

MANCIPIA

December/January 2009

THE REPORT OF THE CRUSADE OF SAINT BENEDICT CENTER



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TO FRIENDS OF THE CRUSADE:

CONSCIENCE AND THE NANNY STATE



Br. André Marie, M.I.C.M., Prior

Visiting a nearby college recently, I picked up the campus newspaper to see what the students are reading nowadays. The front-page headline proclaimed that the dean of the college opposes lowering the legal drinking age from twenty-one back to eighteen. It seems that binge drinking is a problem on campus, and this problem is pandemic. Eighteen-year-olds just aren't "mature" enough to drink.

The institutionalized prolongation of adolescence we call higher education has evidently failed to imbue any sense of moral restraint on its inmates, so the officials want draconian laws to keep them from getting themselves hurt.

I am not alone in observing the irony that an eighteen-year-old can get himself killed in his country's defense, yet he cannot legally buy a beer or a bottle of wine to celebrate with his friends the day he signs up for the Marines. Something is slightly askew here. But who is to blame?

Meet the Nanny State. Since we are all bad little children, our Nanny makes laws — many and minute — to regulate our infantile behavior. Nanny is a conflicted old dame. Nanny is terribly *overweight*, since she gorges herself on our tax money. She is *morally lascivious and unnatural*, because her schools

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and agencies encourage us to have "safe sex," with a partner of our own preference, and to murder our children in the abortuaries she funds if we weren't safe enough. Nanny tells us not to think less of folks whose ideas of gender roles are different than ours. Her protection extends to the oft-misunderstood "transgendered," whom even my spell checker discriminates against. Yet, for all her obesity and moral turpitude, Nanny is also a *prude*; for, like an old-fashioned schoolmarm with

chronic dyspepsia, she gets downright preachy about some topics: We must not drink until we've reached twenty-one, and *that's that!*

Inconsistent? Not at all. What it shows is that the numbing of the conscience, which leads to social chaos, brings its own

On the cover: The beauty and devastation of the ice storm. We survived quite well despite considerable damage to one of our buildings.

punishment: Tyranny. "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." This famous quote comes from John Adams, whose insight can be reduced to this: Without the natural law (the eternal law of God written on the heart), our nation's positive law (the Constitution) is useless.

Having tossed off the natural law and grown gross in mind and body, modern Americans are at the point Adams spoke of: Our Constitution, the rule of law, is inadequate to govern us. What then? Richard Weaver would seem to think that despotism is

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For his part, Orestes Brownson argued that Catholicity is necessary to sustain popular liberty.



Orestes Brownson

CONVENT CORNER

PEACE . . . TO MEN OF GOOD WILL



Sr. Marie Thérèse, M.I.C.M.,
Prioress

The philosophic definition of peace is the tranquility of order. Instinctively, people seek peace, but they don't find it because they don't take the means to establish a right order in their lives. This results in individuals seeking means of escape from the inner war of their own heart, which in turn causes families being at war, and ultimately countries being

at war. The tranquility of order that the angel was referring to as he gave the glad tidings of Christmas peace was that peace which comes from a human will being united to the will of its Creator. You might say our will becomes "good" when it is united to God's good will. "Peace on earth to men of good will!"

This peace is something that we had in seed form at baptism when we were first in the state of grace. Since then, something has happened to rob us of this peace. Something has happened to destroy this tranquility of order. When at the dawn of reason, our will chose something other than God's will, we committed sin and we started losing that peace, because we started losing that harmony of our will being ordered to God's. If we cooperate with God's superabundant graces, we can unite our will to God's good will and regain that peace and continue to grow "in wisdom and age and grace before God and men" (Luke 2:52). A person who does this is becoming a saint. And all of us are called to be saints by pursuing this peace, ". . . seek after peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11).

Basically this means living a sacramental life (frequenting the sacraments to grow in grace and restore it if we lose it). Very simple. However, because we sin on a regular basis, things get complicated and confusing. With every sin we commit we weaken the union of our will with God's and we darken our intellect to the way of peace. Now this striving to keep our own souls (and consequently our families and the world) at peace is truly a war. We fight in this war as part of the victorious army, known as the Church Militant, in which we enlisted at our baptism. The Church Militant provides the means we need to win these battles and establish peace. And, as with all victorious armies, the Church Militant realizes the importance of pulling its members out of the battle from time to time in a retreat.

A retreat is used by a successful army as a means to strengthen and refocus the members of the army in order to be able to go back into battle with increased vigor and strive anew for the victory, which is synonymous with peace. In the Church Militant, yearly, monthly, daily, and hourly retreats are

used to obtain victory and consequent peace.

At Christmastime we witness God Incarnate, by the message of an angel, inviting all men to find peace by coming to Him in His retreat house — the stable at Bethlehem. If we take a little time to think about those who responded to this invitation, we will have the perfect examples to follow for making these several types of retreat.

Let's start with those who are furthest away, namely the Three Kings. Their journey to Bethlehem began nine months before when, in their far-off kingdoms, they were startled by the appearance of a new star in the heavens. Immediately they realized that a prophecy had been fulfilled, and they loaded their camels and took off after the star to satisfy this divine desire. They left their kingdoms behind, and it wouldn't be surprising if there were some left behind who didn't share the vision of their king and didn't mind expressing this. Having overcome the love of riches and the love of power by leaving them, and having vanquished that fell foe of human respect by ignoring it, the victorious kings continued on their arduous journey toward the object of their holy desire. When they finally reached Jerusalem, their star disappeared. They then followed the inner lights of God's grace and were rewarded by the reappearance of the star, which rested over the "retreat house," causing them to rejoice with exceeding great joy. We don't know exactly how long (perhaps a week) these three holy kings spent adoring Jesus in silence, offering along with their three gifts the gift of their whole selves and their kingdoms. They must have had hushed conversations with Saint Joseph. They must have asked him, the prince of the House of God, for advice in their own kingly vocations. Their devotion to Jesus would surely have been "Marian" as they "found the Child with Mary His Mother" at every hour of their retreat. And

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The angels appearing to the shepherds.

PREFECT'S COLUMN

HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND HOLY NEW YEAR!



Tertiary* Br. John Marie Vianney

economic conditions, however, are calling for a scaled-down version for future conferences. We may end up having shorter regional convocations with fewer speakers, while maintaining the conference flavor and fervor. You will hear about whatever is decided in our newsletters.

What is it we can do in the Month of the Divine Infancy to make us better Catholics? In brief, we can make this the best Advent and Christmas we have ever had. It is easy to love babies, despite the great disregard for the pre-born exhibited throughout the world today. And it is very easy to love Baby Jesus who comes to save us. Give Him the unrestricted love He deserves this Christmas. Focus on His coming, not on all the glitz that the world offers. Many will find it a little easier to do that this year as economic necessity forces us to exercise the poverty that comes naturally with lay-offs, unemployment, business closings, etc. And there is powerful recourse to the head of the Holy Family, Saint Joseph, patron of workers.

And what can you do to make the month of the Holy Name of Jesus the best you have ever experienced? A gentle nod of your head every time you say or hear His Most Blessed Name! Sometimes say it slowly and with feeling, knowing it is sweet music to His ears. It is the most powerful one-word prayer

* Third Orders, whose members are called "tertiaries," are associations of the faithful established by religious orders. Most M.I.C.M. tertiaries are lay folk.

This *Mancipia* was meant to cover the December and January time period, i.e., the month of the Divine Infancy and the month of the Holy Name of Jesus. But, for just a moment, I wish to follow up on my article in the August/September *Mancipia*. I want to thank all those who made our last annual conference a smashing success. Current

there is. January is a time when many of us make resolutions. In a world gone crazy, a world that threatens the existence of not only the little ones but also the elderly and the infirm, a world that seems on the precipice of destruction — there is a resolution that I highly suggest, which I highlighted in my talk at the last conference: become a daily communicant. Since the time of Saint Pope Pius X, the laity have been encouraged to receive Our Holy Lord daily in the Blessed Sacrament. The cure for the daily woes of this life is the Divine Physician Himself: Jesus Christ, our Eucharistic Lord.

Are you carrying and saying your Rosary daily? If you love Our Lord, you must also love His Mother. The prayer she specifically asked for was the Rosary. Tertiaries make a simple promise to carry their rosaries and pray the Rosary daily. Anyone can make the same promise. Our Lady calls you. Will you answer her this coming year by saying your daily Rosary? The family Rosary is particularly efficacious. Father Patrick Peyton is best known for promoting the theme: "The family that prays together, stays together."

Consider, in the year 2009, starting a Circle of Studies, *continued on page 14*

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FOUNDERS' COLUMN



Father Leonard Feeney

THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH

TAKEN FROM THE BOOK OF THE SAME TITLE

We are told in the beginning of the holy Gospel according to Saint John that, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

That is a wonderful phrase: “the Word was made flesh.” “Word” has a great deal of meaning for us. Our memories

are all tucked away in the shape of words. Our utterances to those we love are impossible without words, and even when we are thinking by ourselves and not speaking, we are somehow wording our thoughts for the hidden ear — which is the bliss of solitude.

Of all man’s achievements, perhaps the most astounding is his wording of a thing. When a little child cannot speak — when he has no words yet — one of the things we do for him is to coax him into word land.

If you were to sit down and think for many years as to how you could best say that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became Incarnate — took our nature and dwelt in our

midst, breathed our air and walked our roads, looked at our skies and listened to our sounds — I do not think you could possibly get a more chaste, clear, simple, inexhaustible-in-meaning expression of it than to say: “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”

“Word” leaves nothing out. And when you say “flesh,” you get in every single atom of our poor human frailty. If

you said, “the Word became man,” or, “the Word moved into our scene,” or, “the Word became one of our children,” there would probably be left out of the realization — for the sake of more lofty, noble, and impressive values — a great deal of what seems to be commonplace in us, of what is lowly and helpless, and yet of what God did assume.

But when you say, “the Word was made *flesh*,” the whole man is encompassed in that utterance. There can be no doubt about what has happened. Nothing is left out. Our ears, our nose, our eyes, our hair, our hands — everything is conveyed to our realization of what the Word became.

It is a marvelous wedding, the Word of God and the flesh of man. They are one. Thought now has little elbows. Divine

Thought has fingers. The Word of God has a human mind, a human soul, a human will, a human heart. God’s eternal Thought pauses, as it is uttered. It is filtered to suit our light. It is slowed down to our pace. It has our ways.

Saint John’s phrase, “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,” is a beautiful challenge, and you cannot get away from it. You either have to accept its value the way it is expressed, or else you have got to put it aside and go and study “Christianity” or “religion” — getting vaguer and vaguer in terms of some less challenging phrase, until finally your faith has slipped away from you.

And here is the next point I am going to make: If “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,” that must mean that all God’s utterances to the world, from the time of the Incarnation on, were meant somehow to be associated and connected with the flesh. God has nothing further to say to man, except what a voice can speak, a head nod, a hand plead, a pen write, or a man topple over on the ground for, in martyrdom. God has nothing to say any more that is not to be said in terms of flesh and blood. All non-incarnational communication with man, by way of revelation, has ceased.

That is a wonderful phrase: “the Word was made flesh.” “Word” has a great deal of meaning for us.

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Mr. Brian Kelly

THREE KINGS

Shortly after Vatican II, in the mid-60s through the 70s, I can remember, at Christmas Mass, or the Sunday before Epiphany, being enlightened from the pulpit about a minor, erroneous detail concerning three figures in the manger scene. Those richly robed men who are always approaching the Baby Jesus, without ever quite making it into

the stable, are not who we think they are, we were told. Yes, they're wearing crowns on their heads, and they are carrying precious gifts befitting royal personages. But these mysterious characters were not kings.

Who were they then? Well, we used to hear a variety of answers to that question depending on whether the preacher was the old monsignor who never forgot to plug the second collection, the middle-aged curate who always forgot to genuflect, a newly ordained who forgot what his parents taught him about the fickleness of popularity, or some visiting preacher who just loved to travel around dropping bombs from the latest book he'd read by some luminary in the school of Higher Biblical Criticism. "They were Persian astrologers," the pastor assured us in stentorian tone; "Zoroastrian wizards perhaps," opined the forty-something curate who was always in a hurry; "No," said the newly ordained in a daring effort to be erudite, "they were from a priestly caste, you see, and these priests were called *magi* in the Persian tongue." The visiting preacher had no patience for all this: "People," he thundered cockily, making sure he had every eye and ear, "I hate to tell you this, but the whole story of Bethlehem, the stable, the angels, the shepherds, the star, and the kings — it's all a myth. It was invented by the Johannine community in Pella, in the second century, and they added all this to Matthew's original Gospel. You see, in order to deify the historical man, Jesus, and change Him into a God-King, they had to have earthly kings come and adore Him." Yes, "myth" was the exact word I once actually did hear a priest call the Bethlehem story in a sermon I did not stay to hear the rest of.

In more recent years, however, even at some of the traditional Latin rite Masses I've attended, I've heard priests offer correction to the simple folk informing them that the magi were not kings but "wise men" — as the Douay Bible clearly states — or even learned "astronomers" who studied the stars. Magi is the root for the Latin word *magister*, which means "teacher." The English word "magic," which also has a darker meaning, may be derived from the Persian word, but it is more probably taken from Simon Magus (dubbed *Magus*, the magician, in tradition) who lent his name as well to the

sin of "simony." This Simon, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, tried to pay St. Peter money for the power to confer the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands.

Just as the word "priest," in its linguistic, pre-Christian variants, can apply to pagan priests or to the divinely established Aaronic priesthood, so, too, can the Persian word *magi* be applied to idolatrous sages of old, or to wise men who, though not Hebrews, offered some kind of priestly worship to the one true God. We should know that not all the Jews returned to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century BC; the majority, in fact, remained in Persia, where, under Kings Cyrus and Darius, they flourished and multiplied. The magi who came to Bethlehem were certainly influenced by these Jews. Having familiarized themselves with the Hebrew religion they, no doubt, were inspired by God to know that the Messiah, His Son, was to come in those days.

There's something else of interest here. Language scholars note that at the time of Our Lord's advent, due to six centuries of Jewish presence and intermarriage, the tongue spoken in that part of Persia, where the magi caste lived, was more Aramaic than Parsi.

So, the magi, or some of them at least, waited to see His star, for it was a common belief that the birth of great kings would be preceded by a sign in the heavens. The Greeks borrowed their word for sage, *magos*, from the Persian and that is the word that the Holy Ghost inspired St. Matthew to use in describing the men who came from the east to worship the "King of the Jews." If they were kings, then, why didn't St. Matthew say so? That's the gist of the un-regal argument. I'll get to that in a minute after the following somewhat relevant interjection.

The custom of building a manger scene, or *presepio*, as the Italians call it — and no one outdoes the Italian people in designing their *presepi* — dates back to Saint Francis of Assisi. His manger scene was a live one acted out with characters as a play. At some point in time, I am not sure when, churches began making manger scenes of their own with statues designed for the occasion: Our Lady and Saint Joseph, their donkey, the shepherds and their lambs, and even the kind of animals that stables normally sheltered. *Il Santo Bambino*, the Holy Child, would be placed in the crib at the Christmas Eve Mass. In western churches the Three Kings would not make

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their appearance until January 6. From churches, the custom spread to homes.

It never bothered anyone that the three wise men followed the star to the “stable” rather than to the “house,” which the Gospel of St. Matthew tells us the Holy Family had by that time found residence in. Nor did anyone ever question the tradition of having “three” wise men adore the Christ Child, when scripture does not relate how many had come.

Think about this first Epiphany as it really was. What a blessing for the proprietor of that house. Imagine having the Holy Family as guests in your home! Imagine having a brilliant star rest a single beam upon your roof while three princely-clad foreigners knocked at your door asking to adore a baby resting there in the arms of His mother. What must have been that man’s surprise when he saw all the commotion outside as the entourage of these noble visitors awaited its turn to give obeisance to this new-born Child.

The Gospel tells us that the presence of the magi in Jerusalem, and their question to King Herod concerning the whereabouts of the one “*born* king of the Jews” troubled not only Herod, but “all Jerusalem.” Now, if they were merely foreign “sages” would they have created such a commotion? And, if they were not at least of nobility, how did they gain an audience with a king? And if they were just astronomers, then why didn’t Herod send spies to follow them to Bethlehem and note the

exact place where the new-born King was? The fact that Herod did not send anyone to follow them would argue that the magi were kings also, because it would have been highly undiplomatic to send someone to tail a king. Furthermore, if they were not only “wise men,” but kings, then they would have traveled with a retinue, perhaps of hundreds, and that in itself would have aroused the city.

Where did the tradition originate that the magi were also kings? And where did

Tradition find their names: Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar? Actually, in the works of only one early father, Tertullian, do we find the magi also described as kings, or “princes,” to use his exact word. The oral tradition, on the other hand, could have been more universal. It wasn’t until later, however, in the Middle Ages, that we find quite a few doctors testifying to the royalty of the magi. After all, the Gospel account does say that they “opened up *their treasures* and offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matt. 2:11, *my italics*). It would be highly unlikely that even one astronomer, or sage, would have

a “treasure” to carry about on a five hundred-mile (or longer) journey, never mind three of them.

In the Old Testament there is this compelling Messianic prophecy, which, although not as explicit as so many other prophecies about Christ, is nevertheless appropriated to the magi in the Offertory prayer for the Church’s Epiphany liturgy: “The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents: the kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts” (Psalm 73:10). Then, there is the prophecy of Isaias (Gradual prayer), which has been incorporated into the Epiphany liturgy, although kings are not mentioned: “The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Epha: all they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense: and showing forth praise to the Lord” (Is. 60:6).

Sometime in the Middle ages, scholars discovered a fifth century Armenian text, which is the earliest document registering the Three Kings’ names, as we have received them, and their princely status. In the fourth century, while in Palestine, St. Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, was shown three tombs, which the Christians there had long believed encased the bones of the three wise men. The tradition was that the magi remained together after returning east and that soon after Pentecost they were baptized by St. Thomas the Apostle. Apparently, being that their tombs were in Palestine, they must have ended their days there, no doubt in Bethlehem, although I was not able to find a reference for this assumption. St. Helena had the relics of the holy kings transported to Constantinople, and from there they were brought to Milan a century later. In 1163, they were brought to Germany, where they have rested in the cathedral of Cologne until this day. How serious were the Cologne in upholding the authenticity of their precious relics? Well, emblazoned on the city’s coat of arms, you will see the three crowns of the royal magi.

Email Brian Kelly at bdk@catholicism.org.



The Three Kings in front of Herod during an IHM Christmas pageant.

TO FRIENDS OF THE CRUSADE:

CONSCIENCE AND THE NANNY STATE

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next: “An ancient axiom of politics teaches that a spoiled people invite despotic control. Their failure to maintain internal discipline is followed by some rationalized organization in the service of a single powerful will. In this particular, at least, history, with all her volumes vast, has but one page” (*Ideas Have Consequences*, pg. 91).

For his part, Orestes Brownson argued that Catholicity is necessary to sustain popular liberty. His reason? As a democratic society is governed by the will of the people, there is no higher civil power to guide them in the fundamental principles of right and wrong, as well as the application of these principles in concrete situations. Yet they need to know these things, since their will is governing society. (Think again of the quote from John Adams.) The Catholic Church, as the guardian of both the natural law and the positive (revealed) law, is necessary to inform men’s consciences so that they can govern themselves rightly. At the time Brownson expressed these views, Protestantism was liberalizing at a fast pace. Former generations of Protestants believed in the natural law and certain biblical principles, but that was quickly changing. The fact that the Catholic Church is now virtually alone in opposing birth control, which all Protestant sects used to oppose, is an indicator of where the trend has led them. Now most mainstream Protestant denominations are so overrun by the sexual revolution that they are squishy on some of the most fundamental aspects of the natural law as it pertains to family life. The result? The moral sewer in which we find ourselves.

What it comes down to is this: Men’s consciences have been morally lobotomized by promiscuity and consumerism; their minds have been rotted out by the buzz of mass media and the intellectual squalor of public “education”; they have rendered themselves less than governable. Emasculated by their own progress and prosperity, they will be beaten into subjection by a rotund Nanny — *whom they created*. Nanny the fatty, Nanny the lecher, and Nanny the prude will become Nanny the Magisterium and Nanny the Gestapo, demanding not only more of their paychecks, but most of their freedoms, and all of what is left of their ability to think critically.

It’s almost enough to make radical libertarianism look good.

When my grandmother was a little girl growing up in Perpignan, France, she used to walk to school with a wineskin hanging from her shoulder. It was part of her lunch every day. Mamère was *eight* when she left France for America. When her son, my father, was a little boy, he would occasionally accompany his father to the neighborhood bar, where gents in the Gentilly section of New Orleans would gather for conversation and spirits. Papa would perch my little dad on the bar and say, “A beer for me, and one for Sonny.” The bartender would give Papa a full beer mug, and then fill a small glass from the tap — with mostly head, as Dad recalls — for “Sonny.”

A sociologist might say it was a male bonding ritual in our tribe. Whatever it was, it drew father and son together. In our house, as young men, my brothers and I drank wine and beer at family gatherings. It was normal; nobody questioned it. We were taught to be moderate in drinking just as we were taught moderation in eating and *in all things*. By contrast, some of my peers in college, who hailed from less Mediterranean and Catholic parts of Louisiana, had been taught that spirits were the devil’s own brew. They could not handle the stuff. Once introduced to it, some of them drank to excess and became almost instantly debauched. This was particularly tragic when it happened to girls, who became targets for unscrupulous predators.

Mamère at eight years old was mature enough for wine. Dad, at about the same age, was mature enough for beer. Neither of them abused the stuff; both of them enjoyed happy marriages, stable family lives, good health, and a notable absence of any criminal record. But today’s twenty-year-old is not “mature” enough for alcoholic beverages.

God will not be mocked. As in the French Revolution, when we throw off the restraints of tradition and the moral law, we forge cruel shackles for ourselves.

Welcome, Nanny! We’ve been expecting you.

Email Brother André Marie at bam@catholicism.org.



“Sonny”, looking rather mature for his age.

CONVENT CORNER

PEACE . . . TO MEN OF GOOD WILL

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she, as a loving Mother, would have directed their devotions in a most loving fashion. But the Three Kings couldn't stay indefinitely, as their hearts surely inclined them, since eternity hadn't yet started. The Infant God willed that they go back to their kingdoms and live out their vocations until He called them to Himself again at the eternal banquet. It was time that they leave the retreat house and bring back with them the lights they had received and the peace that had filled their hearts. And so they did. They not only became holy monarchs, but the peace that emanated from their hearts possessed their kingdoms.

The shepherds also received a call from their duties. They left their sheep in the fields at the invitation of the angel ". . . to go over to Bethlehem and see this word" (Luke 2:15). They felt that the peace of their hearts depended on this visit. And so they went with haste and "found the Infant Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger" (Luke 2:13). They spoke to Joseph and, also, to Mary, who ". . . kept all these words, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Again, we don't know how long they stayed, though Scripture seems to indicate that their midnight visit may have lasted through that night. And so our shepherds, having made an intense and short retreat of perhaps a day, ". . . returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard" (Luke 2:20). Scripture doesn't say, but because they were so close, it is likely

that they came back for a few more visits to refocus their hearts and reorder their lives, banishing sin and growing in virtue. Surely, had they the opportunity, they would have spent a day visiting Him during each month.

Saint Joseph is the hidden figure at Christmas. We know that he was constantly caring for and protecting the Infant God and His Holy Mother. It almost seems as though he was never in a position to visit them since he was never away from them. However, he must have had to leave their sides briefly to procure food or wood for a fire or simply to greet the shepherds and the kings. Saint Joseph's example of retreat is a more frequent occurrence. Early in the morning before he started the round of his daily duties, he must have knelt by the crib and, with his holy spouse, adored the Infant God, there filling his heart with divine knowledge and love

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When Saint Joseph arose from his meditation to go about the round of his daily duties, he brought peace to everything and everyone he came in contact with.



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The course of instruction is basically the same as that which had been offered in the early days of the St. Benedict Center in Cambridge. The instructors are the popes, the councils, the saints, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and, most especially, Holy Scripture and Catholic Tradition. By learning from these unchangeable foundational sources, we

continue to keep our eyes fixed on the narrow path to salvation, no matter how distorted and distracting the world around us becomes, and no matter what is taught by self-proclaimed "experts" — wolves in sheep's clothing.

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SPECIAL FEATURE

MY HUMAN GUARDIAN ANGEL BY RUSSELL LAPLUME

One reads and hears about a lot of stories of direct divine intervention in the lives of not only saints, but ordinary faithful Catholics who had some saintly person in their lives praying for them night and day. Our author, Russell LaPlume, I can vouch, is about as balanced a Catholic as I've ever known, and definitely not one to go around looking for "signs and wonders." Judging from what we have already read about his father, and the amazing stories Russell relates in this present article, we can assume that Gabriel LaPlume's prayers were very powerful. Furthermore, our author freely admits that if these events had not happened to him personally, he would have been highly skeptical of them. Even without an imprimatur, we hope our readers draw profit from this chaste and credible, personal account, which magnifies God's particular providence through means of His human instruments. The Editor

In the August/September *Mancipia* I recounted the story of my amazing father, the "Can Man," and I made mention at the end of the article that I considered him my special protector here on earth, as I hope he is in the heavenly country. His intercessory prayers for his children's protection must have been powerful for, in my particular case, more than once in my life miracles were performed that I always attributed to his special care.

My father had a nickname for each of his children. The one assigned to me was *minou*, and roughly it means in its Canadian sense "little dust ball under the bed" — you know, when you pull up the bed sheet to see what is under there, the sudden air current causes all the dust to flit to and fro. My mother called me *l'oiseau à la branche* — the bird who flits from branch to branch in nervous activity. I tell you this so you will understand the concern my parents had in my regard, for their gray hair must have come prematurely on my account.

The first instance was recounted by my mother. It seems that she needed to go to Boston one day to take care of some of my father's printing business and, so, she took me along with several other siblings. We entered a building and took the elevator. It was one of those box elevators used for cargo — no sides, just a platform with a small open space between the floor and the elevator walls. It was crowded, and upon reaching our desired floor my mother quickly counted heads, and, you guessed it, I was missing. In desperation, the elevator operator looked back into the cargo platform and almost fainted when he saw two little hands holding on to the sides of the floor in the space between the elevator walls. He carefully walked in, clutched both my hands and wiggled me up and out. Upon returning home, my father had nervously run to the car to check on his children. He told my mother that sometime during our absence he was prompted to say a prayer for our safety — he just had that "feeling."

The next instance I can directly attribute to my father. I was in Vietnam at the time and my period of R&R (rest and recuperation) had arrived. We Marines weren't always given first class status and, believe it or not, I had to bum rides from up north to the nearest airbase, which was in Danang. On my way to this base, I stopped in at an artillery outpost to visit some buddies. We were walking to the chow tent when I realized that I had forgotten my bag that contained my orders authorizing some R&R in Australia. My buddies went on ahead while I went back for the bag. Upon returning,

one single artillery round exploded not more than thirty feet in front of me. I remember feeling the shock wave while sensing hot metal whizzing through the air. I looked down at my body and, amazingly, I was intact. Upon recovering, I boogied to the nearest bunker because other shells were falling in the compound. That same day I left the compound and took my R&R. After the allotted week I returned to Vietnam. I retraced my steps back up north again stopping at that same artillery base. My buddies excitedly grabbed me and told me to take them to the exact spot where I had been standing, but not to look to my rear. They pointed out the crater the shell had left and, from there, I oriented myself, rather puzzled, to the position where I thought I had been. Once settled, they told me to turn around. To my amazement, a tent that had been about twenty-five feet behind me was riddled with holes; and to my greater astonishment, a rough shape in the middle of that perforation was intact. At that moment, I had immediately thought of my father — I remember it well — and thanked him interiorly. Had I died I would have gone straight to hell, for my life had been a sinful one. Curiously, however, from that moment on I would pray to my father for protection. I guess I can say that this was the beginning of my road back to the Faith.

After I was discharged from the Corps, I returned home, and feeling invincible as ever, which is the eternal problem of youth, I lived a godless life. During one of the many parties I attended, and after drinking way too much alcohol, I decided I would descend a slide, while standing up, into the swimming pool. On the last leg of that foolish plunge, my head crashed into the bottom of the slide and I plunged unconscious to the bottom of the pool. My friends who had been watching thought

As I was being yanked out I could still feel the grip on my ankles when the trailer came crashing down and actually pinned my long hair to the ground. In seconds I pulled myself free, turned to thank my rescuer, and found no one there.

I was only faking it to scare them, so they decided to turn their backs to me and wait for me to surface — then they would have the last laugh. While unconscious I had an out-of-body experience. I seemed to be going through a gauntlet of all the people I had met in my life and experiencing what good or bad I had performed in relation to them all the while immersed in a white light. As I proceeded along the way, the light became brighter and, while at first a peace had enveloped me, the closer I came to the source of that light, the more my limbs trembled. It was towards the end of this procession of people that I saw my father — a sad smile upon his face. The experience ended at that moment, for I found myself choking outside the pool as I was being revived. My wife, who was present, can testify to this event.

The next instance I will recount is to me the most eerie. My wife and I had bought some land in central New Hampshire, living in a trailer at first, then building a home and moving the trailer to the back of the property for future use. I had always intended to make that trailer a barn, but I just couldn't get around to it. My wife had decided to visit family and stay with them for a week. She took all the children and left me alone because someone had to work and take care of the animals that we had, my children being too young at this time to assist. I thought to myself, "What better time to prepare the trailer for a barn?" As I said, I had hauled that trailer to the back of the property and, after examining it, I could see that it was leaning quite drastically. I commenced to level the trailer by crawling under the frame and, using pump jacks, lifting it as far as I could, inserting cinder blocks, lowering the jacks, then moving further along and doing the same thing. It was certainly unsafe to be doing this alone, but I was bound and determined. At some point I was questioning the wisdom of being under that behemoth and, while I was on my stomach, jacking away, somebody grabbed my legs and hauled me out. I screamed something like, "What do you think you're doing?" As I was being yanked out I could still feel the grip on my ankles when the trailer came crashing down and actually pinned my long hair to the ground. In seconds I pulled myself free, turned to thank my rescuer, and found no one there. Then my father popped into my mind. I searched for several minutes wanting to find someone who had done this deed but there was no one to be found. As far as I was concerned, my "guardian angel" had done it again.

The previous episodes occurred while my father was still in this vale. The last episode happened several years after his death. One day, my sister Denise, whom my father had nicknamed "Lily of the Valley," called me to ask if I could install a rock pathway to her front door. I hesitated, for you see, she had abandoned the Faith years before and was now living with someone other than her sacramental partner. I knew that I could not stay under that roof for that very reason. After reflection, I decided that I would accept and make a plea for her to return to the true Faith. Upon arriving, and before I started working on

the job, I asked her if there was a place we could talk privately. She promptly took me to her back deck which is situated high on a secluded hill in central Maine. I commenced with my spiel admonishing her on her current lifestyle, all the while condemning my past behavior. I said she greatly offended Our Lord and, also, was scandalizing the good name of our parents. Wondering if I was going to be asked to leave, I studied her face for a reaction. With tears in her eyes she said, "After I had hung up the phone with you the other day, I came out to this deck to relax. Suddenly I remembered that I had wanted to put up a statue of some saint someday. My eyes drifted to the site I had previously picked and to my astonishment, Pa was standing there. He did not move nor speak, but just stood there staring at me for about a minute. I felt interior calm, but somehow felt he was trying to tell me something. You probably think I'm crazy, but I tell you I saw him."

I didn't think her to be crazy, and I have a pretty good idea of what he was trying to tell her.

It was shortly after the previously mentioned trailer incident that I returned to the practice of the true Faith. I never told Pop of these episodes in my life because I always figured that somehow he already knew about them. "Thanks, Gabriel LaPlume, for persevering, and thank you, dear Lord, for granting his prayers."

Email Russell LaPlume at rlp@catholicism.org.



The school science fair took place mid-January, even though the hall was still being repaired from damage caused by the ice storm.

LOCAL NEWS:



Mr. Michael Hamilton

A LESSON IN TRUE FRIENDSHIP

How did you become a Catholic?" This is a frequent question that Catholic converts ask each other because it is in our spiritual genes to love true stories of God's divine providence and miracles. My own conversion is one filled with the loving providence of God and Our Lady.

I was not brought up in a religious home. My parents did not practice any religion, so neither did my brother or I. God's grace was evident early on, though, as I seemed to have been given a more sensitive conscience about doing bad things than my friends. I was always the one who didn't want to get into trouble.

In high school I had become best friends with a Catholic. He was not leading a good life, but he had the habit, at least, of attending Mass every Sunday. I eventually started going to Mass with him. I had no real understanding of what was going on, but people were pleasant enough and I didn't mind. Eventually, the idea of becoming a Catholic was presented to me. "Why not?" I thought. "I was going to Mass every Sunday anyway." So I enrolled in the R.I.C.A., where I learned absolutely nothing. Nonetheless, on Easter Sunday, 1990, at the age of eighteen, I was baptized, confirmed, and received my first Holy Communion. Although I still had no idea what it meant

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to be a Catholic, the graces of the sacraments started to work on me.

My friend moved away and I started to spend time with another Catholic friend with whom I worked. His name was Michael. Michael was always one step ahead of me in religious matters. He was serious about being Catholic, and I was not. He decided this had to change. Michael read a lot of good Catholic books and every

couple of weeks he would buy me five or six books in the hope that I would be as interested as he was. I always politely accepted the books and said that I would read them, eventually. Soon I had a small library of unread books and leaflets. One day after Mass, we got into Michael's car and he handed me a booklet entitled, "Confessions of a Roman Catholic," by Paul Whitcomb. I again told him I would read it. He told me he wanted me to read it right then and there. I argued that it would take well over an hour to get through it all, but Michael was

unwavering. He drove around aimlessly while I sat there reading the booklet. If you have never read the booklet, it is the story of a former Protestant minister who converts after taking an honest look at the Scriptures and seeing the Catholic doctrines all contained therein. It is a personal testimonial as well as a sound explanation of the major doctrines of Catholicism proven by the Bible. That booklet was the start of my full conversion to Catholicism. Without ever hearing the salvation doctrine before, I knew right then and there that there was *no salvation outside of the Catholic Church*.

Michael's parents also befriended me; his mother taught me how to say the Rosary and how to make rosaries, and his father encouraged us to join the Knights of Columbus, in which he was active. But Michael's work as my mentor was far from over. He and I worked the nightshift, so one weekday morning, he asked me if I wanted to go to Mass. I thought a moment and realized I had nothing better to

do, so I said, "Sure." Within a month we were going to Mass every day. We started saying the Rosary daily and making novenas, and we were enrolled in the brown scapular. I frequently told Michael after Mass that, in all honesty, I felt like a completely different man. I was rapidly changing and the "lord of this world" was not happy.

As with all real conversions, other people notice. I was soon confronted by my family and close friends who informed me that going to Mass every day and striving to live a moral life was "fanatical." One particularly rough day I knelt down in front of a photocopied picture of Mary that I had pinned to my bedroom wall. I begged her with all my heart to help me and confirm me in the truth. That is all I wanted. Mary, who never fails her children, did not fail me either. That day, the Mother of our Savior became a true mother to me. But, my mentor, Michael, still had more work to do.

In 1994, a traditional Catholic news publisher somehow got hold of Michael's address and sent him a sample issue of their periodical. In this sample issue was an ad for St. Benedict Center in New Hampshire. Michael wrote to the Center for more information and the brothers sent him their magazine and some other booklets. It wasn't too long before he went there for a visit. When he came back, he couldn't wait to tell me all about it, and the Latin Mass he had attended. "[I] just had to come with [him] for Mass on Sunday," he said. To which I ar-

Brother Francis always said that there were too many positive things that Catholics should focus on, so why waste time on the negative?

gued that since we worked all night Saturday, driving to New Hampshire after work, two hours each way, was just impossible. After two weeks, he wore me down and I agreed to go.

We got there just before Mass started. I wasn't too impressed. Because of the crowd we had to sit in the back of the chapel and I couldn't see what was happening on the altar and the language was, well, Latin. So, what made me come back the following Sunday? It was Father Jarecki's sermon. He spoke all about God's love for us, and how offended He is by sin. How could we offend God when He is so good, Father asked? Then, he raved about Mary and what a wonderful mother she is. This sermon was all the convincing I needed. I finally felt at home. And, after Mass, the people were so welcoming. They were the kindest, most charitable, and fun-loving group of Catholics I had ever met.

But why St. Benedict Center? Well, it was there that I found the richness of the Faith that I had read about in books, lived out by a community. There was no "professional wailing" at the Center. Brother Francis always said that there were too many positive things that Catholics should focus on, so why waste time on the negative? And for my part, I am grateful to Our Lady for leading me to the Center, and her holy crusade. I pray that I, too, may be a worthy soldier in her army.

Immaculate Heart of Mary School needs your help!

Support traditional Catholic education! Immaculate Heart of Mary School needs your help to provide an affordable education that will enable our students to reach their full potential: mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Our dedicated sisters take no salary and, with only a few lay teachers, our expenses are kept to a minimum. Our total costs, however, aren't completely covered by tuition.

We are looking for *Patrons of IHM*: individuals, families, or businesses that would help with contributions (which could be given monthly or in a few larger installments).

Will you help us? All *Patrons* receive: 1) a framed, autographed picture of the students and faculty of Immaculate Heart of Mary School; 2) an annual subscription to the school newspaper, *The Queen's Quarterly*; 3) a remembrance in certain special daily prayers; and 4) our eternal gratitude!

Fill out the reply form on page 15 or call Sister Maria Philomena at (603) 239-6495 to sign up or for more information.



We have plenty of snow for the school children to play in now.



A skit from the MICM Anniversary Program. This year was our 60th.



Two of our school alumni married on January 10.

even if it is a circle of only one, you. Our new official website, sai.catholicism.org explains all about the Saint Augustine Institute of Catholic Studies, the educational arm of the Crusade of Saint Benedict Center. Our founders, Father Leonard

Join the Team! Be a Queen's Tributor

Just as a family has to budget its monthly income in order to pay the bills, so do the Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The advantages of giving monthly are many:

1. It is a commitment; although voluntary, it is still more likely to be met than not.
2. It helps the religious economize more prudently and, at the same time, more magnanimously.
3. It can be less stressful on most benefactors because giving less, more often, is easier than giving more once a year.
4. It helps young benefactors, those just beginning to practice their obligation to support the Church, to budget accordingly.

Queen's Tribute donors receive all our mailings. More importantly, every month the traditional Latin Mass is offered for all our benefactors.

Fill out the reply form on page 15 or call our bookkeeper, Russell LaPlume, at (877) 773-1773 [toll-free], to join or for more information.



The Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Feeney, Sister Catherine, and Brother Francis always stressed the crucial importance of Catholic studies. If we are going to convert America, we will need Catholic men and women who are well formed in the Faith and well *informed* about it. The day will come, we pray, when well-educated Catholics will be called upon to become leaders of our nation. This is a major goal of our crusade.

As the Church, our families, our order, and America face difficult times ahead, remember that we always have hope. Those who have the One True Faith must never despair. In these dark times we must not hide the light of our Faith under a basket; rather we must let it shine brightly for all our neighbors to see. This may be a time when they who have no hope will hear us and find their true hope in the Catholic Church.

Email Brother John Marie Vianney at toprefect@catholicism.org.



Tragic beauty from the 2008 ice storm. Many trees snapped apart.



Some of IHM School's fiddle students performing before Christmas.

CONVENT CORNER

PEACE . . . TO MEN OF GOOD WILL

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in the silence of meditation, or better, contemplation. An hour would have flown by like a moment. His heart was full of peace, that tranquility of order that comes with complete union of our will with God's, that good will that the angel spoke of. When Saint Joseph arose from his meditation to go about the round of his daily duties, he brought peace to everything and everyone he came in contact with.

And finally we have the Mother of that Divine Infant, the Queen of Peace herself. Almost a year ago it was said to her by the Angel Gabriel, "The Lord is with thee." The Lord was always with her because she was always with Him, being completely of one will with His good will. If we think as far

back as her Immaculate Conception, we can say "the Lord is with thee" because she didn't wait until Christmas to unite her will to God's and surrender her soul to peace. Her example of retreat is most sublime. We can strive to imitate her constant union with God by "hourly retreats," which the saints have recommended. And so every hour when the clock strikes we can take a deep breath and retreat into the silent stable of our own soul where Jesus is, if we are in the state of grace. In a short but ardent gaze, we can offer Him our hearts, give up our sins, and be inflamed with His love in the presence of His Holy Mother. When we arise from our adoration full of peace, we will be startled to find ourselves back in the world and will do as Mary did, keeping "all these words, pondering them in our hearts" as we go about our daily duties.

Divine Babe of Bethlehem, Prince of Peace, come and take birth in our hearts!

Email Sister Marie Thérèse at convent@catholicism.org.

Building Lots for Sale

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CD, Tape, and MP3 Sale

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Detach and return in enclosed reply envelope or mail to Saint Benedict Center, PO Box 627, Richmond, NH 03470

Reply Form

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O Mary, Mother of mercy and Refuge of sinners, we beseech thee, be pleased to look with pitiful eyes upon poor heretics and schismatics. Thou who art the Seat of Wisdom, enlighten the minds that are miserably enfolded in the darkness of ignorance and sin, that they may clearly know that the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church is the one true Church of Jesus Christ, outside of which neither holiness nor salvation can be found. Finish the work of their conversion by obtaining for them the grace to accept all the truths of our Holy Faith, and to submit themselves to the supreme Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth; that so, being united with us in the sweet chains of divine charity, there may soon be only one fold under the same one shepherd; and may we all, O glorious Virgin, sing forever with exultation: Rejoice, O Virgin Mary, thou only hast destroyed all heresies in the whole world. Amen.

Hail Mary, three times. (Pius IX, Raccolta No. 579)

Referrals are a great way to be apostolic. Please help us reach more people by sending us names of friends, relatives, clergy, or religious who you think would be interested in reading our newsletter, *Mancipia*. Email names to our bookstore manager Bob Cohen at orders@catholicism.org or snail mail them to the address to the right. Thank You!

OUR CRUSADE:

The propagation and defense of Catholic dogma — especially *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* — and the conversion of America to the one, true Church.

For more information:

Our congregation website:
www.catholicism.org

Our bookstore website:
www.store.catholicism.org

And our conference website:
www.SbcConference.com

Slaves of the
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Be a part of our upcoming Speaking Tour!

This February and March, the Catholic America Tour (CAT) is taking a road trip through the Midwest, the South, and the Eastern Seaboard.

What is the CAT? It is a series of speeches given throughout the country, a program meant to inform, motivate, and equip Catholics to be better laborers in the project of converting our Republic to the one true Faith. The core of each CAT event is Brother André Marie's talk: "Toward a Catholic America: History, Goals, and Methods."

In addition to hearing the presentation, those in attendance can browse the books and audio products we will bring along. As part of the event, Brother André Marie will also field questions pertinent to Saint Benedict Center's apostolate, or various topics of a Catholic interest.

Make plans now to be a part of it. To learn more about this trip and about the Catholic America Tour, see our websites: www.catholicism.org and www.sbcconference.com, or call Russell LaPlume at (603) 239-6485.

Visit www.sbcconference.com for the latest information on the CAT, including locations and times for the talks.