and our admirable conductor, who shines with excellence and superhuman virtue, vouchsafe to deliver us from evil, who turn to you with confidence, and enable us by your gracious protection to serve God more and more faithfully every day. Amen.

Prayer of Pope Leo XIII

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the Divine Power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who wander throughout the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.