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Voice of the Rosary Confraternity

LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD E. MARTIN, O.P., DIRECTOR

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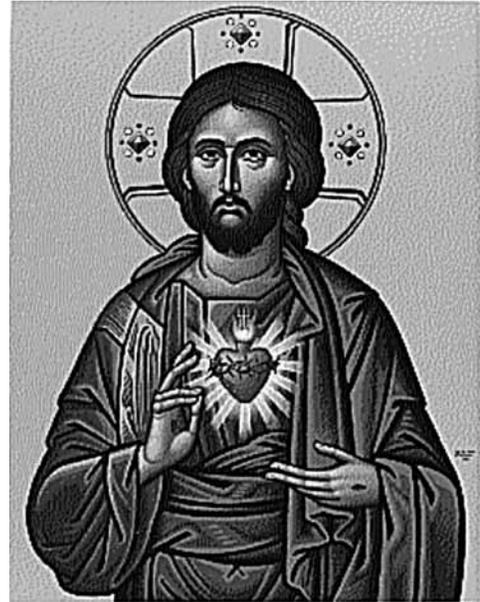
FROM THE DIRECTOR

I once did some research on the word "heart," and discovered it occurs 990 times in Shakespeare. The Bible uses the word "heart" 865 times, but that is the unmodified noun. The concordance offers separate listings for "brokenhearted," "faint hearted," "hard hearted," "merry hearted," "stiff hearted," "stout hearted," and "tender hearted." The word "heart" is an important word in our vocabulary because our hearts are important parts of our lives. Where we find them, Jesus says, we will find our treasure. This can, it strikes me, be a rather frightening thought when we consider some of the things that make our hearts beat faster.

Fortunately – for us – we are what makes Jesus' Sacred Heart beat faster. So the gospel reading for the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart tells us He is a good shepherd, willing to come out looking for us when we've wandered off. Throughout the Scripture we are warned that the cost of our sin is exile; when we misplace our hearts we end up all by ourselves. This is bad enough, but St. Luke says things get worse: sin not only cuts us off from one another, it finally paralyzes us. We cannot come home even if we want to. So Jesus comes looking for us. Since we cannot walk, he doesn't just lead us home, he carries us. And because we are so valuable, he invites everyone to celebrate our home coming.

In *Misericordiae Vultus*, his letter announcing 2016 as an Extraordinary Year of Mercy our Holy Father refers to this passage from St. Luke's gospel, one of the three "lost and found" parables in Luke's gospel account. "In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon." (MV, 9)

The Scriptures contain few pictures that illustrate love more vividly than the parable of the lost sheep. St. Paul says we would be hard-pressed to die for someone good, but Christ was willing to die for us. Not in spite of our sin, but because of it. When our hearts skipped a beat in the garden, and we found ourselves



in exile, God took on a heart – to show us how to love, and where to find our treasure.

A HEART STILL BEATING WITH LOVE

On April 14th our beloved Fr. Paul Duffner celebrated his 101st birthday, and the Rosary Center's many friends will be delighted to know that he still pays daily visits to the office and takes a hand in the Center's affairs. He is no longer so active as he once was, but his handwriting is as magnificent as ever, and new members of the Rosary Confraternity are beautifully enrolled in our records.

NEW BOOKS

We are proud to offer a new book, published by the Carmelite sisters in Coimbra, Portugal.

A Pathway Under the Gaze of Mary: A True Story This is a fascinating biography of Sister Maria Lucia of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart, 2015. The book is available for \$19.95. Check it out on our order form.

We also have a new children's book, *Lucia and the Immaculate Heart: A True Story* (Angela Andrejczuk). This is an astonishingly comprehensive presentation of

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TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

THE CAPITAL SINS: II VAINGLORY

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

PRIDE REVISITED

In our last reflection we considered the sin of Pride, which St. Gregory the Great named the father and foundation for all other sins. So fundamental was the place of pride in St. Gregory's moral theology, he did not bother to number it among the Capital sins. Rather, he simply assumed we would understand its place and deadly influence in our moral lives.

St. Gregory (A.D. 540 – 604) was the last of the early doctors of the Western Church. The others, who are far better known than he, are St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome. Six centuries later, St. Thomas Aquinas would turn to all four teachers when he composed his various writings. And in his *Summa Theologica* he agrees wholeheartedly with St. Gregory, and cites the Book of Ecclesiasticus to conclude that pride "...is the beginning of every sin." (ST, I-II, 84.2)

In our last reflection we understood pride to be the "inordinate [excessive] desire to excel." Pride plays a major role in our moral universe because the more we seek our own excellence, the greater we experience the temptation to turn away from God. St. Thomas observes, "...it is characteristic of pride to be unwilling to be subject to any superior, and especially to God; the result being that a man is unduly lifted up...." (*ibid.*, ad 2)

Although they did not always agree on the exact relations that link the Capital sins to one another, the ancient writers believed they were connected and that by succumbing to one of these deadly faults, the human soul could easily fall prey to the others. After he identified pride as the captain of the "leaders of an army" of sin, St. Gregory placed the capital sins in this order: vainglory (vanity), envy, anger, sloth, covetousness, gluttony and lust.

St. Thomas accepts the order of Gregory's plan, and we will follow it as well. To begin, let us consider the nature of vainglory. In our everyday speech we probably substitute the word "vanity" for "vainglory," but the latter word is quite descriptive. It explains our moral choice when we seek glory for vain, that is, "empty" reasons.

THE QUEST FOR GLORY

Glory, St. Thomas teaches, is the public display of some beauty or excellence – physical or spiritual. To share the glory of the saints in heaven is the goal of our lives on earth. We are called to strive for perfection, and we commit no sin if we rejoice in the intellectual and physical gifts God has given us. St. Thomas observes

Now among the goods that are the means whereby man acquires the honor, glory seems to be the most conducive to the effect, inasmuch as it denotes the manifestation of a man's goodness: since good is naturally loved and honored by all. Wherefore, just as by the glory which is in God's sight man acquires honor in Divine things, so too by the glory which is in the sight of man he acquires excellence in human things. Hence on account of its close connection with excellence, which men desire above all, it follows that it is most desirable. (ST, II-II, 132.4)

However, glory becomes vain – empty – when we seek it for some unworthy reason, when we seek it from those unworthy to give it, or when we seek honor for our own sake, rather than God's glory or the benefit of our neighbor. (ST, II-II, 132.1) The covers of supermarket tabloids exhibit splendid examples of individuals who have chosen vainglory over the virtuous activities that merit mention in the Book of Life.

AN UNWHOLESOME CONNECTION

The link between vainglory and pride should be clear. Both express an imperfect commitment to excellence, and both tempt us to forget God who is the source of excellence in our lives. St. Gregory believed vainglory to be "the immediate offspring of pride," and St. Thomas embraces this position. We desire excellence above all things, St. Thomas argues, but in our seeking that moral summit we encounter a great risk.

In his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, St. Francis de Sales gives an apt description of the person who falls prey to the lure of vainglory.

Vainglory is the glory that we give ourselves; either for what is not really in us, or for what is in fact in us but not owing to anything we did, or for what is in us and owing to us but which does not deserve to be the cause of a boast....

There are those who are proud and haughty because they ride a magnificent horse or because their hat sports a fancy feather, or because they are wearing some fashionable clothing. Who does not see the folly here? If there is glory due, it belongs to the horse, the bird or the tailor! And what a pitiable heart is his who expects esteem because of a horse, a feather or some lace!

A modern moralist observes, "In a nutshell, then, the glory we seek is vain if we seek glory *for the wrong*

things, from the wrong people, or for the wrong reasons.”
(Kevin Vost, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, p. 137.)

VAINGLORY: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Few of us will find our photographs on popular scandal sheets, so vainglory may seem a remote possibility in our moral lives, but St. Thomas identifies a number of unedifying – and potentially sinful – activities that are associated with vainglory. He writes, “...the vices which by their very nature are such as to be directed to the end of a certain capital vice, are called its daughters....” (ST, 133.5)

ME FIRST

St. Thomas describes a number of ways we can surrender to the lure of vainglory. They include boastfulness, obstinacy, discord, contention, and disobedience. Each is a manifestation of an individual’s desire “to make known his excellence by showing that he is not inferior to another.” These vices are quite sad to consider, for each preys upon the very God-given attributes that make us human. They devalue our intellect, our will, our capacity to speak, and our Baptismal call to strive for unity among God’s People.

BOASTFULNESS

St. Thomas observes, “Now the end of vainglory is the manifestation of one’s own excellence...and to this end a man may tend in two ways. In one way directly... by words, and this is boasting....” Students have every right to rejoice in good grades, and parents every right to rejoice in their children’s accomplishments. But we must recognize limits and, as we have already noted, we must acknowledge God as the source of our excellence. The line between honest delight in an achievement and boastfulness can be very slight. For this reason we must always remember that vainglory, like pride, is a matter of degree: taking excessive pleasure in some gift or good deed.

Boasting can take a number of forms, of course, but one of the most common is verbal. This is a particularly distressing offense, as it misuses the gift of speech, which sets us humans apart from the rest of God’s creation. In the beginning, God spoke creation into existence, and He gave us the ability to speak so we might follow His example and continue to build upon this precious, and fragile, foundation.

CONTENTIOUSNESS

St. Thomas characterizes this fault as that “whereby a man quarrels noisily with another.” Like boastfulness, contentiousness is a misuse of our gift of speech, not simply because we may be tempted to “quarrel noisily” but because contention demonstrates an unwillingness to surrender to the will of another, or even to consider that another person’s words may have more value than my own.

OBSTINACY

Without doubt, we are called to form our consciences and to defend and stand up for the truths of our faith.

But what if another individual has a well-reasoned, faithful argument that proves more compelling than ours? Common sense suggests we should relinquish our opinion, or at least strive to incorporate its good points into ours. The obstinate individual, however, is so attached to the excellence of her or his argument that any differing point of view – certainly any compromise – is unthinkable. The obstinate individual, writes St. Thomas, “is too much attached to his own opinion, being unwilling to believe one that is better.”

This is a grave misuse of the intellectual capacities God gave us that we might discern the truth. If the truth contradicts my belief, I do myself no favor, nor do I honor my intellect, if I stubbornly maintain an opinion (no matter how hard I have worked to form it) simply because it is “mine.”

DISCORD

As the ills of obstinacy overshadow the sun of our intellect, the plague of discord casts the same gloom upon our will. Throughout our *Catechism* we read that through our Baptism we have become, by the outpouring of God’s Spirit, members of Christ’s Body, the Church. “In the unity of this Body, there is a diversity of members and functions... [But] all members are linked to one another....” (CCC, #806)

This unity may seem a distant goal and a fragile reality, but it remains one of the ends toward which we must commit ourselves. The freedom of the human will sets humankind apart from the animal kingdom, and allows us, in St. Thomas’ words, “...to give up [our] own will and agree with others.” Discord is the stubborn refusal to surrender to another, even – and especially – if we are wrong.

DISOBEDIENCE

In an earlier reflection, when we considered the Fourth Commandment, we turned to the *Catechism*, which teaches that this commandment

...extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it.

This commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents [and]...those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons. (CCC, #2199)

The family provides the model for all the relations the *Catechism* describes. Disobedience is a deliberate violation of those bonds, founded on no better reason than an individual’s believing her or his way of acting is “better.” To be sure, we are not obliged – indeed, our faith forbids us to – accede to unjust legislation, and our *Catechism* is uncompromising when it states

The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teaching of the

Gospel. Refusing obedience to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's...." (CCC, #2242)

However, the disobedience the *Catechism* envisions is a carefully (and prayerfully) considered decision. The disobedience that is linked to vainglory is nothing more than a personal conviction that mine is the only way to proceed.

THE ANTIDOTE: MAGNANIMITY

When we hear the words "magnanimous" and "magnanimity" we probably first think of those wealthy individuals whose generosity is so essential a part of the humanitarian assistance offered by so many charitable institutions, and so vital to our cultural life. Indeed, St. Thomas observes, "Magnanimity by its very name denotes stretching forth of the mind to great things." (ST, II-II, 129.1)

The magnanimity St. Thomas describes is (or ought to be) a characteristic of the great and powerful members of our society. However, that does not let the rest of us off the hook.

...a magnanimous act is not characteristic of any virtuous man, but only of great men. It is by reason of their sources, namely prudence and grace, that all virtues are connected, as dispositions residing together in the soul, whether in action or in close readiness for action. So a man who cannot fittingly perform the acts of magnanimity can have a magnanimous disposition, which makes him ready to perform a magnanimous act, should it be appropriate to his position in life. (Ibid., 3, ad 2)

This warns us we may not claim a low spot in the economic or social order to excuse us from the obligation to embrace the quest for personal excellence. Still less may we use our lack of financial or ancestral resources to excuse us from seeking the holiness that characterizes those who are truly "great" in God's kingdom. St. Thomas quotes Aristotle when he teaches that the magnanimous are extremists in their pursuit of greatness, but middle-of-the-road moderates in pursuit of what they feel is their due.

As Aristotle says, the magnanimous man stands at the extreme of greatness in so far as he strives for the greatest aims. But he stands at the mean by being what he ought to be, because he strives for the greatest aims as reason prescribes. For, as Aristotle adds, he claims what he considers he deserves, because he does not strive for things beyond his worth. (ST, II-II, 129.3)

This suggests that we may avoid all the dangers of vainglory when we mind our own business, turn to one another in a spirit of genuine Christian fraternity, and surrender to the virtue of humility – ascribing to God the

worth of everything we have and are – while challenging ourselves to be the best possible representatives of Christ that we can possibly be.

MARY, OUR MODEL

No one will be surprised to find our Blessed Mother the model for our magnanimous behavior. We have only to ponder the words of her Magnificat to realize how well she captures all the qualities that put vainglory to flight. She does not deny that future generations will acknowledge her greatness, but she takes no credit for this excellence. "He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name." (Luke 1.49)

Mary appears only a few times in the gospel accounts, but when we encounter her, as we do at Cana, we find her seeking harmony and the good of a married couple who would be embarrassed by their lack of wine. At Calvary she becomes the model for the Church, surrendering to Jesus' will and accepting the Beloved Disciple as a son. When she visits her cousin Elizabeth to proclaim the Good News of the Incarnation she puts our gift of speech to its highest and best use, to preach God's goodness and mercy.

May our Mother of Humility put all Vanity to flight! ■

NEW BOOKS

Continued from page 1

Sr. Lucia's experiences as a young girl. Although it was written for children, Rosary devotees of any age will find it fascinating. We're offering the book for \$14.95.

FR. MULLADY'S NEW CD

Many of our friends are, undoubtedly, sad, to learn of the death of Mother Angelica, founder of ETWN. What some may not realize is the strong link between Mother Angelica's ministry and that of one of the Rosary Center's most popular contributors, Fr. Brian Mullady. For many years Fr. Mullady took part in a number of Mother Angelica's programs, and he was so well-known that when the Western Dominicans developed their website, he was the most "visited" member of the Western Province. The Rosary Center is very proud to offer the CD of a conference Fr. Mullady recently offered. It is titled *Mercy in to Misery* and leads the listener through a reflection on Mercy, illustrated in the gospel account of Jesus' encounter with the woman taken in adultery. To order the CD, turn to our order form; the cost is \$10.00.

WITH REGRETS...

We are very sorry to announce an increase in the amount we must pay for the candles we make available to our friends. Heretofore, we have asked a donation of \$2.00. The costs of our candles have risen, with the result we must, reluctantly, beg you to contribute at least \$3.00 for the candles you wish us to offer for your intentions.

