

Climbing the Mountain

Discovering Your

Path to Holiness

Study Guide

*Climbing the Mountain- Discovering Your Path to Holiness
Study Guide*

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CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN

STUDY GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

In 2006, a number of Christian faithful in Dallas, Texas, became aware of an ordinary woman from Chicago, Illinois (now living in Ireland), who has an extraordinary calling. Anne, a lay apostle, is receiving messages from heaven and was called to record these messages in a set of “Volumes.” After reading the Volumes, many people were deeply moved by the simplicity of the words and the feeling that Jesus and Mary and others in heaven were speaking directly to them. Anne’s life reminds them of their own; she has a family and a career and, by all accounts, is an everyday woman like the rest of us. After writing the Volumes, Anne wrote her account of her extraordinary visits to heaven, with Jesus as her guide and where she meets many of the known and unknown saints. The fruits of her writings became the book, *Climbing the Mountain*, which again greatly impacted the lives of those who read it.

Later, in the Fall of 2006, a Catholic lay woman in Dallas, Texas, felt called during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (and while studying another book) to prepare a study guide on Anne’s writings. That call was confirmed and others were invited to assist and reflect on Jesus’ words and messages, as conveyed through Anne. The purpose was discerned as building up the kingdom of God through studying Anne’s writings and sharing this within the community. Hence, the *Climbing the Mountain* Study Guide Core Team was born.

One woman passed away shortly after joining the Core Team. Several other women close to the Core Team or planning to do the study passed away during the development process. We asked and continue to ask these prayerful women to intercede for us, and we feel comforted that they each strengthen and oversee our efforts from their new home with God. Several other faithful women were part of our original group, but due to critical family or health issues, each felt called to turn and focus their time and energy on other matters. We appreciate their continued prayers.

The Core Team has worked since January 2007 to research, write and organize this Study Guide. You are holding the results of their effort in your hands. With much prayer, time, trial and attention, we are pleased to present this Study Guide for the first session of the *Climbing the Mountain* book study. We are deeply grateful to our families first and then to all in our faith community who have aided in this effort, particularly by their prayers, and we hope that each of these faithful friends and supporters will continue to pray for and guide us and our study in the coming weeks. We appreciate the pastor of St. Monica who has graciously allowed us to use St. Monica’s facilities in Dallas, Texas, to hold our book study on Monday evenings in the fall of 2007.

We warmly welcome you to this study, and we hope that you are truly inspired both by the words of Jesus, Mary and the other saints as conveyed by Anne and by the encouragement of your fellow “climbers” as you journey through the coming weeks. Our prayer is that you will each take what you have learned and use it to continue to promote the kingdom of God in your families, neighborhoods and workplaces and among your friends in the Body of Christ.

With love and blessings in Christ,

The *Climbing the Mountain* Study Guide Core Team

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September 10, 2007

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This *Climbing the Mountain* Study Guide has been broken down into 10 weekly sessions over 12 weeks. Each week from 2 through 11 will consist of a large group meeting with prayer, announcements, music and sometimes a short DVD. After that, the large group will break up into assigned smaller groups, each with a facilitator whose purpose is to guide the discussion for that group. The facilitator is not an expert, just a “mountain climber” like all the other participants. In the small groups, we will start with shared prayer and then go over the weekly lessons, discussing the questions and the material presented. In preparation for each week from 2 through 11, participants will have already read the pertinent pages in the book and written the answers to the questions in this Study Guide as their “homework.” The small group discussions are an opportunity for each group member to speak and share her insight into the material for the benefit of the rest of the group. We strongly encourage each group member to contribute, and no one group member to dominate. After the small group meetings, we will go back into the larger group to hear in some cases a guest speaker, as well as a wrap up and closing prayer from a Core Team member.

Week 1 of the study will be our get-acquainted week, where we will meet our small group members, obtain our books and study guides and receive our first homework assignment. Week 12 will be a celebration week, where we will have a small party and hear testimonials from those who wish to share with the group about how they have enjoyed and benefited from the book and this study.

If you have a smaller group and this format does not work for you, you can simply condense the study to 10 weeks and share on your answers as a group

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All efforts have been made to accurately quote and attribute material from any outside sources, both electronic and printed. Still, mistakes can happen. Please contact us if you are aware of any incorrect citation of outside sources as referenced in this Study Guide.

Important Information

The *Climbing the Mountain* Study Guide Core team developed this work using the book *Climbing the Mountain* by Anne, a lay apostle and Bill Quinn. In late 2007, Direction for Our Times published a revised and updated version, *Climbing the Mountain* by Anne, a lay apostle. Some sections of the original book were eliminated, while other sections were added to reflect new developments in the mission. (Please note: nothing in Part Two- Heaven or Part Three- Climbing the Mountain, was changed).

Direction for Our Times would like to offer the use of this Study Guide regardless of which version you own. Therefore, in all references to page numbers, the first number in brackets { } refers to material from the original book, while the second number in square brackets [] refers to the page where it can be found in the revised and updated version.

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN Week 2

Part One: THE MISSION

In the original *Climbing the Mountain*, read the Prologue and Chapter 1 pages {3-13} and Long Journey of the Volumes {267-275}. In the revised edition, read Introduction as Found in Each of the Volumes pages [253-257] and From the Beginning pages [231-240]. Then, read the following and answer the questions:

{10}[253-255] Visits to Medjugore had a strong influence on Anne and members of her family. While on pilgrimage in Medjugore, a quiet but significant thing happened. During her Communion, Anne spoke with Jesus conversationally.



Geographical location of Medjugorje - map and description

Medjugorje is located in the southwestern region of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a country on the Balkan Peninsula, Southeastern Europe. The Balkan Peninsula is located between the Adriatic and Black Sea.

MYSTICAL PHENOMENA: LOCUTIONS AND APPARITIONS

{81} [45] Later in *Climbing the Mountain*, Jesus tells Anne that “*He will communicate with souls through this work so that they will have greater **mystical** capacity than before.*” We want to begin our study by looking at mysticism and related phenomena so that we can better understand Anne’s writings.

Mysticism. A special, deep experience of union with and knowledge of the divine reality, freely granted by God. Mystical experiences, which may be accompanied by ecstasy, visions and other such phenomena, are usually preceded by the serious practice of contemplation and asceticism. While found in all the great world religions, mysticism in Christian experience has a highly personal quality, enhancing rather than suppressing the sense of distinction between the mystic and God. Genuine mysticism always produces more generous love toward others, and seems to be found frequently among Christians who are dedicated to prayer and sensitive to God’s presence in their lives.

Taken from *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, O’Collins and Farrugia, p. 152

The form of mysticism chosen by heaven for Anne is locutions. The **Direction for Our Times** website (FAQ) discusses this mystical phenomenon. (*Taken from the 16 Edition of the Marian Movement of Priests, page XXXV. Used with permission.*):

*“What is an interior locution? First of all, it is necessary to make clear that it is not something strange or sensational, but a mystical phenomenon present in the life of the Church and described in manuals of spiritual theology. It is not a sensorial communication with Jesus, Our Lady or the saints such as takes place in authentic apparitions. Here one does not see with the eyes, hear with the ears, nor does one touch anything. Nor is it simply a good inspiration, that light which the Holy Spirit normally causes to pour down into the minds and hearts of those who pray and live by faith. In the case of an authentic phenomenon, the interior locution is that gift by which God wishes to make something known and to help someone carry something out, as well as, **the outward clothing of this gift**, in terms of human thoughts and words, according to the style and the way of writing of the person who receives the message.”*

Additional Sources to learn more:

- The Catholic Encyclopedia (www.newadvent.org)
- Catholic Catechism by Fr. John Hardon (p. 186)

The quote mentions “the outward clothing of this gift”.

1. What does this mean and what does it say about Anne’s special talents?

2. Do you find it hard to believe in mysticism and locutions? Why or why not?

AN INTERESTING FACT

In 1998, a French-Italian scientific theological commission "*On the extraordinary events that are taking place in Medjugorje*" came to an interesting finding on mystical phenomena there. During the experiments, one of the things being monitored was brain activity. Most of us are able to use around 15% of our brain during normal activities. It is fascinating to note that at the moment when Our Lady appears, the visionaries brain activity jumps to 100% and stays at this level until Our Lady leaves.

(www.medjugorje.org/faq.htm and www.medjugorje.org/science3.htm.)

Continuing from the **Direction for Our Times** website (FAQ):

“The person becomes an instrument of communication, while still maintaining his full freedom, which is expressed in an act of assent of the Holy Spirit. While receiving the word from the Lord, the person’s intellect remains, as it were, inactive: that is to say, it does not search for thoughts or for a way to express them as, for example, would be the case when one is writing a letter or preparing a demanding discourse.”

3. How is an “act of assent of the Holy Spirit” similar to certain events in the Bible, where the Holy Spirit has acted on and within people through different means? (See Gen 46:1-4; 1 Samuel 3:4-10; 1 Kings 19:9-13 and Acts 2:1-4)

These quotes, and many others from Holy Scripture, remind us that God is intimately involved in our lives. In Anne’s case, His involvement is clear, but for many of us, God’s messages are often murky or convoluted, particularly if we are busy or distracted in some way. His guidance can come in the form of locutions, coincidences, unexplained thoughts, words from others or unusual experiences. Our job is to simply be open to those promptings from Our Lord and to recognize what it is that He wants us to do or learn from that experience.

4. What is your story of how *Climbing the Mountain* got into your hands?

5. Do you believe Jesus has placed this book in your hands by accident? Explain.

6. Share with others the coincidences, unexplained thoughts, words from others or unusual experiences that have happened to you.

ITEM OF CLARIFICATION

Often, Catholics are confused about mystical phenomena, not able to understand the difference between locutions and apparitions. The following information may be helpful in clearing up this confusion:

“An apparition is the appearance of a being normally invisible to human sight. Angels who have not bodies, Christ and Mary whose bodies are glorified, and saints who have “spiritual bodies” cannot be seen with the human eye apart from some supernatural intervention caused or allowed by God. . . An experience where supernaturally caused words are heard but nothing is seen is called a ‘voice,’ or ‘locution.’ It may be external, internal, imaginative (dreams) or intellectual (flashes of insight or intuition).” (Christ’s Mother and Ours, Fr. Oscar Lukefahr, C.M., Liguori, 1998.)

FURTHER CLARIFICATION

The Catechism of the Catholic Church contains the Church’s teaching on Private Revelation (which would include both locutions and apparitions) in paragraph 67:

“Throughout the ages, there have been so-called "private" revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the sensus fidelium (the sense of the faithful, where the laity has a sense or instinct about the authentic teachings of the Church) knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church. Christian faith cannot accept "revelations" that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such "revelations".”

His Holiness, Pope Urban VIII, also sheds spiritual light on mystical phenomena, in his often quoted statement:

"In cases which concern private revelations, it is better to believe than not to believe, for, if you believe, and it is proven true, you will be happy that you have believed, because our Holy Mother asked it. If you believe, and it should be proven false, you will receive all blessings as if it had been true, because you believed it to be true."(Pope Urban VIII, 1623-44)

www.medjugorje.org/purban.htm

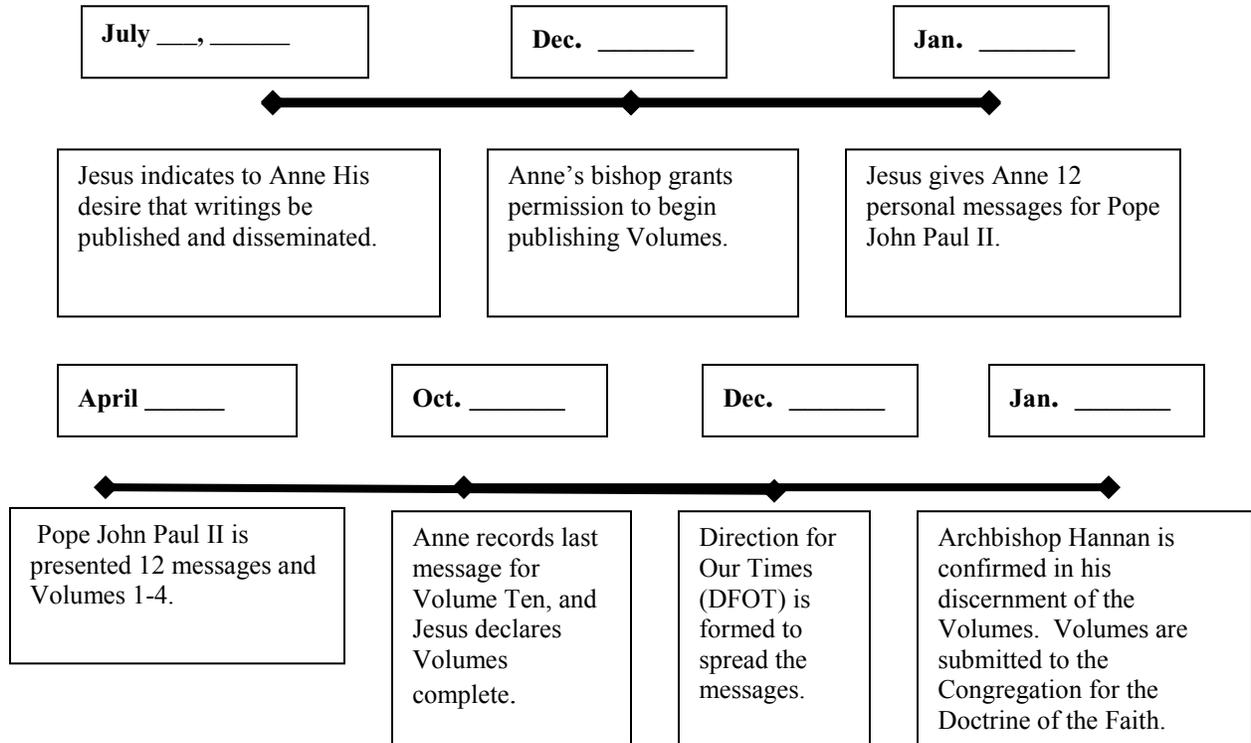
7. As a Catholic, is it obligatory to believe in mystical phenomena? (Either that which has been approved by the Church or that which has not been approved?)

8. Why do you think the Church allows Catholics to believe in mystical phenomena?

9. Why is the Church itself slow to approve or recognize mystical phenomena?

THE LONG JOURNEY OF THE VOLUMES

10. In the original *Climbing the Mountain*, read The Long Journey of the Volumes {267-275}. In the revised edition, read From the Beginning, [231-240]; An Introduction to Anne, a lay apostle [251-252]; and Introduction as Found in Each of the Volumes, [253-257]. Take a moment to reflect on the occurrences in Anne’s life. Often in life it is only in retrospect and with God’s grace that we can see where God may have been leading us. Look at the timeline below and fill in the blanks:



ANNE’S BACKGROUND

{9}[253] In the early years, Anne was divorced and a single parent, but turned to the Church for support. These were very difficult times for Anne, which is “*a reality shared by many during this period.*” She became a daily Mass attendee. Anne grew dramatically after she made that decision to spend part of each day with Our Lord in His Mass. “*Her prayer life began to blossom and she found both support and community as she joined the Secular Franciscan Order or Third Order.*”

11. Have there been times in your life when you felt that you could not turn to the Church for support in your difficulties? Reflect on those times and describe how you were able to redirect yourself to Jesus and His Church, laying your difficulties at His feet.

12. Can you recall a time when you, through difficulty, have grown spiritually?

13. Read 1 Peter 4:12-16 for a discourse on suffering and how we can join our suffering with Christ's. Would these words offer comfort to you in times of difficulty, such as those that Anne faced?

Anne had a dream where Mary asked her to work for heaven. Heaven has always protected Anne's vocation as a mother.

{8} [251] Here are the instructions Our Lady gave. She told Anne, "*I want you to retain your private life as a mother and wife. In order for this to be possible, souls must obey my instructions.*"

14. "You will bring great _____ to others but only through _____ to _____. I will help you with each _____ but we are serious about this distinction of _____. Your family will not _____."

SECULAR ORDERS

{9} [253] As mentioned previously, after Anne began attending daily Mass, she joined the Third Order Franciscans (also known as Secular Franciscans).

SAINTLY CLIMBERS - Saint Francis of Assisi (approx. 1181-1226)

“Words of Our Lord to Saint Francis: ‘My house is falling down. You must rebuild it.’”

Saint Francis of Assisi was born in 1181, to a wealthy merchant family in Assisi, Italy. He was trained to take over his father’s business but showed little interest in commerce. His charming nature was drawn more to French courtly poetry and tales of knightly glory.

When Saint Francis was 20, he marched off to battle against Perugia, a neighboring state of Assisi. He was taken prisoner and fell ill during his captivity. His suffering seemed to strengthen him spiritually and his demeanor became more serious. Again he tried for glory on the battlefield by joining the Pope’s forces against the Germans in southern Italy, but was prevented from reaching the front through illness.

Saint Francis had begun to change. Both his friends and family noticed his preoccupation. He suddenly went on a pilgrimage to Rome. While there, he gave his clothes to a beggar and asked for alms on the steps of St. Peter’s Church. Francis was burning with God’s love and spent long hours in prayer seeking His will.

While praying at Saint Damian’s church, he heard a voice say to him three times: “Francis, go and repair my house, which is falling down.” Saint Francis took some of his father’s goods to buy materials to repair Saint Damian’s, not realizing at first that his call was to minister to all of Christ’s people. His father was enraged, beat him, had him jailed and disowned him. At 25, Saint Francis left Assisi, having paid back his father, singing divine praises and deeply in love with “Lady Poverty.”

Saint Francis had great affection for all of God’s creatures, animate and inanimate, referring to them as his “brothers” and “sisters”. There are several collections of legends retelling of his gentleness toward animals. In addressing all of God’s creatures in this way, Saint Francis was asserting that we are all in community in service to God Almighty.

Saint Francis did not seek followers, but men were drawn to him. When his band grew to 12 members, a primitive rule was drafted based upon Matthew 19:21: “If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, ...and come, follow me.”

In 1224, at Mount La Verna, while praying, Saint Francis received the gift of the Stigmata (the wounds of Christ’s Passion). From this time forward he wore stockings and shoes as well as covered his hands as a sign of respect for this miracle.

SAINTLY CLIMBERS - Saint Francis of Assisi (continued)

At the age of 45, Saint Francis welcomed “Sister Death” while the Passion of Our Lord was being read to him. Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us to abandon possessions and pursue a simple life filled with the love of God and enjoyment in creation. Saint Francis was canonized in 1288.

Document Information: Excerpt from www.catholicculture.org

Descriptive Title: *Saint Francis of Assisi, a biography*

Description: A short biography on the life of Saint Francis of Assisi

Larger Work: *The Lives of the Saints of Every Day of the Year, Vol. III, Sept.-Dec.*

Pages: 571-577

Publisher & Date: The Catholic Press, Inc., 1958

The Secular Franciscans observe the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by following St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life. . Franciscans devote themselves especially to careful reading, reflection and action on the Gospels – they literally bring to the world the Gospel message of Christ: to the poor, the oppressed and the suffering.

The process of becoming a Secular Franciscan is a journey that involves three stages:

1st – Orientation – a time to discern if the Spirit is calling you to a Secular Franciscan vocation. It is a time for dialogue and developing relationships in fraternity. One is introduced to the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare and shares in Franciscan prayer life. The period of orientation is a minimum of three months.

2nd – Inquiry – is an in depth study of the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare. You will learn about the Franciscan charism and Franciscan history. You will deepen your understanding of what it means to be secular and Franciscan and you will continue to discern if the Spirit is calling you to the Secular Franciscan way of life. The period of inquiry is a minimum of six months. If a vocation is discerned, the Inquirer is received into the Order.

3rd – Candidacy – is the final formal period of initiation. It is a time of preparing for permanent commitment by immersion into fraternity life. Central to this stage of formation is Article 4 of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order which states: “ The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan is this: to observe the Gospel of Our

Lord Jesus Christ by following St. Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people.” The period of Candidacy is a minimum of 18 months and culminates in permanent commitment to the Gospel life. (www.nafra-sfo.org/is_god_calling.html)

15. Why do you think someone would choose to be a Secular Franciscan?

16. How do you make Christ the center of your life?

The Catechism also discusses secular institutes in Paragraphs 928-929 (see www.usccb.org/catechism/text):

928 *"A secular institute is an institute of consecrated life in which the Christian faithful living in the world strive for the perfection of charity and work for the sanctification of the world especially from within."*

929 *"By a 'life perfectly and entirely consecrated to [such] sanctification,' the members of these institutes share in the Church's task of evangelization, 'in the world and from within the world,' where their presence acts as 'leaven in the world.' " Their witness of a Christian life 'aims 'to order temporal things according to God and inform the world with the power of the gospel.' They commit themselves to the evangelical counsels (faith, hope and charity) by sacred bonds and observe among themselves the communion and fellowship appropriate to their 'particular secular way of life.' (Footnotes Omitted)*

17. How is Anne's lay apostle mission similar to that of a secular institute?

FURTHER STUDY

The Catechism also speaks about societies of apostolic life (Paragraph 930); living lives consecrated to God (Paragraphs 922-924); and the significance of the mission of these lay people who dedicate themselves to God (Paragraphs 931-933).

DISTRACTION

{11} In her videotaped talks, Anne often tells the story of one of her earliest locutions. After Communion, Anne asks Jesus, “*Are You there?*” At times when she was distracted, Jesus said “*Anne, are you there?*” Anne is so like each of us, in that it is very difficult to remain focused on the most important things in a modern world that is so distracting, noisy and busy. Often, we find it difficult to clear our heads of thoughts such as what we are going to have for dinner, how we are going to get that report done at the office and where are the children off to later today. We require quiet time in order to focus on Our Lord and spend time in prayer and meditation and often that time simply eludes us.

Some ideas for limiting distraction are: spending time in the Adoration Chapel with Jesus; taking a walk with Jesus; asking a friend to pray with us; taking just a few minutes in a quiet room in our home to pray the Rosary or the Divine Mercy Chaplet; or just taking a moment anywhere to sit and think about Jesus and what He is asking us to do.

18. What has worked for you in overcoming distractions?

19. Can you recall any times when the Lord responded to you in a similar way, by asking, “Are you there?”

20. How can you carve out an hour a day to devote to God and what would you do with this time?

**SAINTLY CLIMBERS - Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross
(Edith Stein) (1891-1942)**

“During the time immediately before and quite some time after my conversion I... thought that leading a religious life meant giving up all earthly things and having one’s mind fixed on divine things only. Gradually, however, I learnt that other things are expected of us in this world... I even believe that the deeper someone is drawn to God, the more he has to ‘get beyond himself’ in this sense, that is, go into the world and carry divine life into it.”

Edith Stein was born in 1891, in Breslau, Germany. Her father died when she was young and the family struggled financially. Edith was raised as a Jew. She was drawn to study philosophy and eventually the Catholic liturgy. She wrote scientific books and also taught at the University of Munster in Cologne, Germany. It was there that she entered the Carmelite Order. During WWII she fled to Holland but was captured there by the SS (German armed forces) and taken to Auschwitz.

While in the concentration camp, a former companion said:”In the midst of cries of desperation, she moved among the women, offering comfort, help and peace, like an angel. Many mothers, almost insane, staring into space during the whole day, oblivious of their children, were overcome by despair. Sister Teresa took care of the little ones, washed them, combed their hair, fed them, and nursed them. During the entire time she spent in the camp, she continued her work of charity, which filled everybody with admiration.”

Saint Teresa died in the gas chambers at Auschwitz in 1942. She wrote:”I understand at once that God’s hand lay heavy on His people, and that the lot of that people was mine also.” Saint Teresa was canonized in 1998 by Pope John Paul II.

Document Information: Excerpts from www.ewtn.com, www.vatican.va and www.catholicculture.org

Description: In a previously unpublished essay, Eugenio Zolli, writes of the heroism of Edith; Larger Work: *Sursum Corda!* Pages: 24-26

Publisher & Date: Foundation for Catholic Reform, Summer 1997

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Items for Further Study:

Other:

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN Week 3

In the original *Climbing the Mountain*, read Chapters 2 & 3 pages {15-28} and The Rescue Mission{41-44} Also, read Three Servants of the Returning King; Saint Faustina Kowalska Speaks to Anne, a Lay Apostle; Focus Worldwide Television Network; A Lifetime of “Yes”; and The Nourishment We Seek pages {277-298}. In the updated *Climbing the Mountain*, read The Rescue Mission [pages 3-7]; Saint Faustina Kowalska Speaks to Anne, a lay apostle [pages 247-248]; Three Servants of the Returning King [pages 261-270]; and The Nourishment We Seek [pages 293-294]. Read the following and answer the questions:

VOCATIONS AND OBEDIENCE

Many frequently doubt their assurance of God’s call – for their primary vocation. Throughout the book, Jesus and Mary point out the importance of obedience and of fulfilling the duties of our primary vocation. In Anne’s case, she was also called to a secondary vocation; that of writing down Jesus’ messages and distributing them to the world.

1. What is your primary vocation?

2. Is God calling you to a secondary one? If so, what do you think your secondary vocation is?

3. How do you know these are your vocations?

Throughout the centuries, Jesus has placed a primary emphasis on obedience for His saints. Even when the saints believed that God wanted them to do something for Him, they were in complete obedience to their superiors who forbade their mission or at the least, delayed it. For example: St. Padre Pio had his priestly faculties taken away for a time by his superiors; St. Margaret Mary was subjected to severe disciplines by her superiors for her visions; and Mother Teresa was forbidden to leave her convent to work in the streets for a period of time.

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Padre Pio (1887-1968)

“Never fall back on yourself alone, but place all your trust in God and don’t be too eager to be set free from your present state. Let the Holy Spirit act within you. Give yourself up to all His transports and have no fear. He is so wise and gentle and discreet that He never brings about anything but good. How good this Holy Spirit, this Comforter, is to all, but how supremely good He is to those who seek Him.”
www.padrepiodevotions.org

Saint Padre Pio (Francesco Forgione) was born in Pietrelcina, Italy in 1887. His family was financially poor but rich in love for God. At the age of 5, Francesco dedicated his life to God. From a very early age, he was given extraordinary graces, which enabled him to see and communicate with his guardian angel, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary. At the age of 15 he was admitted to the novitiate of the Capuchin Order of the Friars Minor in Morcone, Italy. At the age of 23 he was ordained a priest.

The Mass was the center of Saint Padre Pio’s spirituality. At various parts of the Holy Sacrifice, he would pause in contemplative silence. His Masses could last several hours and his parishioners were greatly impressed by his piety. They often sought his counsel, and for many, even a few moments in his presence was life changing.

Saint Padre Pio was a man of deep prayer. He prayed very simple prayers almost continuously and he had a great devotion to the rosary. God endowed him with many extraordinary spiritual gifts. The gift of healing, prophesy, and the ability to abstain beyond man’s natural powers from both sleep and nourishment are only a few. In 1918, he received the gift of the Stigmata, while praying before a crucifix making his thanksgiving after Mass. He bore these painful wounds for 50 years with serenity. When asked about the special gifts and charisms he had received, Saint Padre Pio replied humbly that “... they are a mystery to me, too.”

Saint Padre Pio suffered from poor health for all his life. He never became discouraged, even though his doctors could never explain the cause of his prolonged illnesses. “He offered all of his bodily sufferings to God as a sacrifice for the conversion of souls.”

“In his monastery in San Giovanni Rotondo, he lived the spirit of Franciscan poverty with a detachment from self” and possessions. His workday often lasted 19 hours. He slept little and was able to sustain himself with a mere 300 to 400 calories a day.

In 1968, Saint Padre Pio died with a Rosary in his hands, at the age of 81. Saint Padre Pio had been called to offer himself to the Lord as a victim for poor sinners and for the souls in Purgatory. In his lifetime, he reconciled thousands of men and women back to their Catholic faith. In 2002, Saint Padre Pio was canonized by Pope John Paul II.

Document Information: Excerpts from www.padrepiodevotions.org, *A Short Biography of Padre Pio*.

We, also, are called to a life of obedience. We must submit not only to God, but also to civil authority as long as the morality of the action conforms to God's law. Jesus said to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and that means that we must submit to the laws of our government in all moral areas, i.e. driving the speed limit, paying our taxes, living a crime-free life. We also must submit to other authorities in our lives, for example, our spouses, our bosses, our parents, our religious superiors to name a few. St. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:24-25: "As the church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her...."

Many of us today have great difficulty accepting the above quote, because we cannot get past the "subordinate" at the beginning. However, St. Paul calls husbands to an even greater standard than wives.

4. What is this standard? How does it parallel Christ and His Church?

{159} [123] Anne was taught by Jesus that we should begin with small acts of obedience in order to prepare ourselves for responding obediently to greater callings. If we find this difficult, then we must ask Jesus for the strength and the humility to do His will. Often we can offer up our small irritations and humiliations for some greater good, such as the welfare of the Holy Souls in Purgatory or the benefit of the sick. With each act of obedience and offering, we might find that the next act becomes easier.

5. What small acts of obedience can you do this week?

DARKNESS AND COMFORT

{16} [3] Jesus tells Anne, "...I am raising up a tidal wave of Christians to wash over the shore of badness that has taken control of this world so lovingly created by My Father. This process will cleanse your world, making it safe once again for God's children. I am going to bring you knowledge, wisdom and love. I am going to introduce you to the divine to make your hearts burn like furnaces of divine love. You will be given the opportunity to work with Me." (Volume Two, August 17, 2003)

{23} Jesus also says, “*This world, your world, has suffered. Sin obscured the light until children began to doubt the very existence of God. This will never be allowed to happen again. God, in all His omniscience, allowed mankind to direct itself and direct the course of humanity so He could see the fruits of separation from heaven. Children, with all the wisdom of heaven, you can now see the level of darkness that has settled in ever growing layers upon the world.*” (Jesus, Volume Four, January 9, 2004).

6. When have you felt overwhelmed by darkness in our world?

7. Do you think that our world is darker now than it was when Jesus was born?

8. {17} Why did God the Father say the following?: “*The saints in heaven only wished they could have lived in this time. It is similar to the time when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. You might say the world is with child again because the world is awaiting the return of the Savior.*” (Volume Four, January 10,2004)

9. How do Jesus’ and God the Father’s words comfort and console you?

Jesus’ words to Anne about the darkness are nothing new. In Sacred Scripture, the early apostles discuss the themes of darkness and light in the world. The darkness falls as a result of our losing focus on God and becoming attached to the things of this world. This is as true today as it was in St. Paul’s time, so his words can apply prophetically to us as well as to his audience two thousand years ago.

10. Read Galatians 5:19-23 and Ephesians 5:1-20. Describe your thoughts as you meditate on the words of St. Paul.

11. What are some concrete things that you can do to overcome the “darkness of the world”?

WE HAVE MANY FRIENDS

{17} Anne also says, “*Countless saints in heaven are waiting to help you and me and every other lay apostle. We can’t fail.*”

{291} [248] On October 24, 2005, St. Faustina says, “*Heaven is joined with earth and sends all necessary grace.*”

{292}[268-269] Then, on November 9, 2005, St. Faustina says, “*No apostle climbs alone. Be joyful in this time and join heaven as we beseech God for mercy for the whole world.*”

12. Describe your reaction to the above words:

GRACE

By fulfilling the requirements and duties of our vocations, God sends us tremendous amounts of grace. While it is never easy to do our duty, if we offer up our activities to God, both in sorrow and joy, He will use our obedience to send grace and peace into the world. The darkness does not have to overcome us, but rather, by fulfilling the Divine Will for our lives, we can shine a light in that darkness for all to see. God gives us grace to move forward in His Will to bring about His kingdom. Grace is a gift given not just for our personal joy and use, but to bring about His will for the entire world

Jesus wants souls to follow Him now, in the early 21st century, not at some future date. {270-271} [233] Jesus says, “*I would ask My servants to present these words as words from heaven. I have a great mission that I wish to accomplish through these messages and I have attached graces that are unimaginable to human minds. Those who read them will understand if they have been called to participate in this heavenly project. I want these words disseminated the world over. I will see that this is accomplished. Ask Me for guidance in this matter and guidance will be available to every person who pays attention to My will. Good and holy children of God, understand that these times are not like other times. These messages are not like other messages. I am trying to save many*

souls at this time. Do not think that this can be done in the future. It must be done now. I ask that you treat this work according to My heavenly request for urgency. Your reward will be no small thing, even though I know you serve from love, not personal interest. Feel My graces flow through these words to your soul. Feel my Truth as I convey it to you. All is well, as I am directing all, but I need many 'yes' answers at this time" (April 5, 2004).

13. What does Jesus say about the amount of grace in this time?

GRACE DEFINED

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2003) defines grace as:

- *“Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us.*
- *But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church.*
- *There are sacramental graces, gifts proper to the different sacraments.*
- *There are furthermore special graces, also called charisms after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning "favor," "gratuitous gift," "benefit." (Cf. Lumen gentium 12) Whatever their character - sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues - charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and **are intended for the common good of the Church**. They are at the service of charity, which builds up the Church. (Cf. 1 Cor. 12)”*

The Catechism continues in 2004:

“Among the special graces ought to be mentioned the graces of state that accompany the exercise of the responsibilities of the Christian life and of the ministries within the Church:

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:
if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;
if service, in our serving;
he who teaches, in his teaching;
he who exhorts, in his exhortation;
he who contributes, in liberality;
he who gives aid, with zeal;
he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom 12:6-8)”

14. Which of these gifts of grace have you been given? Which others do you want?

15. What does the Catechism in Paragraph 2005 below say about how we can know Grace?

2005 *“Since it belongs to the supernatural order, grace escapes our experience and cannot be known except by faith. We cannot therefore rely on our feelings or our works to conclude that we are justified and saved. (Cf. Council of Trent (1547); Denzinger-Schonmetzer 1533-1534)) However, according to the Lord's words "Thus you will know them by their fruits" (Matt 7:20) - reflection on God's blessings in our life and in the lives of the saints offers us a guarantee that grace is at work in us and spurs us on to an ever greater faith and an attitude of trustful poverty.*

A pleasing illustration of this attitude is found in the reply of St. Joan of Arc to a question posed as a trap by her ecclesiastical judges: "Asked if she knew that she was in God's grace, she replied: 'If I am not, may it please God to put me in it; if I am, may it please God to keep me there.'"(Acts of the trial of St. Joan of Arc.)”

16. Why do you think that Jesus is extending so much grace to accomplish His Will?

17. When did He extend His grace to accomplish things that otherwise were impossible for you?

18. Can you name some ways in which Satan attempts to distort heaven's graces?

THE JOY OF SAYING “YES”

19. {42} [4] Anne says, “Serve in _____ and confidence as there is _____ but a decision against God.

20. Read 1 Peter 3:15-17. Peter explains how we should spread our joy to others. Give an example of a time in your life when you were able to do this.

21. {271} [233] Jesus says, “All is well, as I am directing it all, but I need many ‘yes’ answers at this time. “ (April 5, 2004) What is the qualifying test for a lay apostle?

22. Reflect on the most famous “yes” of all time—Mary’s “yes.” Read her Magnificat in Luke 1:46-55 below:

*“And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all
generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of
their hearts,
he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree;
he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.”*

Mary’s joy and anticipation leap off the page. When a simple young Jewish woman said “yes” to God 2000 years ago, the entire world changed forever. While we may not be called in the same glorious way as Mary, we are all called to do our part to further the kingdom of God.

23. Has your “yes” changed the world forever in some way as well?

Read about Abraham's "yes" to God in offering Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22:1-18. Also read about St. Paul's "yes" in his conversion from persecutor to preacher in Acts 9:1-29.

24. Share about someone you know whose "yes" had a profound effect on the world.

WHY NOW?

"This world, your world, has suffered. Sin obscured the light until children began to doubt the very existence of God. This will never be allowed to happen again. God, in all His omniscience, allowed mankind to direct itself and direct the course of humanity so he could see the fruits of separation from heaven. Children, with all of the wisdom of heaven, you can now see the level of darkness that has settled in ever growing layers upon the world. (Jesus, Volume Four, January 9th, 2004)

25. What was the result of God allowing mankind to direct itself?

Just as a loving parent must allow a child to fail or fall so they can learn for themselves, God does the same for us. Throughout salvation history, the stories abound of times when the Israelites attempted to determine their own destiny, only to fall flat. At these times, usually right before God's punishment, heaven would intervene by sending a messenger. Noah, Jonah, Jeremiah; the Scriptures are replete with examples. Perhaps this is why He gives us directions for our times in His messages to Anne--to help us in the task of changing the world.

26. Could you be a messenger like Noah and Jeremiah, witnessing to our troubled world that is so in need of God's healing touch? How would you accomplish this task?

Jesus also said, *"When I find you, you will want to welcome Me in all recollected holiness. Do I demand that you become a saint overnight? My little soul, of course I do not. This is not even possible for you. I do not expect it. Like a welcomed and beloved guest, I look not at how high you have reached spiritually, but how willing you are to work with Me on your soul. I am looking for a calm acceptance that you are My subject*

and live in My kingdom. You will be lifted up in My kingdom. You will be one of My close advisors and friends who, upon My return, will bring Me all manner of news and requests. You will say, "Lord, God of this world, all is not well with this soul. This soul needs Your special help." Because you are My faithful one, the souls whom you recommend will have My special help and also My special mercy. You will say also, "Lord, God of this world, I would like to see Your influence more strongly in this school, this hospital, this church, this religious order, this political group." I will say, "Good idea, servant of the King. You shall have what you request, because you are My faithful subject who waited for Me in faith and love." Do you see how we will spread My Kingdom?" (Jesus, Volume Four, January 15, 2004).

27. Does Jesus need us to be saints to assist Him in this intervention?

28. Have you already seen instances where He has shown His mercy to others flowing through you?

It has been a long standing tradition of the Church to ask the faithful to say a Morning Offering and a prayer before bedtime. In this apostolate, Jesus asks for an Allegiance Prayer as well. {73} [37] Jesus says, *"The pain you suffer on earth, be it physical or emotional, will be utilized."* It is important to follow these directives since Jesus has told us that it will be beneficial.

29. {42} [5] Why are these devotions recommended?

{281} [265] In September of 2005, Anne recorded this message from Saint Faustina: “Anne, our missions are destined to be joined.” A short time later, Anne was invited by Sister Briega McKenna and Fr. Kevin Scallon to go to Poland to visit the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy where St. Faustina had lived. There are times when Jesus invites and times when He commands.

30. Can you give Scriptural examples of times when Jesus invited others and times when he commanded others?

31. What is the difference between an invitation and a command?

32. Have you received both invitations and commands? Give examples.

33. Share the invitations you’ve been given and the results of your decisions, both when you said “yes” and when you said “no.”

ST. FAUSTINA, POPE JOHN PAUL II AND THE MISSION

Read the Appendices {277- 292} [247-248; 261-270] and answer the questions:

34. Who are the three people whose lifetimes overlap one another, spanning a period of over a century, working for the same goal, under the direction of the same Master?

35. What do they have in common?

{278} [261] Father Raneiro Cantalamessa, a preacher to the pontifical household, is quoted as saying, “*A general atmosphere of impunity is established in today’s society, in which there are competitions to break the law, to corrupt and allow ourselves to be corrupted, with the justification that ‘everyone does it’.*”

36. Give an example of a time you did something because “everyone does it”. Were you free of moral dilemma because everyone does it?

{278} [262] Father Cantalamessa further points out that the general feeling of security that comes with “everyone does it” is a fatal deception, “*The beyond and, with it, the judgment has become a joke.*” *But in the Gospel, Jesus responds: “Fool! This night your soul is required of you.” (Lk 12:20) Father states, “Now is the time for mercy; then it will be a time of justice. It is for us to choose, while we still have time.*”

37. Do you know anyone who was taken from the world suddenly? Do you reflect on your own readiness?

38. What in my life at this time is in need of Jesus’ mercy?

Saint Faustina Kowalska

Saint Faustina Kowalska is often called the *First Servant of the Returning King*. She was a cloistered nun of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, in Warsaw, Poland.

In the 1930s Jesus appeared to Sr. Faustina in a series of messages. He asked her to promote the devotion to His Divine Mercy, in preparation for His return to earth.

{279}[263] In 1938 Jesus told Sr. Faustina, “*I have a special love for Poland, and if she will be obedient to My will, I will exalt her in might and holiness. From her will come forth the spark that will prepare the world for My final coming.*”

Under Jesus’ personal direction, the devotion to Divine Mercy and the praying of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy would eventually spread to the entire Catholic world.

Karol Wojtyla – Pope John Paul II

Now enters the *Second Servant of the Returning King*. In May of 1938, a young Polish man of 18 years, by the name of Karol Wojtyla, accompanied by his father, enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy in Jagiellonian University.

In 1942, during the Second World War, he entered the clandestine Cracow Seminary. He was unaware that he would be the “spark” that Jesus had chosen to continue this mission begun by Sister Faustina, to prepare the world for His coming.

Twenty-five years later, in 1967, as Archbishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyla was gathering all the necessary material for the closing of the *Informative Process* of Sister Faustina, Servant of God, as the first step towards her sainthood.

Thirty-three years later (in 2000), as Pope John Paul II, Pontiff of the Universal Church, he canonized Sister Faustina, recognizing her role in preparing the world for the Second Advent of Christ, the Returning King.

{280} [264] “*As his reward, and also as a prophetic sign to the faithful, he was taken home... by providence, on the eve of the Feast of Divine Mercy. Saint Faustina was surely waiting at the gates of Paradise to welcome His Holiness on her Feast Day.*”

Anne - Housewife and Mother

In 2004, the year before his death, Pope John Paul II received twelve personal messages from Jesus, dictated to *Anne, a lay apostle, the Third Servant* in our story, a housewife and mother.

A few days after receiving the personal messages, His Holiness received Anne's emissaries in a private audience. A few months later, Anne and her husband were asked to travel to Rome, where they met with the close personal friend of His Holiness, who had delivered the messages to him.

{281} [265] *"On September 27, 2005, St. Faustina said to Anne, 'Our missions are destined to be joined. Your mission is an extension of my mission in that it is all a part of the Divine Mercy.'"*

39. {282} [266] How did St. Faustina concretely demonstrate that the missions were joined?

40. {283} [267] What does St. Faustina say about the Divine Mercy devotion?

41. {284} [268] What does St. Faustina say about the image given to Anne?

42. {285} [269] What does St. Faustina say about the soul who cooperates in this project?

43. Why do you think the painting is named, “Jesus Christ the Returning King”?

44. Why would St. Faustina understand Anne’s struggles?

{289} [247] St. Faustina says on September 28, 2005:

“So the amount of mercy flowing down into the world is directly proportional to the amount of pleas for mercy that come from the world. . . . His mercy has no limits.”

{290} [247] St. Faustina continues on October 3, 2005:

“The mercy of God floods the world in this time because God is good . . . If each apostle begged God for mercy . . . the world would change and I say this with the authority of heaven. There would be a detectable increase in peace and purity.”

45. What stops us from begging God for anything?

{290}[248] Continuing in wisdom, St. Faustina says on October 24, 2005:
“God is patient and waits for the soul to turn to Him in need, in sorrow, in humility.”

46. In reflecting on your life, did God wait patiently for you? Is there one mercy you'd beg for today?

47. In humility, ask Jesus what He would like you to do now for the good of souls.

48. What do I need to TRUST Jesus for today in my doubts, fears and sorrows?

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Further Study:

Other:

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Genevieve Torres Morales (1870-1956)

“Even if I must suffer greatly, thanks be to God’s mercy, I will not lack courage.”

www.vatican.va

Saint Genevieve Torres Morales was born in the village of Almenara in eastern Spain in 1870. She was the youngest of 6 children. Many trials were visited upon the Torres family. Four of the siblings died in infancy and when Saint Genevieve was eight her parents passed away as well. At such a young age, Saint Genevieve became responsible for the care of her brother and the household. She could no longer attend school but continued to attend Sunday catechism classes and read the religious books her mother had left to her. At age 13, Saint Genevieve developed a malignant tumor on her left leg. Her life was spared, but she had to have her leg amputated, requiring the use of crutches for the rest of her life. During these trying years, she became fascinated with the thought of “following God’s will in all things.”

For the next nine years, Saint Genevieve lived at the “House of Mercy,” an orphanage in Valencia operated by the Carmelites of Charity. Her spirituality grew during this time as she learned to unite all her suffering with Christ on the Cross. While trying to discern God’s will for her life, Saint Genevieve attempted to join the Carmelites of Charity but was informed that her disabilities disqualified her from joining the order. Still wondering what God’s plan was for her, Saint Genevieve became aware of the great needs of homeless women, those widowed, childless, or forgotten by society. She and two other lay women opened the doors of their little house to some of these lonely women, offering physical as well as spiritual service, including Eucharistic adoration.

In 1911, Saint Genevieve formalized her project by establishing a house in Valencia specifically for homeless women. The home had 3 laywomen ministering to 4 residents with Saint Genevieve as director. Residents who were able paid for their own care, while those who were penniless were welcomed as well. Eucharistic Adoration and other religious devotions were a large part of the program. The undertaking was successful and a year later another house was established in Saragossa.

In 1912, the laywomen ministering in the houses began to dress like sisters. From 1915 on they started to take private vows. In 1925, the archbishop of Saragossa, established the “Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Holy Angels” as an order of the diocese. “Two weeks later Saint Genevieve and her 18 companions professed public vows.” Saint Genevieve was elected Mother Superior of the order she founded. “In 1953, the Holy See granted her community the status of papal religious congregation.” She died in 1956. “Even in death the constant smile on her face did not disappear.”

Saint Genevieve was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2003. “Her life reminds us that no matter our abilities or disabilities, we can achieve wonders if we follow the Will of God.”

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Study Guide for *Climbing The Mountain*

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN Week 4

Read The Rescue Mission {41-44} [3-7]. Eucharistic Adoration {303-304} [299-300]; Guidelines for Lay Apostles {305-306} [241-243]; Prayers {307-308} [303-304]; How to Recite the Chaplet of Divine Mercy {309-311} [305-307]; and How to Recite the Rosary {313-322} [308-316]. Then, read the following and answer the questions:



EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

The Roman Catholic Church has consistently held fast to the belief in the Real Presence. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1374) states:

*“The mode of Christ’s presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as “the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all sacraments tend.”(St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae III, 73, 3c) In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist “the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.”(Council of Trent (1551); Denzinger-Schonmetzer 1651) “This presence is called ‘real’ - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be ‘real’ too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present.” (Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei* 39)*

The belief in the real, physical presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist was debated even before Jesus died. He told His disciples about the coming discord before His death. John recorded this in John 6:47-69:

“Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. I am the living

bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us (his) flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him....so he who eats me will live because of me....Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" ...After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him. Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

1. Write in your own words the meaning of The Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist:



CONTRADICTION STUDIES ON BELIEF

- A 1992 Study of Catholics by Gallup showed only 30% believed that “when receiving Holy Communion, you are really and truly receiving the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ...”
- In 1994, the New York Times (June 1, 1994) reported the results of a poll on American Catholic beliefs about the Real Presence. It concluded “*almost two-thirds of American Catholics believe that during Mass, the central sacred ritual of Catholicism, the bread and wine can best be understood as ‘symbolic reminders of Christ rather than as actually being changed into Christ’s body and blood’*”.
- In 1997, the Roper polling company found that 82 percent of American Catholics believe that “*The bread and wine used in Mass are actually transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.*”
- In 2001, a national poll conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate concluded that 70% of American Catholics twenty years of age and older believe that “*Jesus Christ is really present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.*”

2. These polls show a substantial increase in the last decade of American Catholics believing in the Real Presence. Why do you think that is?

3. A measure of doubt in the Real Presence of the Eucharist still exists among American Catholics. Why do you think that is?

Many miracles are attributed to the Eucharist. In Fr. John A. Hardon’s writing “Christ the Miracle Worker in the Eucharist,” he reminds us of Jesus’ promise, “*Behold, I am with you all days even to the end of the world.*” (Matthew 28:20) Jesus promised us His presence, and He delivers it through the Eucharist. When we look at the miracles Jesus performed when he walked the streets of Palestine, no miracle occurred without His consent and without faith on the part of the person. He restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and the use of their limbs to the paralyzed. He told the dead Lazarus to rise, and the woman’s hemorrhaging stopped when she touched Jesus’ garment. These

all happened in Jesus' presence and with His consent to the faithful. Today, in the Eucharist, Jesus is present, and awaits our fervent prayers.

4. Have you ever participated in a Eucharistic Holy Hour? If yes, what was your experience?

5. What is Perpetual Adoration?

6. For many, what is the most personal meeting they have with God?

7. Find, in Paragraph 1418 of the Catechism, the three reasons Pope Paul VI (in *Mysterium Fidei*) gives to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Intercessory prayer is a powerful method of prayer in which others pray for a certain intention on the supplicant's behalf. Intercessory prayer can be a part of every Catholic's life on earth with the living (the Church Militant), but can also include the saints in heaven (the Church Triumphant) and the souls in purgatory (the Church Suffering). The saints in heaven await our requests for their help and while the souls in purgatory can do nothing for themselves, they are always ready and eager to pray for the souls on earth. This is the Communion of Saints in which we profess belief as we pray the Apostles Creed each Sunday at Mass.

8. What is intercessory prayer in your own words?

COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The spiritual union between Christ and all Christians, whether already in heaven (or purgatory) or still living on earth.

A Concise Dictionary of Theology by O'Collins and Farrugia, p.42

The Catechism of the Catholic Church discusses intercessory prayer in paragraphs 2634 to 2636:

2634 "Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners. (Cf. Rom 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1; 1 Tim 2:5-8) He is "able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." (Heb 7:25) The Holy Spirit "himself intercedes for us . . . and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom 8: 26-27)

2635 Since Abraham, intercession - asking on behalf of another- has been characteristic of a heart attuned to God's mercy. In the age of the Church, Christian intercession participates in Christ's, as an expression of the communion of saints. In intercession, he who prays looks "not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others," even to the point of praying for those who do him harm. (Phil 2:4; cf. Acts 7:60; Lk 23:28, 34)

2636 The first Christian communities lived this form of fellowship intensely. (Cf. Acts 12:5; 20:36; 21:5; 2 Cor 9:14) Thus the Apostle Paul gives them a share in his ministry of preaching the Gospel (Cf. Eph 6:18-20; Col 4:3-4; 1 Thess 5:25) but also intercedes for them. (Cf. 2 Thess 1:11; Col 1:3; Phil 1:3-4) The intercession of Christians recognizes no boundaries: "for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions," for persecutors, for the salvation of those who reject the Gospel. (1 Tim 2:1; cf. Rom 12:14; 10:1)"

Some Christian faiths don't understand the importance of the Communion of Saints, preferring to pray directly to Jesus Himself... These Christians believe that Catholics worship Mary by praying to her and that there is no need to pray to the saints when one can simply pray to Jesus. It is likely that these Christians do not fully understand the Communion of Saints, wherein the saints in heaven are part of the Mystical Body of Christ, as are the souls in purgatory. Since those who are in heaven and purgatory are not limited in space and time, as we are on earth, they are able, through the assent of Our

Lord, to hear our prayers and make supplication on our behalf. They can pray for us just as our friends and neighbors here on earth are able to pray for us. The saints in heaven can intercede even more powerfully since they are already with God in heaven.

St. Paul gives us beautiful examples of intercessory prayer in Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:18-19; and Philippians 1:3-11, where he prays for his communities and asks for prayers for himself and his work from them.

9. Are there any hindrances that prevent you from utilizing intercessory prayer? Discuss your ability to both give and receive intercessory prayer.

10. Is there a saint to whom you are particularly devoted?

11. How has she or he helped you?

12. Have you been privileged to see a friend converted, reverted or revitalized in faith? What special work have they taken on in light of their change of heart?

GROWING IN HOLINESS

*On June 30, 2003, Jesus says, “I want My children to have spiritual discipline. This means you practice your faith regardless of how you feel. **There is far too much time spent on feelings today.** Duty is more important. My children of the world think that their duties should be suspended if their feelings change. This is not the case, My children. On the contrary, you must complete your duties despite feelings of fatigue, boredom, and restlessness. The enemy uses these feelings to persuade people that they should not serve their loved ones. The world encourages this and does not hold people responsible when they shirk their duties or become lax or lazy. Indeed, even in work, My children complain and think they should be given liberty. . . . Your duty is holy and in it you will find your path to holiness . . . **Decide, through prayer and conversation with Me, what spiritual practices you need to adopt.** Then you must be disciplined about these practices.” (Jesus, Volume One, June 30th, 2003)*

We have all experienced this attitude at some point in our lives—how we feel is more important than anything else. We can see its pervasiveness in modern society. Often, we are overly concerned with our feelings and may neglect our duties to our family, our Church, God Himself, our jobs or our neighbors. Would the divorce rate in the United States be lower if we, as spouses, were less concerned with how we feel and more concerned with fulfilling the marital vows we made? We are left to ponder.

On the same day, Jesus speaks to Anne with brutal honesty about duty and discipline. *“They (My children) begrudge doing their duty in every area of their lives. Only in their personal entertainment do they stop complaining, and that is being taken to excess. **Children, this is not the way I intended for you to live.**” (Jesus, Volume One, June 30, 2003)*

13. Do you have spiritual discipline? If you do, what helps you to achieve it? If you don't, how can you acquire it?

14. What are some of the spiritual practices that you can incorporate into your life on a daily basis? How can you make these a priority?

15. According to Jesus, the enemy uses which feelings to persuade people that they should not do their duty to serve their loved ones?

16. When do people stop complaining and begrudging their duty in their everyday lives? Give some examples.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Fr. John Corapi, a well-known Catholic preacher, often says, in his booming God-like voice (paraphrased): Like the Nike commercial says, Just Do It! You don't feel like praying the Rosary?—well, just do it even if you don't feel like it. If you wait until you feel like it, it will never get done.

*Jesus says “Dear servants of the Returning King, you will not be sorry you sacrificed for Me. During the whole of your eternity, you will reap the reward for having done so. **In a time when few understand the concept of sacrifice**, you are giving of yourselves, day after day, to bring about My goals. You are serving Me and you are serving your fellow man.” (Jesus, Volume Ten, October 14, 2004).*

Sacrifice, for many in today's world, is something to be avoided at all costs. It reminds worldly people of the “archaic” restrictions on human freedoms that are imposed by many religions. Many do not understand that activities which they are calling freedoms, are actually license, i.e., activities with no moral restrictions whatsoever. Since many believe that the times in which we live are so “enlightened” that there is no need for religion, the concept of sacrifice has been completely disregarded or often viewed as silly and superstitious.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, however, views sacrifice in a vastly different light. In paragraphs 2099 to 2103, the Church relates individual sacrifices to those of Jesus on the Cross. In other words, a Christian's life today should be almost totally contradictory to the lives of worldly people everywhere.

FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING

Atheism – Loss of faith in God or indifference to His existence. There are a number of “*species of atheism . . . identified to give as complete an array of infidelity as any era of Christianity has ever witnessed.*”

These species include:

- **Disbelief** – positive denial of the existence of God
- **Agnosticism** – we cannot know anything certain about God’s existence
- **Nominalism** – the ability to discuss God without any sense of belief in Him
- **Positivism (or empiricism)** – we cannot know anything with certainty outside of our senses
- **Relativism** – truth varies according to the individual person and what they feel
- **Humanism** – the deification of man, i.e., man is his own God
- **Indifference** – God does not really matter

Taken from *The Catholic Catechism*, by Fr. John Hardon, S. J., Doubleday & Company, 1975 p. 60-63.

“I WANT YOU BACK!”

Jesus speaks to those who hold any of the above-mentioned beliefs with these words, “*I want you to look at Me. You do not offend Me by your demand for proof. I have dealt with far more belligerent souls than you. Ask Me to speak to you in your heart. I will do so. You want to know that I exist? I will show you that I exist. Will you then follow Me? If I speak to you in your soul and you hear My voice, will you then forsake darkness and return to My fold? You find your courage failing you, dear soul. You must be braver than this if you are going to be a servant of Christ. I am here. I am watching your every step and hearing your every word. I want you back.*

I wish to draw you against My heart and keep you there for all of eternity. I want to hear your joyful laughter again and I want to heal every wound that has been inflicted on you by others who should have loved you. I can do that. You look for answers. You look for consolations. Do you realize how many times a day you walk past Me? Have you any idea how I stand watching you in every situation and observe your pain? You ridicule Me, dear child of God. I hear you. I am offended by you and yet I never leave you and never stop hoping that you will look at Me. If you close your eyes now and look for Me, I will come to you.” (Jesus, Volume Four, February 18, 2004)

One of the “far more belligerent souls” that Jesus refers to could be St. Augustine. He was a brilliant man who held many of the beliefs detailed in the box above and spent a portion of his life running away from Jesus who called him without ceasing. Primarily due to the prayers of his mother, St. Monica, St. Augustine was converted to the Church at age 33, and he became one of the greatest saints in history.

“Though Augustine received a Christian upbringing, he led a very dissolute life as a youth and young man, according to his “Confessions”. Augustine gives an account of his spiritual development in the first nine Books of the “Confessions” -- a work that has engrossed readers for 1600 years, and are as fresh and immediate today as when they were written. Augustine died August 28, 430 at the age of seventy-five. His perennial contribution to and influence on Catholic doctrine and thought and on Christian belief and piety is incalculable, and his many theological and philosophical works, especially the “Confessions” and the “City of God” have continued to captivate and inspire mankind for more than fifteen-hundred years.” (<http://www.wf-f.org/StAugustine.html>)

17. How do you respond when asked “How do you know that God exists?”

FAITH BUILDING

Two quotes from St. Augustine quite beautifully and simply illustrate his conversion:

- *“Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised . . . Thou has made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.”*
- *“Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved You! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would have not been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.”* (Taken from *Confessions* by St. Augustine)

St. Augustine’s prayers are beautiful examples of how Jesus calls us to Himself, even when we can’t or don’t want to hear His voice.

18. Have you ever heard Our Lord “call, shout or touch” you? Discuss an example with your group.

19. Where would Jesus like to speak to us? _____

20. What is my reaction to Jesus saying “*I wish to draw you against My heart and keep you there for all of eternity. I want to hear your joyful laughter again and I want to heal every wound that has been inflicted on you by others who should have loved you*”?

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Monica (322-387)

Prayer to Saint Monica: Exemplary mother of the great Augustine, you perseveringly pursued your wayward son not with wild threats but with prayerful cries to heaven. Intercede for all mothers in our day so that they may learn to draw their children to God. Teach them how to remain close to their children, even the prodigal sons and daughters who have sadly gone astray.

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Saint Monica was born in Tagaste, Algeria in 322. She was born into a Christian family, but was married by arrangement to a pagan official named Patricius. He was generous but ill tempered. His mother lived with them and was equally difficult and they both proved to be a great challenge to Saint Monica. St. Monica was very good-natured and she endured her husband's abuse in an attempt to convert him through her example. She believed as Saint Paul wrote (1 Cor 7:14): "*The unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife.*" Eventually through her patience and prayers, she was able to convert both her mother-in-law and her husband to the Christian faith. Patricius died a year after his conversion.

Saint Monica had three children, Augustine, Navigius, and Perpetua. Navigius and Perpetua embraced Christianity from a young age and entered religious life. Augustine chose a different path in his youth as he explains in "Confessions of St. Augustine." Saint Monica prayed for her son Augustine to be converted to Christianity for 17 years. She anguished over refusing him the hospitality of their family home because of his dissolute behavior. One day, a figure appeared while she was weeping over Augustine, and asked what grieved her. She answered and the mysterious figure told her to dry her tears. "*Your son is with you.*" Heartened by this vision, Monica relented and allowed Augustine to come home. She continued to fast and pray for her wayward son, imploring the local bishop to help in his conversion.

Augustine moved to Rome and Saint Monica, through great difficulty, followed him there. Once she found Augustine, she learned that he had come under the influence of Bishop Ambrose in Milan. It was there that she became part of a close-knit group which supported Augustine's conversion through discussions of religion and philosophy. Augustine was eventually baptized by Bishop Ambrose on Easter, much to the joy of Saint Monica.

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Monica (continued)

During her return to Tagaste, in Algeria, Saint Monica became ill at the port of Ostia, Italy. She said to Augustine: “*I do not know what there is left for me to do or why I am still here, all my hopes in this world being now fulfilled. All I wished for was that I might see you a Catholic and a child of Heaven. God granted me even more than this in making you despise earthly felicity and consecrate yourself to His service.*” She died in Ostia, Italy in 387. Saint Monica is an example to all of us of the power of intercessory prayer. She is the patroness of married women and an example of Christian motherhood.

Document Information: excerpts from www.catholic.org, www.catholic-forum.com “Lives of the Saints”, Published by John J. Crawley & Co.
Rhonda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Woman Saints*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1991. Pages 46-47.

THE RESCUE MISSION

As this chapter begins, Anne shares with us a snapshot of her mission as described to her by Jesus. She paints a picture of today’s disobedience and of the future with obedience to God’s will. We are encouraged to join with Anne and others to climb the mountain.

21. {41} [3] Many souls are living in rebellion to God’s will – distinguished as the Age of _____ . The Age of Obedience is the time when souls will live in _____ with God’s will. The time we are living in now is called the _____ .

Excitement engulfs us as we contemplate Jesus’ return to earth. When looking at how humbly He comes to each of us, we are touched with His peace. As we fuel His return through obedience to His call, the Second Coming draws closer and closer. The magnitude of Jesus’ humility in returning through our small acts of obedience is moving. Anne tells us that the shift toward obedience will require changes in our souls and the way we live. It is said that Jesus speaks to us in silence to reveal God’s will.

22. Do you create a time of silence during your day? What do you hear Jesus saying to you?

23. What changes would Jesus encourage you to make this week? Can you make them to help fuel His return?

Lay Apostles of Jesus Christ the Returning King

Jesus called for the formation of a group He calls the Lay Apostles of Jesus Christ the Returning King. Apostles serve where Christ has placed them – some in obscurity and others in the eyes of the world. Apostles accept their crosses and carry them with the certainty that Jesus draws great graces from their cooperation and uses the graces for the conversion of sinners.

Promise from Jesus to His Lay Apostles

{306} [243] May 12, 2005

*“Your message to souls remains constant. Welcome each soul to the rescue mission. You may assure each lay apostle that just as they concern themselves with My interests, I will concern Myself with theirs. They will be placed in My Sacred Heart and I will defend and protect them. **I will also pursue complete conversion of each of their loved ones.** So you see, the souls who serve in this rescue mission as My beloved lay apostles will know peace. The world cannot make this promise as only heaven can bestow peace on a soul. This is truly heaven’s mission and I call every one of heaven’s children to assist Me. You will be well rewarded, My dear ones.”*

{305} [242] **Basic Guidelines for Lay Apostles**

Lay apostles agree to perform the basic obligations of practicing Catholics (if they are Catholic). Additionally, they adopt the following spiritual practices, as best they can:

1. Say the Morning Offering, along with the Allegiance Prayer and a brief prayer for the Holy Father.
2. One hour of Eucharistic Adoration each week.
3. Participation in a monthly lay apostle prayer group, which includes praying the Luminous Mysteries of the Holy Rosary and reading aloud the Monthly Message from Jesus.
4. Monthly Confession.
5. Further, they follow the example of Jesus Christ, as set out in Holy Scripture, treating all others with His patience and kindness.

Additional prayers and instructions on reciting the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and the Holy Rosary can be found in the Appendix {307-322} [303-316].

24. What is your reaction to the spiritual practices for lay apostles? Do they sound difficult to you?

25. Might you be called to be a lay apostle?

{43} [5-6] Jesus floods each returning, beloved apostle with light, a light that then overflows from that soul into the world. If a soul faces downward toward the world, they risk becoming afraid. Souls can be so busy studying darkness that they ignore the light. If souls face up the mountain to Christ then they will find His peace and security despite the fears of the world.

26. Share a recent example from your life where you were:

Facing down the mountain:

Facing up the mountain:

27. {44} [7] Are we ever alone in our climb?

We all feel alone at times. Jesus tells us, *“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”* (Matthew 11:28-30)

28. What are some of the warning signals that allow you to think, “I am alone in my climb...?”

We all inherently have the ability to reach the mountaintop. As we climb the mountain, we continuously are given and making choices. God speaks to each of us at different times and places; we are His chosen people. God will be there to do the hard part – we simply need to say “yes.”

SAINTLY CLIMBERS - Saint Maximilian Kolbe, Apostle of Mary (1894-1941)

“The most deadly poison of our times is indifference. And this happens, although the praise of God should know no limits. Let us strive, therefore, to praise Him to the greatest extent of our powers.”

Raymond Kolbe was born in Russian-occupied Poland in 1894. He was the second of three sons and both his parents were Franciscan lay tertiaries. His father fought for Polish independence and was hanged by the Russians as a traitor in 1914. His mother later became a Benedictine nun, while his brother Alphonse became a priest.

Raymond was considered a mischievous child, but at the age of twelve he received a vision of the Virgin Mary which changed his life. He entered the Franciscan junior seminary in Lwow, Poland in 1907. Three years later, he became a novice in the Conventual Franciscan Order at age 16. There he took the name of Maximilian. He took his final vows in Rome in 1914. While still in seminary, he and six friends founded the Immaculata Movement (Militia Immaculatae, Crusade of Mary Immaculate). This movement was devoted to the conversion of sinners; opposition to Freemasonry (which was extremely anti-Catholic); the spread of the Miraculous Medal (which they wore as their habit); and devotion to Our Lady and the path of Christ. Saint Maximilian was ordained in 1918 at age 24.

While in Rome, Saint Maximilian was stricken with tuberculosis, leaving him in frail health for the rest of his life. However, he did return to Poland and started publication of the magazine “Knight of the Immaculate” in order to fight religious apathy.

SAINTLY CLIMBERS - Saint Maximilian Kolbe (continued)

Within 5 years the magazine had a press run of 70,000. To continue his work, a larger friary was needed. In 1927, he was given land in the vicinity of Warsaw to found a new monastery, known as the City of the Immaculate. At its peak, the “Knight of the Immaculate” had a press run of 750,000 copies a month. Additional publications were also being printed as well. The friars were using the most modern printing and administrative techniques. St. Maximilian also started a shortwave radio station and planned to build a motion picture studio. He established a City of the Immaculata in Nagasaki, Japan and for a brief time in Malabar, India.

Saint Maximilian was briefly arrested with several other Franciscan brothers in 1939, following the Nazi invasion of Poland. Once released, the brothers quickly returned to their work. At this time, the monastery was housing 3,000 Polish refugees, many of them Jewish, and was publishing materials considered anti-Nazi. In February of 1941, because of this work, the presses were shut down, the congregation suppressed, and Saint Maximilian was imprisoned in Warsaw, Poland.

In May of 1941, Saint Maximilian was transferred to Auschwitz. Because he was a priest, he was assigned to especially degrading work duties and beaten frequently. At one point, he was beaten so severely he nearly died, but was smuggled by other prisoners to the camp hospital. There he heard Confessions during his recovery. While in the camp, he conducted Mass using smuggled bread and wine.

Each time a prisoner escaped from camp, ten others were required to forfeit their lives as reprisal. One man selected cried in anguish over fear for his wife and children. Saint Maximilian offered to take his place. He and the other nine men were locked in a starvation bunker. For two weeks they suffered, all the while being led by Saint Maximilian in prayer and song. Saint Maximilian and three others survived this ordeal, only to be taken to a chamber and killed by lethal injection. This was on August 14, 1941.

Pope John Paul II canonized him in 1982, as a martyr who had died for his faith. Saint Maximilian was a ground-breaking theologian. His insights into the Immaculate Conception anticipated the Marian theology of the Second Vatican Council and further developed the Church’s understanding of Mary both as “Mediatrice” of all the graces of the Trinity and as “Advocate” for God’s people.

Document Information: excerpts from www.catholicculture.org, www.catholic-forum.com, www.stthomasirondequoit.com, and www.consecration.com.

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Further Study:

Other:

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN Week 5

Read the *Climbing the Mountain* text, {47-62} [11-26]. Then, read the following and answer the questions:

PART TWO: HEAVEN I

Up to this point, we have discussed some of Anne’s background and started to learn about climbing the mountain. For the next three weeks, we are going to discuss the summit of the mountain, which is heaven. This is the vision that Jesus gave to Anne about what the reward will be for all of our labors, sufferings and the performance of our duties, out of love for Him. As it says in 1 Cor 2:9:

“What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Beginning this week and for the next six weeks, we will study the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, as they relate to Anne’s experiences and writings in *Climbing the Mountain*. Before we delve into Anne’s visit to heaven, let’s discuss the gifts and their importance for all of us. According to the Catechism (1830-31):

*“The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit. **The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.** They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David. (Cf. Isa 11:1-2) They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations. *Let your good spirit lead me on a level path. (Ps 143:10)* For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God . . . If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” (Rom 8:14, 17)*

THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Courage (Fortitude)

Wisdom

Understanding

Piety

Counsel

Knowledge

Fear of the Lord

COURAGE (FORTITUDE)
Our first gift of the Holy Spirit

{47}[11] Anne was fearful in this newest assignment. While affirming her, Jesus begins our trip to heaven with encouragement, “*Heaven is a truth. Souls serve Me on earth and they will then join Me in heaven. I am giving souls **great courage** through this grace.*” It is very reassuring to know that Jesus is with us and that He will give us courage to do our duty and to follow our calling from Him. Often, even when we know what we should do, we prevent ourselves from following Our Lord’s will because we are afraid. We fear what others will think of us. We fear our own weaknesses, and we also fear potential outside events and circumstances.

Courage is also called fortitude, and Fr. John Hardon, in his Catholic Catechism, speaks of courage and fortitude in this way:

*“Two forms of courage are implied in the gift of fortitude:
to undertake arduous tasks and
to endure long and trying difficulties for the divine glory.*”

The two are quite distinct.

There is a type of courage that anticipates grave obstacles while entering on a course of action, a state of life, or a new venture in the spiritual life or the apostolate, but the obstacles are faced with a quiet trust in providence that inspires willingness to suffer in the prosecution of the plan. Fortitude of this kind is characterized by a dauntless spirit of resolution, firmness of mind and an indomitable will.

Another form of courage does not pioneer in God’s service but finds itself tried by unexpected trials, sickness, persecution, and external failure. Nevertheless, it perseveres in the practice of virtue and unflinchingly carries on in spite of oppressive odds.

Both types of courage are necessary for salvation, at least to the extent that perseverance in grace over a long period of time will call upon the deepest resources of courage.”

1. Can you explain the two types of courage detailed above in your own words?

Fr. Hardon continues:

“... a man needs... to live up to his ideals in spite of the criticism and, perhaps, opposition he meets from those who should encourage him in the struggle for perfection.” But if he continues in his struggle, against all odds and condemnations from others, *“His strength of character, born of the Spirit, will become a grace of attraction for others to follow his example.”*

2. Can you give an example of someone, either that you know or know of, who exhibited great courage in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles?

3. In what circumstances have you or do you find God prompting you to be courageous in your life?

Courage is also a cardinal virtue (see Catechism paragraph 1808), so it is necessary for a soul to strive after. But it is also a gift of the Holy Spirit given in Confirmation. Jesus is telling Anne that He is giving great courage in the graces unleashed by these messages.

4. Why do you think courage is so important at this time?

INTRODUCTION TO HEAVEN

{48} [12] Jesus mystically brings Anne to heaven where she is apprehensive at first. The initial group that they encounter is a large gathering of souls surrounding St. Clare.

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Clare of Assisi (1193-1253)

“Go forth in peace, for you have followed the good road. Go forth without fear, for He who created you has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you as a mother. Blessed be you, my God, for having created me.”

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Clare Offreduccio was born in Assisi, Italy in 1193. Her parents were from noble families, having a palace in Assisi and a castle on the slope of Mount Subasio. At the age of 18, she heard Saint Francis preach the Lenten sermons in the Church of Saint George in Assisi. She was greatly moved by his call to take the Gospel as the rule of life itself. She consulted with Saint Francis afterwards, and he encouraged her to give up worldly things and follow the Gospels.

SAINTLY CLIMBER – St. Clare of Assisi - continued

On Palm Sunday Saint Clare attended Mass at the cathedral, but when the congregation pressed forward to the altar-rail to receive a branch of palm, she remained in her seat “as if rapt in a dream.” The bishop descended from the sanctuary and placed a palm in her hand. Saint Clare saw this as a sign to devote her life to God. That night she secretly left her father’s house, and traveling with her aunt and another companion, met Saint Francis and his followers at the humble chapel of the Portiuncula. “[There Saint] Clare laid aside her rich dress, and Saint Francis, cutting her hair off, clothed her in a rough tunic and thick veil.” She vowed herself into the service of Jesus Christ in March, 1212.

Once her father discovered her secret flight, he was furious. He had planned for her to make an advantageous marriage. He tried his utmost to dissuade her from dedicating herself to God. He even tried to drag her home by force from the Benedictine nuns Saint Francis had placed her with in San Paolo. But she held to her convictions, and her father was forced to leave her in peace.

Saint Francis eventually secured a modest home for Saint Clare and Agnes (her sister had joined her) in Assisi next to the church of San Damiano. Thus the second order of Saint Francis, known as the Order of the Poor Ladies or of the Poor Clares, was founded with Saint Clare as the Superior. Other candidates joined Saint Clare, including her mother, another sister, and aunt. The order spread rapidly in Italy, France, and Germany. The Poor Clares were cloistered and therefore could not go from town to town preaching. They depended solely on alms, forced to have complete faith in God to provide through people.

Saint Clare governed her convent for four decades despite poor health. She was a living copy of the poverty, humility, and mortification of Saint Francis. She had a special devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the Passion of Christ. “Toward the end of her life, when too ill to attend Mass, an image of the service would miraculously display on her cell wall; thus she’s called the Patron Saint of Television.” On her deathbed she requested, as had Saint Francis 27 years earlier, to have read to her St. John’s account of the Passion of Our Lord. In her last days, she was attended to by Pope Innocent IV, Cardinal Rainaldo, her sister Agnes, and three of the earliest companions of Saint Francis. Saint Clare passed from this world in August 1253.

Saint Clare was canonized in 1255 by Pope Alexander IV. Saint Clare’s example inspires us to divest ourselves from any unnecessary items in our lives and to joyfully live simply in God’s love.

Document Information: Excerpted from the following: www.newadvent.org, www.stthomasirondequoit.com, and www.catholic-forum.com.

Rhonda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Women Saints*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1991, Pages 257-258.

5. Reflecting on St. Clare, what good do you think television has been for modern man?

6. What harm do you think television has done to society?

7. Have there been any effective means that you know of to positively affect television, movies or the media? Discuss.

8. How can we work to correct abuses in television?

So, you think you know what He'll ask of you?

One highly unlikely individual, who, probably not by accident, is a Poor Clare of Perpetual Adoration in Hanceville, Alabama, began a Catholic television network that has grown to worldwide proportions, doing untold good for the Church on every continent. Against all odds, an unknown nun was called to build a Catholic radio and TV station to broadcast Catholic teachings to the entire world. Her name is Mother Mary Angelica and her network is the Eternal Word Television Network, EWTN. Her network teaches, evangelizes and brings hope to people of all faiths.

9. Do you know of any situations where unlikely projects happened in spite of the instrument or person used to bring them about?

10. If you are familiar with EWTN and watch it with any regularity, please tell your group what your favorite show on the network is and why.

11. Spend some time this week either watching EWTN or listening to Catholic radio and give your observations of differences or similarities with secular broadcasts.

{48} [12-13] Jesus tells Anne,
“Look at this audience, Anne. They are all saints. Many served as Franciscans but there is no separation in heaven so all are welcome. Many like the concepts being taught here so they bring others. There is constant joyous learning in heaven and such companionship provides the loveliest peace to others.”

12. It appears that souls choose where they go and what they do in heaven. Is that freedom a surprise to your idea of heaven?

{48}[12] Jesus tells Anne, *“Souls who served together on earth, or who served in the same fashion, take the greatest pleasure in assembling for festivals or on feast days.”*

13. Discuss your companions or people that you serve with and/or the groups you serve in. Could the joy you experience with others in serving be a foretaste of heaven for you?

14. Did you ever imagine that you would learn in heaven? What would you like to learn more about once you reach heaven?

15. {49} [13] At one point, Anne asks Jesus, “Will souls have faces in heaven?” What is Jesus’ response?

Anne's question is a childlike question but one we are probably all curious about. In Scripture Jesus says: "unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3.

16. What childlike questions do you have for Him?

The Catechism describes the "beatific vision" of God in heaven, in this way: "*Because of his transcendence, God cannot be seen as he is, unless he himself opens up his mystery to man's immediate contemplation and gives him the capacity for it. The Church calls this contemplation of God in his heavenly glory 'the beatific vision.'*" (CCC 1028)

The Catechism also defines and describes the experience of heaven:

Paragraph 1024: "*This perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity—this communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed—is called "heaven." Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness.*"

Paragraph 1025: "*To live in heaven is "to be with Christ." The elect live "in Christ," (Phil:23; cf. Jn 14:3; 1 Thess 4:17) but they retain, or rather find, their true identity, their own name. (Cf. Rev. 2:17)"*

Paragraph 1027: "*This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description. Scripture speaks of it in images: life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem, paradise: "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Cor 2:9)"*

Paragraph 1029: "*In the glory of heaven the blessed continue joyfully to fulfill God's will in relation to other men and to all creation. Already they reign with Christ; with him "they shall reign forever and ever." (Rev 22:5; cf. Mt 25:21, 23)"*

17. Do you long for heaven?

CONTEMPLATION

{51}[15] Jesus takes Anne to a beautiful area of trees, a stream and rocks and they encounter Mary, an unknown saint, who is contemplating nature in all of its glory. She is realizing the beauty and the goodness of God who has made all of this for us. Mary is completely alone, and yet is peaceful and contented, listening to God and recalling all of His works.

18. How does this contemplation differ from loneliness on earth?

In coming pages of the book (for example pages {64} [28]; {82} [46]; and {88} [52]), Anne comments several times, while visiting heaven, that no one there is ever surprised when Jesus enters their room or their group. She explains that this is because He is always with the souls in heaven who are joined to Him perfectly in His will, so they are never separated from Him. He is always with us on earth as well, but we are not yet in perfect union with Him.

19. When you yearn to spend time with Our Lord, how do you envision that perfect environment? Describe for your group.

20. {51} [15] How was the stream similar to music?

21. {51-52} [15-16] According to Jesus, what is the saint learning about by listening to the stream?

One way to begin the process of quiet contemplation of Our Lord is through His Word in Scripture. Often, when we feel dry, restless or unable to pray, we can turn to Scripture to find the beginning of a deeper prayer life. The psalms are one way to begin if we simply don't know where to start.

According to the New Oxford Annotated Bible, "the Psalter is the hymnal of ancient Israel, compiled from older collections of lyrics for use in the temple of Zerubbabel (Ezra 5:3; Hag 1:14). Most of the psalms were probably composed to accompany acts of worship in the temple and may be classified [into 8 types] as follows:

1. **Hymns** - acts of praise suitable for any occasion
2. **Laments** - in which an individual seeks deliverance from illness or false accusation, or the nation asks for help in time of distress
3. **Songs of Trust** - in which an individual expresses his confidence in God's readiness to help
4. **Thanksgivings** - in which an individual expresses his gratitude for deliverance
5. **Sacred History** - in which the nation recounts the story of God's dealings with it
6. **Royal Psalms** - designed to be used for occasions such as a coronation or royal wedding
7. **Wisdom Psalms** - which are meditations on life and the ways of God
8. **Liturgies** - which are often of mixed type and were composed for some special cultic or historical occasion.

Psalms can aid in quiet introspection, reminding us of nature, like the saint Anne encountered in heaven. A few of these are Psalms 1, 8 and 19. Other psalms can begin the search for quiet and peace in our hearts, as a refuge from the noisy and oftentimes deafening world around us. These are Psalms 25, 27, 62, and 63. The next time we feel dry and unable to pray, we can consider using the psalms as a starting point. They are rich in language and symbolism and can guide us to a more fruitful prayer life.

22. If you have a favorite psalm, tell your group why it is special to you.

{52}[16] While looking at the sunset, Anne’s spiritual director said, “*Imagine people trying to say God does not exist.*”

23. Name an experience that you have had that convinced you of God’s existence?

{53}[17] Anne says at the end of this segment, “*there is total isolation if you desire it and complete companionship, as well. I imagine I will go from one to the other as the alone time is spent with the availability of Jesus.*”

24. How can we best develop our senses so that on earth we are more aware of spiritual interventions?

{53} [17] Finally, Anne makes a remark that makes us smile. She says “*The nicest part of this all is Jesus. He bowls me over and I want to do anything for Him.*”

25. When has Jesus “bowed you over?”

FAMILY

{55} [19] Anne sees her paternal grandmother in heaven, a woman that she never knew, but prays for each day. Her grandmother gives her some grandmotherly advice “*Don’t be afraid . . . We are all here but we are also with you.*” These few simple words very clearly describe the Communion of Saints that we talked about in Week 4 in the section on Intercessory Prayer. Isn’t it comforting to know that our ancestors, who we don’t even know and may not think about very often, are praying for us from either their eternal resting place in heaven or their temporary resting place in purgatory? In addition to the canonized saints who we regularly ask to pray for us, we have an abundance of other, unknown saints, many of whom we are related to over the generations, who can take an interest in our lives and intercede for us before the throne of God.

26. Is there an ancestor in your life that you feel especially close to, even if you did not know them very well? Perhaps you have heard stories about their lives that impress you in some way.

{56} [20] Anne talks of her grandmother working with others on her behalf. “*The camaraderie between the souls in heaven and the souls on earth cannot be stressed enough. We do not have the divine vision yet, but they sure do and they use it to help us in everything.*”

27. Do you believe there are souls in heaven working on your behalf? What are they assisting you with? What additional help would you request from heaven?

Anne’s grandmother likes to organize and is able to do that in heaven, even though heaven is beautifully organized. Anne herself is creative.

28. How will your gifts affect you in heaven? What are a few of the things you like to do that you would want to do in heaven?

God calls everyone with his or her special talents and gifts to do His will.

29. What are some of your gifts and talents? How can you use these talents and gifts to help other people and other souls?

{57} [21] Jesus tells Anne: “*It is not an easy thing to experience heaven while you remain on earth.*”

30. What did He say was the most important observation she made on her return?

[57] [21] Jesus tells Anne: “*When you see love on earth, you know that I am present. Be at peace. This heaven has been created for all of God’s children and all will be welcomed. . . . There is no need to worry over loved ones. They are given the choice to make and most choose Me. But I need My beloved apostles to work hard during this time.*”

31. Who does Jesus say will not come to heaven?

Jesus’ words above are very comforting to us. Many of us worry about and pray for loved ones who have left the Church; who are not practicing their faith; or who hold certain beliefs and live certain lifestyles that are not in conformity with the Catholic faith. This is very distressing to good, practicing Christians who, although still sinners, understand the value of a close and obedient relationship with God. We want our loved ones to have what we have, and we worry when they seem to be far away from Our Lord and His Church. When we do feel this way, the best thing that we can do is to pray for a conversion for those people and to trust that God will do the rest. As a holy bishop told St. Monica when she was despairing over her son, St. Augustine: “*It is not possible that the son of so many tears should perish.*” (www.catholic.org/saints)

32. Describe any experiences you have had in drawing loved ones to or back to the Catholic Church. What was your role in their (re)conversion? Give any examples you may have that will help others to do the same.

{59}[23] Jesus says: “*Each soul on earth has a path that has been traced out for him. His culture, his parents, his placement in time, all of these things have been designed by Me.... There is room for each soul and the reward for each soul has been prepared by Me.*”

Oftentimes, as we struggle with family issues, either family of origin, extended family or simply our own nuclear family; we wonder why we have been put in this place, at this time. We ask Our Lord, “Why did You give me this child that I can’t seem to reach?” or “Why is my mother so difficult to get along with?” or any number of similar questions. Often the familial crosses are the most difficult to bear.

{60} [24] But Anne gives a captivating account of a time in her life when her crosses were too much for her to bear alone. From the vantage point of heaven, Jesus allows her to see how all those in her life at that time were helping her to deal with her own personal suffering. She herself was continually offering up her sufferings to Our Lord, usually through simple prayers such as “*I trust you, Jesus*” or “*Make me better, Lord.*”

SUFFERING

{60}[24] In Anne’s account of a time of great suffering in her life, she gives a beautiful description of how Jesus saw her pain and her efforts:

“The experience Jesus had in this period was the opposite of mine. He watched a soul carrying a great cross, who offered it all to Him. With this commitment, He built a fortress in My soul that He could occupy. This was one dark night for me but Jesus drew the greatest consolation from it.... From the heavenly perspective, great things were happening during this time.”

Suffering and struggles are God’s way of bringing us closer to Him. Through our sufferings we pray for God’s help, and it is through God’s grace that we endure.

33. Think of a time when you were suffering mentally or physically. How did you feel towards God at that time?

34. {61} [25] According to Anne, how does the enemy try to get us to view suffering?

The Catechism addresses this issue in paragraph 164, with these words:

“Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice, and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it.”

35. Can you in retrospect see a great good that came about as a result of hard, difficult suffering?

{62} [26] According to Anne, “*Jesus is trying to make us all saints.*” He tells Anne, “*It is this I want others to see. They will not avoid the cross on earth. If they accept the crosses in their lives, I can make them saints. Holiness is a process and suffering is part of that process.*” Everyone has a cross or crosses to bear. It is in how we deal with these crosses that Our Lord has planned out our future in heaven with Him. Even though we may not be glad in our sufferings as St. Paul was, if we deal with them with acceptance and dignity, God’s graces can flow not only to us, but to many others as well. We can also allow others to be a part of or help with our struggles. Remember that God has a hand in making all of us saints. And in allowing others to help, gives them an opportunity to save not only their own souls but to help heal our souls as well.

36. Listed below are a number of quotes on the value of suffering. Which is your favorite and why? Do you have any others?

Encouragement in Suffering

- *“Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.”*
Matthew 16:24 (See also, Mark 8:34 and Luke 9:23)
- *“For God desires that you learn to bear trials without comfort, that you may yield yourself wholly to Him, and grow more humble through tribulation.”*
Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, iii, 12.
- *“To live for love is not to set up one's tent here below on the heights of Tabor, but to climb Calvary with Jesus.”* St. Therese of Lisieux
- *“Why should the righteous suffer?” “Why not?”* replied Lewis...*“They're the only ones who can handle it.”* CS Lewis
- *“Everywhere a greater joy is preceded by a greater suffering.”* St. Augustine

37. How does Jesus use suffering?

38. What is the one thing Anne would like us to walk away with from this experience?

{62}[26] Final words on suffering from Anne, that really sum up the essence of what God wants from us: *“I see that my prayers were that much more powerful because of the darkness from which they burst from me. Praise God. We should strive for great acceptance in all because it is all from His hand and **He never averts His gaze from us.**”*

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Further Study:

Other:

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Venerable Cornelia Connelly (1809-1879)

“We glorify God by accomplishing His will as He makes it known to us through those who represent Him, and by the events in our lives which He orders or permits... Take the Cross He sends, as it is, and not as you imagine it ought to be.”

Rhonda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Woman Saints*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1991. Page 98.

Cornelia Augusta Peacock was born in Philadelphia, PA, in 1809. The Peacock family worshiped at a Presbyterian church. “At 22, she married an Episcopalian minister, Pierce Connelly, and moved to Natchez, MS, where Pierce was Pastor of an Episcopal Church.”

By 1835, the couple had two children: Mercer and Adeline. In that same year Pierce resigned his rectorship. He was greatly bothered by the anti-Catholic movement of the south. He started to seriously study the controversy between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant religion. His search led him to Rome.

Cornelia supported her husband. “I am proud to say that against my prejudices and in spite of the feeling of horror which I have nurtured against the Catholic faith, I am ready at once to submit to whatever my loved husband believes to be the path of duty.” It was this fidelity in her husband’s integrity that brought Cornelia to consider conversion to Catholicism. Two days before leaving to join her husband in Rome, Cornelia was baptized. The following year, in 1836, Pierce was also baptized.

Pierce started to contemplate entering the priesthood. As he considered, Cornelia was greatly troubled. “She was aware that the Church would require her to take a vow of perpetual chastity in the event she allowed her husband to become a priest” (note that this is no longer Church policy today). She pleaded with an American clergyman: “Is it necessary for Pierce to make this sacrifice and sacrifice me? I love my husband; I love my darling children; why must I give them up?”

In 1837, the couple was gifted with the birth of a third child, John Henry. The family then returned to Louisiana for financial reasons. “In 1839, a daughter, Mary Magdalene was born but died six weeks later. The next year, John Henry accidentally fell into a vat of boiling sugar cane and died four days later. The loss of two children deeply saddened Cornelia. In 1841, the last Connelly child was born, Pierce Francis.”

In 1842, Pierce left the family and went to Europe to finalize his plans for ordination. He brought Mercer with him. Cornelia loved her husband dearly, but by 1844, it was clear that their union had to be dissolved. Pierce received the minor orders, and Cornelia began to discern a religious vocation. Despite Cornelia’s plea to carefully consider his plans, in 1845, Pierce was ordained a diocesan priest. “I have given him to God,” Cornelia explained.

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Venerable Cornelia Connelly (continued)

Cornelia felt she was being called to start a religious community, one in which she could care for her children, as well as focus on Catholic education for the poor. Pope Gregory XVI then asked her to go to England in 1846 with her children, Adeline and Frank, to found the new order. The community was called the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. She conducted night schools and Sunday classes, teaching sewing, embroidery, reading, arithmetic, and catechism. The community worked with the poorest of the poor and continues that work today in several countries around the world.

Personal tragedy again came to Cornelia in 1848. Without Cornelia's loving support, Pierce was lost. He wanted to visit Cornelia and the children frequently and without constraint. He visited her in the convent and was turned away. He became distraught and removed Mercer from boarding school and took Adeline and Frank as well. He again tried to see Cornelia and convince her to come back to him. But she remained true to the vow she had taken before his ordination. This enraged Pierce. He left the Catholic Church, blaming it for his family problems. He prevented the children from seeing their mother and filed a lawsuit against Cornelia in an attempt to force her to return to their marriage. The court case dragged on for nearly 10 years, though he eventually lost the case. During that time Mercer died in 1853, at the age of 20, completely alienated from his mother.

In 1879, Cornelia, at the age of 70, died peacefully. She had remained indomitable in the face of all the trials that befell her. She reluctantly followed her husband into the Church, yet she ultimately embraced the faith more deeply than he. Her only desire was to do the will of the Father. She had found her vocation, which was to totally commit herself to God's work. Cornelia was proclaimed Venerable in 1992 by Pope John Paul II. Her Beatification remains under review today.

Document Information: Excerpted from the following: www.shcj.org,
www.newsaints.faithweb.com/biographies

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN Week 6

PART TWO: HEAVEN II

Read the *Climbing the Mountain* text, pages {63-78} [27-42]. Then, read the following and answer the questions:

THE VALLEY OF SOLITUDE

{63}[27] Jesus takes Anne to a place where she can see beautiful trees, rivers, and streams. He asks her to look closer and she notices souls within this setting. Jesus calls the place one of the many valleys of solitude and describes them as “*places where souls come to converse with Me in privacy and silence. They learn about Me and come to know Me better.*” Here “*they can absorb more, and then more again.*”

1. What would your Valley of Solitude be like?

WISDOM

Our second gift of the Holy Spirit

Wisdom has always been one of the greatest gifts of God to His people. We read in the Bible about King Solomon and his great wisdom in 1 Kings 3:5-14. Solomon, when asked by God to request something of Him, chose wisdom as his gift. God was so pleased with Solomon’s request that he made this promise in verse 12: “*I give you a heart so wise and understanding that there has never been anyone like you up to now, and after you there will come no one to equal you.*”

2. In this Scripture passage, what are the other two promises made by God while granting Solomon his request?

3. Is it possible for us to obtain wisdom like Solomon?

In Catholic Bibles, one of the Deuterocanonical books is called the Book of Wisdom. It is called a Deuterocanonical book (or apocryphal in Protestant terms) because it is one of the seven books of the Roman Catholic Bible that are not recognized by our Protestant brethren. This is due to the fact that the early Christians, most of whom were Greek-speaking, used an ancient Greek translation as their Bible, which included 46 books. When the Jews officially set out to determine their canon, they chose only those written in Hebrew, which consisted of 39 books. During the Protestant Reformation, Protestants went back to this shorter canon.

AN INTERESTING FACT

The books of the Greek canon which are included in Catholic Bibles are:

1. *Tobit*
2. *Judith*
3. *1 & 2 Maccabees*
4. *Wisdom*
5. *Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)*
6. *Baruch*

The Book of Wisdom contains beautiful imagery about the gift of Wisdom, addressing Wisdom as a female who watches over and guards her followers. It exhorts us all to seek Wisdom and contains this beautiful praise of Wisdom from Solomon:

“Her I loved and sought after from my youth; I sought to take her for my bride and was enamored of her beauty. She adds to nobility the splendor of companionship with God; even the Lord of all loved her. For she is instructress in the understanding of God, the selector of his works.” (Wisdom 7:2-4)

Fr. John Hardon has this to say about the gift of Wisdom:

“Wisdom is the highest (of the seven gifts) in dignity, since it makes the soul responsive to the Holy Spirit in the contemplation of divine things and in the use . . . of God’s ideas for evaluating every contingency in the secular and spiritual order. Where faith is a simple knowledge of the articles of belief that Christianity proposes, wisdom goes on to a certain divine contemplation of the truths that the articles contain, that faith accepts without further development. Built into wisdom is the element of love, which inspires contemplative reflection on these dogmas of belief, rejoices in dwelling upon them and directs the mind to judge all things according to their principles.” (The Catholic Catechism, Fr. John Hardon)

4. Name some ways in which you can develop and increase the gift of Wisdom in your life, a gift that you were given at Baptism and Confirmation.

Wisdom, as with all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, will be developed primarily in solitude, such as that which Anne witnesses in the valley. Solitude can mean many things. It is a sense of peace and comfort. It is a place of quiet in which we can be alone and free.

5. How can you find the peace and solitude necessary to be alone with God in order to hear his voice and speak with Him?

6. Why do you think we do not have solitude all the time? Do you think it is possible to have complete peace while on earth?

THE SAINTS AND TODAY'S WORLD

{64} [28] Jesus takes Anne to a room with a large table, with men sitting around it, who are discussing the world and its challenges. She is welcomed by St. John of the Cross, who, along with St. Teresa of Avila, is one of the greatest mystics of the Church. They each are also one of the 33 Doctors of the Church, designated as such for their “unique intellectual and pedagogical gifts”.

Doctors of the Church are “*persons who have succeeded in an outstanding way in communicating the truth they have contemplated in Jesus. . . their teaching brings health to the human heart and soul.*” (*The 33 Doctors of the Church*, by Fr. Christopher Rengers, O.F.M. Cap.)

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church (1515-1582)

“Let nothing trouble you, let nothing make you afraid. All things pass away. God never changes. Patience obtains everything. God alone is enough.”

www.catholic-forum.com

Teresa Sanchez Cepeda Davila y Ahumada was born in March, 1515, in Avila, Old Castile, Spain. She was one of nine children. Her father was a good man. Her mother died when she was 14. Saint Teresa wrote: “As soon as I began to understand how great a loss I had sustained by losing her, I was very much afflicted; and so I went before an image of our Blessed Lady and besought her with many tears that she would vouchsafe to be my mother.” Soon after the death of her mother, Saint Teresa became interested in fashion and chivalrous poetry. Her father noticed these changes and decided to send her to a convent of Augustinian nuns in Avila for instruction. While there Saint Teresa fell gravely ill and was brought back home. Once home she feared that a disagreeable marriage would be forced upon her, so she began to deliberate whether or not she should undertake the religious life. In sixteenth century Spain, “any woman who wanted a sheltered life without much responsibility could find it in a convent. The religious for the most part were not aware of how far they fell short of what their profession demanded.”

Saint Teresa announced to her father her intention to join the Carmelite convent. He withheld his consent. With much sadness, she went in secret to the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation outside of Avila. A year later she made her final profession, but became ill again. It was during this time of intense suffering that she started to “concentrate on mental prayer, progressing towards the “prayer of quiet” with the soul resting in divine contemplation, all earthly things forgotten. Occasionally, for brief moments, she attained the “prayer of union,” in which all the powers of the soul are absorbed in God. “

In the convent, however, Saint Teresa was distracted by family visitors and felt she was unworthy of the graces God had bestowed upon her in prayer. She abandoned her practice of mental prayer. When finally Saint Teresa withdrew from the pleasures of social interaction, she found herself able once more to pray the “prayer of quiet.” She began to have intellectual visions of divine things and to hear inner voices, giving her wonderful strength in trials, reprimanding her for her unfaithfulness, and consoling her in trouble. “Though she was persuaded these manifestations came from God, she was at times fearful and troubled. She consulted many persons, binding all to secrecy, but her perplexities nevertheless were spread abroad, to her great mortification.” She was visited by many religious, Jesuits, and Dominicans to help her discern the work of God and to guide her on a safe road. As her mystical experiences continued, the greatness and goodness of God and the sweetness of His service became more and more manifest to her.

SAINTLY CLIMBER – St. Teresa of Avila - Continued

Saint Teresa was inspired to found a new and stricter community (Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the Primitive Rule of St. Joseph at Avila), in response to how undisciplined the Carmelite nuns had become. Saint Teresa raised funds and started to erect a small convent in Avila. News soon spread and opposition flared. However, through the intercession of a benefactor, the controversy subsided, and Saint Teresa was allowed to continue. “The nuns were strictly cloistered, under a rule of poverty, and almost completely silent. They wore habits of coarse serge and sandals instead of shoes, and for this reason were called “discalced” or shoeless Carmelites.” Through many difficulties Saint Teresa would go on to establish a total of 16 other convents throughout Spain and Portugal.

“Saint Teresa was a person of great natural gifts. Her ardor and lively wit was balanced by her sound judgment and psychological insight.” “She wrote in Castilian vernacular, setting down her experiences reluctantly, out of obedience to her confessor. Her account of her revelations is marked by sincerity, genuine simplicity of style, and scrupulous precision. “The Way of Perfection” and “Foundations” were composed as special guides to her nuns. And “The Interior Castle” was perhaps meant for all Catholics.”

In 1582, during a trip to visit a friend, Saint Teresa became very ill. Stopping at a convent on the way Saint Teresa took to her bed and passed away. She was canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622. She was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1970 by Pope Paul VI.

Saint Teresa reminds us “that spending time in silence and prayer will not destroy our natural vivaciousness, but channels it so that our interest in others will be purified in the love of Christ.”

Document Information: Excerpts from the following: www.ewtn.com, www.newadvent.org

Rhonda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Women Saints*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1991. Pages 200-202

7. Do you have a favorite Doctor of the Church? Do you know any additional Doctors of the Church?

St. John directs Anne to St. Peter, who is also seated at the table. St. Peter, the first Pope, was given the keys to the kingdom by Jesus, as related in the following passage from Matthew's Gospel:

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:18-19)

{65} [29] Anne, who has been troubled about the times we live in, asks St. Peter if our times are worse than the times when he lived and worked.

8. How does St. Peter answer her?

St. Peter's answer is very revealing about the state of humanity today. It is true that many alive today believe that they are in complete control of not only their own lives, but also of the lives around them. Nowhere is this more evident than in the discussions that take place today around the basic issue of human life and what is man's role in the various life issues. Simply because science makes an event or procedure possible, does this mean that we are to allow procedures such as cloning and embryo experimentation to take place? Likewise, does a government have the right to force people to abort their children or limit the number of children they have? Pope Paul VI wrote prophetically, in his 1968 encyclical "Humanae Vitae" (Of Human Life), that if artificial birth control is allowed,

"a dangerous weapon would thus be placed in the hand of those public authorities who take no heed of moral exigencies . . . Who will stop rulers from favoring, from even imposing upon their peoples . . . the method of contraception which they judge to be most efficacious?" (Humanae Vitae 17)

9. Can you describe other examples of man's arrogance today, in contrast to the people of St. Peter's time?

10. Name several of the best ways that we, as Catholics, can combat the errors of our time and bring mankind back to Christ.

11. {65} [29] Anne also questions her ability to communicate Jesus' message to Christians of all denominations. St. Peter gives her advice. What does he say?

12. What does it mean to "...preach what you are and what Christ has made you"?

Peter also says "*The Catholic Church holds the **deposit of our faith** on earth, the truths. You must defend this. Souls who hear you will recognize the truth and they will recognize Christ. Fear no man.*"

13. Read the explanation of the term "deposit of the faith" in the Catechism, paragraph 84, and explain what the term is and what it means to you as a Catholic.

{66} [30] St. Peter tells Anne to "be calm and work steadily, remaining in obedience. It will all work out."

14. How do you remain calm when life seems to be asking too much?

OUR BLESSED MOTHER

{67-69} [31-33] Anne is struggling with something that upset her. She is comforted by Jesus' presence. She meets with Our Lady who consoles her sorrow over those who were speaking badly about her. Mary comforts Anne with these words "*It is not possible for heaven to insulate apostles from all hurt . . . if you are misunderstood on earth, rejoice. You will be understood in heaven.*" This quote reminds us of the Beatitudes, which Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

15. Read the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-10. Which one can you relate to the most at this point in your life and why?

{68}[32] Mary takes Anne to a place filled with flowers arranged for her Feast of the Assumption.

16. These gardens are also filled with what?

{68} [32] Mary shows Anne a lovely garden, filled with white roses, peonies, lilacs and flowers that looked like baby's breath and little blue bells. These beautiful flowers, stretching as far as the eye can see, remind us of the month of May, Mary's month. Perhaps some of us remember (or heard family stories about) making an altar to Mary in May and placing flowers (or dandelions perhaps) from the yard in a little vase, just for our Blessed Mother to enjoy.

What is a Mary Garden?

In the book *Mary's Garden for Children* by Lisa Creamer, 2000, a Mary Garden is described:

- “A Mary Garden is simply a garden composed of plants dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, having her statue as the focal point of the garden. It may be large or small, indoor or outdoor.....” Brother Sean MacNamara.
- “... It is a collection of plants and flowers that have specific “Mary names” or religious names, in addition to their botanical names and common names. By learning the religious symbols of these plants and flowers, the student reflects on the life and virtues of Mary, the Mother of God. As in any Catholic devotion to Mary, the ultimate goal is to achieve a closer relationship with God.”
- “Marian flower symbols were prevalent in religious art” ...A full listing of plants and flowers can be found on the Mary's Garden website, www.mgardens.org.



{69} [33] Mary tells Anne how to live like a saint.

17. What does it mean to live like a saint?

Anne describes Our Lady in somewhat unusual terms. She says “*(Mary) is the most merciful, and yet the most powerful woman I have ever met.*”

18. How does Anne’s description of our Blessed Mother as a powerful woman compare with our images of powerful women in today’s world? Give several examples.

{70}[34] As Anne sums up her visit to heaven, she reflects her experience of the souls and God’s nature:

**19. “The souls in heaven are filled with _____ and _____
..... _____ is _____.”**

A Strong Woman versus A Woman of Strength
author unknown

A strong woman works out every day to keep her body in shape ...
but a woman of strength kneels in prayer to keep her soul in shape.

A strong woman isn't afraid of anything...
but a woman of strength shows courage in the midst of her fear.

A strong woman won't let anyone get the best of her...
but a woman of strength gives the best of her to everyone.

A strong woman makes mistakes and avoids the same in the future...
a woman of strength realizes life's mistakes can also be God's
blessings and capitalizes on them.

A strong woman walks sure footedly...
but a woman of strength knows God will catch her when she falls.

A strong woman wears the look of confidence on her face.
but a woman of strength wears grace...

A strong woman has faith that she is strong enough for the journey...
but a woman of strength has faith that it is in the journey that she will
become strong.

ST. ANNE

{71}[35] Jesus takes Anne to a house where women are gathered. Here Anne meets St. Anne, who was the mother of Mary and the grandmother of Jesus. Little is known about St. Anne and her husband, the father of Mary, St. Joachim. In “The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary” from the Visions of Anne Catherine Emmerich, Anne and Joachim are described as being holy and pious, with “*a serene and even character.*” “. . . *even in their young days they seemed a little like sedate old people.*” St. Anne believed that the coming of the Messiah was near and that her family would play a part in salvation history. “*She prayed for the fulfillment of the Promise with loud supplications, and both she and Joachim were always striving after more perfect purity of life.*” St. Anne and her husband suffered much awaiting a child. Finally an angel appeared to Joachim and “*told him that his unfruitfulness was no disgrace for him, but on the contrary, an honor, for the child his wife was to conceive was to be the immaculate fruit of God’s blessing upon him and the crowning point of the blessing of Abraham.*” (All quotes from *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, by Anne Catherine Emmerich)

20. Can you name other women of the Bible who, although infertile for a time, were able to conceive and bear a child destined for greatness?

21. What do these miracles say to you about God’s plan?

{71-72} [35-36] St. Anne speaks to Anne about friendships in heaven. She explains that when she receives prayers from someone on earth, she calls on her friends who have the most experience with those situations to help her intercede for the supplicant.

22. Did you ever think that saints had the same experiences or trials, failings, or shortcomings to overcome as we do?

23. Why does this give them greater interest to intercede for us?

24. What does St. Anne say especially about lay apostles and their heavenly missions or projects?

25. What does St. Anne say about your best earthly friendships?

{73}[37] Jesus continues to comfort Anne as they leave the house. He explains to her that *“the graces obtained through your offering of your pain will not diminish. You will be in heaven and you will see the graces reflected in other souls who are here because of the generosity of those who suffered for them. . . . The pain you suffer on earth, be it physical or emotional, will be utilized.”*

26. Does this make your individual and unique suffering in life more bearable? Why or why not?

HOPE AND HOME

{75-76} [39-40] Jesus and Anne spend time in a Valley of Solitude forest at night, listening to the sublime sounds. Anne is not afraid, although she admits that on earth she probably would be. He then takes her to see the millions of stars in the sky, feeling the peace emanating from Him. They look at the earth, and it is beautiful. When Anne asks Jesus what He sees when he looks at the earth, He replies *“I see hope when I look at the world. I hear songs of praise and prayers of gratitude. My heart is moved to great mercy when I look at the world.”*

27. What is your response to Jesus' answer?

28. Do you have hope when you look at the world around you?

Hope is one of the three theological virtues, together with faith and charity. The Catechism states:

Paragraph 1813: *“The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. (Cf. 1 Cor 13:13)”*

Paragraph 1817: *“Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." (Heb 10:23)”*

Paragraph 1818: *“ The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.”*

Paragraph 1819: *“Christian hope takes up and fulfills the hope of the chosen people which has its origin and model in the hope of Abraham, who was blessed abundantly by the promises of God fulfilled in Isaac, and who was purified by the test of the sacrifice. (Cf. Gen 17:4-8; 22: 1-18) "Hoping against hope, he believed, and thus became the father of many nations.” (Rom 4:18)”*

Paragraph 1820: *“Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the beatitudes. The beatitudes raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the "hope that does not disappoint.” (Rom 5:5) Hope is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the*

soul . . . that enters . . . where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.” (Heb 6:19-20)”

Paragraph 1821: “We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. (Cf. Rom 8:28-30; Mt 7:21) In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere “to the end” (Mt 10:22; cf. Council of Trent: Denzinger-Schonmetzer 1541) and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God’s eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for “all men to be saved.” (1 Tim 2:4) She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven:

Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end. (St. Teresa of Avila, Excl. 15:3)”

29. What is do you think about the Catechism’s statements on hope above?

30. How can you pursue the virtue of hope the next time you are tempted to feel discouraged or abandoned?

{77}[41] Jesus and Anne visit one more place, one of His homes while He was on earth. The Virgin Mary is there and “she opened her arms and greeted me with such pleasure and love.” Jesus explained that many souls “*long for a place that feels like their home.*” They will find it in heaven “*with none of the pain of their earthly home.*”

31. Have you always greeted your loved ones, especially your children, as Mary greeted Anne? Think about ways in which you can become more like Mary.

32. What do Jesus' words about home tell us, as women and mothers, about our role in making our homes respites of peace and tranquility from the world? How can we make our homes places that our loved ones "long for" on this side of heaven?

{78}[42] Anne fears that she "will be the only child in heaven," with her childlike awe at the sights and sounds of her journey. Jesus assures her "*you will not be the only child-like soul in heaven . . . heavenly love . . . creates an innocence that cannot be mimicked on earth.*" This reminds us of Jesus' urging in Scripture about the need for childlike faith in order to reach heaven: "*Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and went away.*" (Matthew 19:13-15)

33. What does it mean to you to be childlike in your faith?

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Further Study:

Other:

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN Week 7

PART TWO: HEAVEN III

Read the *Climbing the Mountain* text, pages {79-96} [43-60]. Then, read the following and answer the questions:

WORK AND LEARNING

Jesus brings Anne to a city in heaven very close to the Godhead where there are souls who served Jesus with distinction. He then takes her to a house where His closest advisors discuss the Church on earth.

1. {79} [43] Does it surprise you that Jesus has “advisors” and that there’s debate in heaven?

2. How is their attitude different than debates on earth?

{80}[44] Seeing or experiencing pain and suffering on earth makes it difficult to believe Jesus’ statement that “*The world is truly in the hands of heaven.*”

3. In such times, what truth does He tell us to embrace with faith?

In heaven’s discussion, a man says some children are poisoned by their parents’ erroneous beliefs. In today’s world, many children are forced to grow up very quickly and are exposed to the adult world years before it is appropriate for them. Not only parents, but all adults have a duty to protect children and set a good example for them. As Jesus said in the Gospel,

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6)

4. How do Jesus’ words resonate today? Are you aware of any situations in schools that draw children away from Jesus and toward the enemy? If so, describe:

{81}[45] Jesus explains to Anne about the mission and why He is giving this grace.

5. Why is He giving these glimpses into the heavenly kingdom?

Anne commiserates that there is a lot of what she sees that she cannot attach words to but she leaves it with the peace that comes from Christ.

6. What did He say to Anne which helps her to have peace?

{81-83}[45-47] There are a variety of souls in heaven. Souls are in heaven from other religions, souls who have limited spiritual experience on earth or souls who have not been exposed to any faith at all. This is because, as Jesus indicates, *“in each life there are moments of great value and dedication or triumph over self. These moments are preserved.”*

7. So far in your life, what moments might be preserved?

MOVEMENT TOWARD UNITY WITHIN CHRISTIANITY

The *Catechism* addresses the “wounds to unity” within the Christian Church with these words:

“in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church – for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame. . . All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church. . . “many elements of sanctification and of truth” (Lumen gentium 8, 2) are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: “the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements.” (Unitatis redintegratio 3,2; cf. Lumen gentium 15) Christ’s Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation. . . All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him, and are in themselves calls to “Catholic unity.” (Cf. Lumen gentium 8)....This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: “That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us ...so that the world may know that you have sent me.” (Jn 17:21; cf. Heb 7:25) The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit.” (CCC paragraphs 817, 818, 819 and 820) (some footnotes omitted)

Anne writes, “If the soul chooses Christ, that soul will experience it all and learn it all.” Thus, we are never to pity anyone who dies without an apparent depth of faith or devotion. Jesus will take care of it all if the soul chooses Him at the end of his earthly life.

8. Why do we “fear” relationships with people of other religions or other Christian faiths?

9. What can I do to bridge this gap with a friend or family member?

{83}[47] According to Anne, souls in heaven look at various elements of a saint's life and teaching, "*learning about concepts that they were not familiar with from their lives on earth.*"

10. Does it surprise you that learning continues in heaven? What would you like to learn about?

MARY'S INTERCESSION

{82 and 85} [46 and 49] Anne has an experience of seeing a vast audience of different races and religions enraptured by seeing and learning about Mary.

11. What does this encounter say to you?

12. Do you feel comfortable offering Our Lady love and devotion like the man who sang to her?

{86}[50] There were many souls present on this feast day of Mary, "but each soul communed with Our Lady as though he or she were the only one there."

13. What important things did Mary teach Anne?

14. The Catechism describes Mary as an intercessor in Paragraph 969. Read that paragraph and list the four titles of Mary under which she is an intercessor.

“These titles are important also because they help explain Mary’s relationship to us. Since Mary is Mother of Christ, she is Mother of us who are joined to Him as members of His Body. As our Mother, Mary is an Advocate, one who supports and encourages us in our efforts to follow Christ and in our prayers to Him. She is a Helper, assisting us by her own prayer and example. She is a Benefactress, a patron who invites us to receive the graces only her Son can bestow. She is our Mediatrix, the one who brought Christ into the world two thousand years ago and who forever brings him to us. And as she does, she says to us, “Do whatever He tells you.” (John 2:5)” (Christ’s Mother and Ours, Fr. Oscar Lukefahr, C.M., page 67)

While other Christian faiths often confuse Catholic devotion to Mary with worshipping Mary, the Catechism is very clear on this issue. In paragraph 970, the Church states: *“Mary’s function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power. But the Blessed Virgin’s salutary influence on men . . . flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it and draws all its power from it. (Lumen gentium 60)”*

{87}[51] Anne stresses that there are too few people in the world asking for graces at this time.

15. Why should we ask Mary and all the other saints to intercede for us?

16. Have you ever limited your requests from God almost as though He would only be able to grant one or two of them?

THE HOLY TRINITY

{89}[53] Jesus brings Anne to a place to understand the Holy Trinity. He says that it is “important to understand that there is a distinction between [Himself] and God the Father.” Jesus brought her to the Father and she “felt His piercing gaze go through me.”

17. What are the two things that Anne thinks about God the Father?

18. {90} [54] What does God the Father tell Anne to do?

{90} [54] Jesus tells Anne about the Holy Spirit:

“The Spirit is what connects all goodness. It is the Spirit that bound you to the Father. The Spirit moved through you, prompting you to pledge your allegiance to the Father; and the Spirit has sustained you since your Baptism. The Spirit supports all. Souls must ask for this Spirit and welcome Him.”

19. Anne describes her experiences with the Holy Spirit. What are they?

20. What have been your experiences with the Holy Spirit?

Sacred Scripture verses that discuss the Holy Spirit are as follows:

- *“Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that he might instruct you...and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire.”* (Deut 4:36)
- *“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”* (Job 33:4)
- *“For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* (Rom 8:26)
- *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* (1Cor 3:16)
- *“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!””* (Galations 4:6)
- *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* (Galations 5:16-24)

21. Which of the preceding verses about the Holy Spirit hold the most meaning for you and why? Do you have any other favorites?

22. {91} [55] Why does Anne not know what Jesus looks like?

THE PASSION AND THE RESURRECTION

23. {91-92} [55-56] Jesus takes Anne to a large structure to visit the Passion. Why do souls visit Christ's Passion?

In heaven, souls visit the Passion because unity is complete. They want to fully understand exactly what Jesus did for them.

24. How do you revisit Christ's Passion while on earth?

25. Does it help you to know, love and serve God better?

{92-93} [56-57] We have all read or heard something about the Passion. Perhaps we remember what we were taught as a young person. Anne experiences the Passion firsthand in an overwhelming way.

26. What does Anne say is the difference in how she perceives the Passion as a non-resident of heaven and how she would perceive it if she were finished with her work on earth?

27. Why did this experience of Christ's Passion really shake up Anne?

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ." (2Cor 1:5)

Suffering is a part of life. Sometimes it can be overwhelming, such as in the loss of a loved one or a serious illness. Other times, it can be simpler: minor annoyances that will not go away; dealing with difficult people; or anxiety about our families or the world. Suffering is emotionally and physically draining as well. As Jesus suffered for us He endured many things.

28. When you experience suffering, do you think of Jesus and unite it with His?

{95}[59] Jesus takes Anne to the house of the Resurrection where souls go after they complete the study of the Passion. Jesus says, *"Anne, this is important."*

29. What does He tell her?

30. Do you understand why Jesus says this is important?

31. Why do you think the souls completed their study of the Passion before studying the Resurrection? Is this helpful to understanding the value of suffering in yourself and others?

UNDERSTANDING
Our third gift of the Holy Spirit

{95} [59] To reiterate an important point made above, Jesus tells Anne “*The greatest understanding of man on earth cannot compare to the smallest kernel of **understanding** in heaven. With **understanding** comes joy and wonder and reverence.*” This quote leads us to an examination of the third gift of the Holy Spirit included in this study.

Fr. John Hardon describes understanding in this way:

“The gift of understanding is a supernatural enlightenment given to the mind for grasping revealed truths easily and profoundly. It differs from faith because it gives insight into the meaning of what a person believes, whereas faith, as such, merely assents to what God has revealed.” (The Catholic Catechism, page 202)

In “Catechesis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit”, by Pope John Paul II, this point is further expanded upon:

“We know very well that faith is adherence to God in the chiaroscuro (def: light and shade, as in a painting) of mystery; but it is also search in the desire to know the revealed truth more and better . . . (this) urge comes to us from the Holy Spirit who, with faith, gives us precisely this special gift of intelligence and, as it were, intuition of the divine truth...Through this gift, the Holy Spirit who “sees into the depths of God” (1 Cor 2:10), communicates to the believer a glint of such a penetrating capacity, opening the heart to the joyous understanding of God’s loving plan.” (Catechesis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Pope John Paul II, April 16, 1989)

32. Describe an “Aha” moment in your life, when you were overjoyed to find that you possessed a deeper understanding of a previously difficult tenet of your faith?

From these writings, we see the importance of knowing and believing our faith, as well as continually striving for those “Aha” moments when we are given an understanding of certain truths of the faith. These moments can come through a particularly insightful homily at Mass, individual study of the Scriptures, focused prayer, group discussion, to name a few. It is always a gift of the Holy Spirit. The disciples on the road to Emmaus offer a good example of these thrilling moments. Their excitement is contagious, as we read Luke.

Read the passage in Luke 24:13-35 and answer the following questions:

33. Why was Jesus initially not recognized by the two disciples?

34. Can you identify with the disciples' misery at the events surrounding Jesus' passion and death? Why were they not overjoyed after hearing of the vision of the angels who announced that He was alive?

35. Can you see where the gift of understanding aided the disciples in coming to the realization of Jesus' Resurrection?

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690)

“This divine heart is an abyss filled with all blessings and into [which] the poor should submerge all their needs. It is an abyss of joy in which all of us can immerse our sorrows. It is an abyss of lowliness to counteract our foolishness, an abyss of mercy for the wretched, [and] an abyss of love to meet our every need.”

www.catholic-forum.com

Margaret Alacoque was born in 1647 at L'Autecoeur, Burgundy, France. She was the fifth of seven children. Her father died when she was eight, leaving the family financially challenged. Margaret, however, was sent to school with the Urbanist Sisters at Charolles. Because of her deep devotion she was allowed to make her First Communion at nine.

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (continued)

Between the ages of 11 and 15, Margaret was afflicted with a rheumatic ailment which kept her bedridden. She was sent home to recover. Her home life was very difficult. Her actions were governed by relatives, who had taken over the farm upon the death of her father. She was treated unkindly and not allowed to attend Church. This ended when her eldest brother came of age and assumed responsibility for the family farm.

At the age of 20, inspired by a vision, Margaret entered the Convent of the Visitation at Paray-le-Monial. The nuns of the Order of the Visitation were founded by Saint Francis de Sales and were known for their humility and selflessness. At 22, she made her final profession, adding Mary to her name. She also began a course of mortifications and penances which were to continue more or less intensely for the rest of her life.

Some years passed, and then Saint Margaret Mary was given a series of visions and revelations over the course of 18 months. "Christ told her He was troubled by the coldness and ingratitude of so many of those whom He had lovingly saved by His death." "First, He commissioned her to spread devotion to His Sacred Heart, which He ordered to be pictured as a flaming heart, wounded and crowned with thorns. Next, He urged her to promote frequent Holy Communion, especially on the First Friday of each month, and a Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration on the previous evening. Finally, He asked that she work towards the establishment of a liturgical feast day of the Sacred Heart. He also instructed her to become a sacrificial victim for the shortcomings of the nuns of her own community and to tell the nuns she had been assigned such a task."

The Visitation Sisters did not accept Saint Margaret Mary's mission. She was reprimanded and questioned by several priests. For many years, she suffered from despair, from self-inflicted punishments, and from the slights and contempt of those around her. But eventually, the order became more accepting. "The convent became, and still remains, a center for propagating the public and private devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as we are familiar with it today."

In 1690, Saint Margaret Mary fell ill and quickly passed away. She was 43. She was canonized by Pope Benedict XV in 1920. Saint Margaret Mary reminds us, when we are agonizing over the way others refuse to receive and return our love, how Jesus Himself longs for us to devote ourselves more regularly to prayer and special communion with Him through the sacraments.

Document Information: Excerpts from: www.ewtn.com
stthomasirondequoit.com/saintsalive

Rhonda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Women Saints*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1991. Pages 295-297

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Katharine Drexel (1858-1955)

“May He be so pleased with His work in your soul, and through you in others, that He will take infinite pride in His accomplishment.”

www.katharinedrexel.org

Katharine Drexel was born in Philadelphia, PA in 1858. She was the second of three daughters born to Francis Anthony Drexel, a wealthy railroad entrepreneur and philanthropist. With the help of his second wife, Emma Bouvier, the Drexels instilled in their children the notion “wealth was simply loaned to them and was to be shared with others.” “[Saint] Katharine’s older sister Elizabeth founded a Pennsylvania trade school for orphans; and her younger sister founded a Virginia liberal arts and vocational school for poor blacks. Saint Katharine nursed her mother through a fatal three-year illness before setting out on her own. Emma died in 1883.”

“Saint Katharine’s traveling experiences throughout the northwest exposed her to the plight of the Native Americans on the reservations. This gave her the desire to help alleviate their suffering along with the oppressed among African Americans.” The first school she established was St. Catherine Indian School in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1887.

“When visiting with Pope Leo XIII in Rome, Saint Katharine asked him for missionaries to staff some of the Indian missions that she as a lay person was financing. She was surprised when the Pope suggested that she become a missionary herself. Saint Katharine made the decision to give herself totally to God through service to African and Native Americans. In 1891, she professed her first vows as a religious, founding the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament whose dedication would be to share the message of the Gospel and the life of the Eucharist among African and Native Americans.”

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Katharine Drexel (continued)

“Always a woman of intense prayer, Saint Katharine found in the Eucharist the source of her love for the poor and oppressed and of her concern to reach out to combat the effects of racism. In her quiet way, Saint Katharine combined prayerful and total dependence on Divine Providence with determined activism. She did not hesitate to speak out against injustice, taking a public stance when racial discrimination was evident.” “By 1942, she had a system of black Catholic schools in 13 states, 40 mission centers, 23 rural schools, 50 Indian missions, and Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana” the first University for African Americans in the United States.

“For the last 18 years of her life she was rendered almost completely immobile because of a serious illness. During these years she gave herself to a life of Adoration and contemplation as she had desired from early childhood. She died on March 3, 1955.” She was canonized in 2000 by Pope John Paul II. Saint Katharine’s life reminds us that parents can inspire their children to heroic lives of charity.

Document Information: Excerpts from: www.katharinedrexel.org/summary.html, www.catholic-forum.com, www.catholicculture.org; Rhonda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Women Saints*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1991. Pages 224-225

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Further Study:

Other:

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN Week 8

Read the *Climbing the Mountain* text, Part Three: Love of Neighbor, Love of God pages {99-121} [63-85]. Then, read the following and answer the questions:

PART THREE: CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN I

In Part Three of *Climbing the Mountain*, we leave the vision of heaven and begin, again, to concern ourselves with earthly things. In this section, Anne speaks to us of how we should live as followers of Christ and the difficulties and joys that we will face in our journey up the mountain to heaven. She cautions us that the road is not easy, but the reward is infinite. We will study this for the next 4 weeks.

LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

{99} [63] Anne begins this section with one of the most difficult topics of all, love of our neighbor. She immediately sets out to dispel the notion that we should judge the way others live and use that as an excuse to be less than loving to them. On the contrary, this is where the “rubber meets the road”: *“If Christ has indeed been driven out of a soul, through serious sin and a spirit of rebellion in that sin, then the call to illustrate our unity with Christ is compelling . . . Christ glances at a soul and sees the wound that both caused the sin and was worsened by the sin.”*

She goes on to state that *“when a soul in bitterness views Christ in us, it can be like salt in the wound or sore because our unity with Christ highlights their isolation from Him.”*

1. Can you ever recall lashing out at someone because of a wound caused by sin?

It is so typical of our fallen human nature that, while immersed in sin, we lash out at those who are good or living in a holier state.

2. What does Anne tell us about this?

There is a reason that holy people are a vexation to sinners—on some level, a sinner realizes just how sinful he or she is and may even be unconsciously opening him or herself to a change of heart. Thus, if it happens to us, we should rejoice in the potential change of heart, or at least in the opportunity to suffer scorn and ridicule for the sake of Jesus. For, as we know, He suffered all those things from the people of His day as well.

3. Give an example of when you may have been on the receiving end of being reviled or ridiculed for your faith.

4. {100} [64] Does the Scripture quote: “*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block in our brother’s way.*” (Romans 14:13) mean that we should never inform our brethren of a wrongdoing?

We often focus on weaknesses and flaws, but Jesus tells us to look beyond that and realize that each person has unique experiences that make up what he or she is. We cannot judge a person’s heart; only God alone can do that.

5. What then, according to Anne, is our job?

{101}[65] Anne writes with wit and insight, “*Apostles are not called to be judges but delivery people.*” We are not responsible for a person’s conversion or their lack of faith; we are simply called to bring them to Jesus in one way or another.

6. What are the best ways you have learned to do this?

Ephesians Chapter 5 gives us guidelines for the way we should live, setting a good example as a follower of Jesus.

7. Read Eph 5:1-20 and comment on which portions speak to you about changing the way you live in order to be more in conformity to Christ.

{102} [66] Anne alludes to many examples of how Jesus treated others as He served on earth.

8. Which examples speak to you the most clearly?

9. Have you experienced someone who was hard to love? How did you handle this situation?

{103}[67] Anne says, “Remember that there is little merit in loving those who love us, but great merit in loving those who are a cross to us.” Anne gives us much reason for hope as she describes that the process of conversion can take a long time. We have often seen that in our own lives if we have fallen away for a time. Our joy is increased, however, when we read her words “when they return, they can make the greatest strides in holiness in a short period of time.”

10. Can you relate an example of when you have seen this happen?

{103-104}[67-68] Anne states, “We should pray for an increased awareness of our performance in the duty of the relationships closest to us.” Anne tells us that it is in the family where holiness begins. This is the reason that Jesus is determined to protect the family, while the enemy is anxious to destroy it.

11. {104} [68] Discuss ways that we can find great holiness in the structure of the family?

12. {104} [68] According to Anne, if family members see our flaws and have the courage to illuminate these flaws for us, what can we do?

13. {104} [68] Anne tells us that we must remember to pray “before we begin to instruct someone or gently correct a soul.” In this way, we can ensure that it is Jesus who is asking us to reprove a loved one and that it is not just our pride or our own agenda at work. In Anne’s experience of Jesus:

- **He uses _____ .**
- **His corrections are _____ and _____ .**
- **He often _____ His statements.**
- **He tells the _____ and there is no _____ in His workings.**
- **He thinks of the _____ of the soul.**

{105}[69] Anne stresses that the family is not a place where bad behavior should be exhibited and condoned. Often we allow ourselves to be less than Christian within our family because, after all, these are people we live with who know and understand our faults. This attitude is simply an excuse for unloving behavior and we should weed it out and follow Christ more closely within the family as well as outside of it. This also includes parents allowing their children to get away with bad behavior. The family is the first school and it is important for children to model good behavior both at home and in the world. As Anne states, “*there will come a day when our motives will be laid bare before us and we will answer for each act . . . it is not good for a person to get away with constant bad behavior as it confirms his path.*”

14. Why is it hardest to behave as we should with those closest to us?

15. {105} [69] Each family is a little _____.

The family is also known as the Domestic Church. We begin with ourselves, branch out to include our family, and from there, branch out to the entire world, in much the same way as the Church branches from parish to diocese to country to the world. Anne emphasizes that the work of Christian holiness must begin with us.

16. {106} [70] What does Anne tell us to focus on even if estranged from family?

{107} [71] Anne speaks of the necessity of being gentle with the feelings of others. If a person's negative experiences have caused them pain, then we do not want to inflict any more harm by our words or actions.

17. If upon silent reflection we recognize that we have hurt another, we can provide recompense for our failures. According to Anne, how do we do this?

The end of this section includes an admonishment to us as well. Just as we are not to judge others harshly, but allow Jesus to work within them for conversion, so too are we not to be too hard on ourselves. If we have fallen short of God's will for us, then we are to confess and feel sorrow for our sins, and then to pick ourselves up and continue along our path. Anne tells us not to "*carry the burden of our sin heavily . . . we should (be) practicing a little holiness each day through the challenges He has placed in front of us.*"

18. {108} [72] Anne says, " _____

and _____

are two attributes that heaven holds in the highest esteem."

Not only should we be gentle and kind with others, contrary to the world, but we also are to be gentle and kind with ourselves.

19. {109} [73] Anne concludes by describing that when she is climbing her mountain, she feels _____. She says, “I am truly _____.”

**All in heaven are willing to assist us. They need time with us in silence.
We must be listening with our souls.**

LOVE OF GOD

“But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Josh 22:5)

{111}[75] Anne describes the love of God as that which “*propels a soul to the base of the mountain and on up.*” However, we should always be aware of the dangers along the path. We often pause and consider our climb and why we are doing it. Anne says that this is natural. The danger is when we become allured by the noise and glitter of the world and allow it to take us off the mountain and away from our climb.

20. What, according to Anne, are the symptoms that we are abandoning the mountain?

21. {112} [76] What does Anne say about sin?

The Catechism discusses sin in paragraphs 1846 to 1876. Paragraph 1871 says,

“Sin is an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law...It is an offense against God. It rises up against God in a disobedience contrary to the obedience of Christ.”

{112} [76] In reading Anne’s description of those who fall away from the mountain, she is describing those who fall into mortal sin. As she says, **“Sin is not an accident. It is a willful separation from the will of God.”**

Paragraph 1857 of the Catechism describes the **three conditions for a mortal sin** which extinguishes the life of grace in the soul:

*“Mortal sin is sin whose object is **grave matter** and which is also **committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.**”*

The Catechism goes on to say, in paragraphs 1860 and 1861:

“Unintentional ignorance can diminish or even remove the imputability of a grave offense. But no one is deemed to be ignorant of the principles of the moral law, which are written in the conscience of every man....If [mortal sin] is not redeemed by repentance and God’s forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ’s kingdom and the eternal death of hell....”

{113} [77] Anne states that “. . . each decision against the Church, however small in appearance at the onset, can lead to another bigger and potentially more consequential decision later.”

22. “For example, most _____ begin not at the _____ , but at the decision to pursue _____.”

Anne makes this most important point:

*“We must take each moral teaching and follow it all the way down to its furthest possible consequence if ignored. **Church positions then make more sense and can be viewed in truth as protective in nature, as opposed to restrictive.** Love of God begins with, at least, a respect for the necessity of obedience.”*

{113-114} [77-78] According to Anne, this message demands a response: “*Change your life and do so today, not tomorrow.*” Instead of “chipping away at the messenger”, we should take our issues to the ultimate authority, Jesus. Let Him tell us the best way to proceed. But we must be sure that we are ready to hear His answer, even if it is one that we do not want to hear. Subjecting our own will to His will enables us to take those challenging steps up the mountain in perfect obedience and love.

23. {114} [78] Anne states that “*Love of God is _____ and _____.* Those who love God seldom _____ . . . evil has flourished in this time as those who represent Satan speak _____ and _____.”

24. According to Anne, what can we do to combat this noise?

{115} [79] Anne says, “*We know [the Second Coming] will come sometime because God says it will come.*” Those who deny this are only fooling themselves. We must always be prepared for His Coming, whether it comes today, tomorrow or a thousand years from now. Remember that we, as apostles, have the job of preparing the world for His Second Coming. We are to plant and “deliver” the seeds—God’s job is to water them and make them grow.

{116} [80] Another key point that Anne makes is that “*God is not difficult to please. If all souls understood how little God really wanted from us, there would not be so much resistance to a decision to follow Him.*”

{117} [81] Anne points out that “*Love of God brings calm . . . love of the world creates feelings of unrest.*”

25. {117} [81] “The true apostle actually offers Jesus _____ and accepts, in exchange, _____.”

And,

{118} [82] *With the help of God, this is where we will end, in a _____ from the opinions of others.*”

26. Is this holy detachment easy to understand or achieve for you?

We are all sinners but some, after Confession and repentance, achieve great passion for protecting others from their same failures and sins.

27. Name some great saints whose conversion brought passion and therefore did great works for the Church.

SAINTLY CLIMBER – Saint Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510)

“If it were given to a man to see virtue’s reward in the next world, he would occupy his intellect, memory and will in nothing but good works, careless of danger or fatigue.”

www.catholic-forum.com

Caterina Fieschi Adorno was born in Genoa, Italy in 1447. Her parents were from noble Italian families. Saint Catherine was an extraordinary child, “highly gifted in the way of prayer, and with a wonderful love of Christ’s Passion and penitential practices.” At the age of 13, she sought to become a cloistered religious. She was denied due to her youth. With the death of her father, St. Catherine’s mother arranged for her to marry a young Genoese nobleman, Giuliano Adorno.

The marriage was unhappy from the start. “Giuliano proved faithless, violent tempered, and a spendthrift.” Details are scant, but it seems that Saint Catherine spent “the first five years of her marriage in silent, melancholy submission to her husband.” The next five years were spent trying to find solace in frivolous worldly distractions. These pursuits had the effect of lessening her faith, “which transformed into an intense weariness and depression.” “She prayed earnestly for a return to the fervor of her youth.”

She went one day to visit her sister in a convent in Genoa, full of melancholy. Her sister advised her to go to Confession. As she kneeled down in the confessional, such a strong sense of her own faults and of the burning love of God came over her that she vowed to renounce the world and all sin. The revelation was so overwhelming that she lost consciousness and fell into a kind of ecstasy. From that moment, Saint Catherine’s “interior state seemingly never changed, except in varying intensity and being accompanied by more or less severe penance, according to what she saw required of her by the Holy Spirit Who guided her incessantly.”

Eventually her husband was converted and became a Franciscan tertiary, and they agreed to live together as brother and sister. “Saint Catherine and Giuliano devoted themselves to the care of the sick in the municipal hospital of Genoa.” In 1479, they went to live in the hospital, and Saint Catherine became its director in 1490. Saint Catherine was fearless in the care of the poor and sick especially during the plagues of 1493 and 1501. “She kissed the incurable, even at the risk of infection.”

She spent 6 hours a day in prayer, often so rapt in divine love that she could not hear or see anything exterior. Wherever she was, Saint Catherine would see the bleeding Sacred Heart of the Savior on the Cross. She went to Communion daily and made extraordinarily long fasts without abating her charitable activities. Saint Catherine’s revelations were recorded in two celebrated works: the “Dialogues of the Soul and Body,” and the “Treatise on Purgatory.” “After Giuliano’s death in 1497, Saint Catherine’s spiritual life became even more intense.”

SAINTLY CLIMBER – Saint Catherine of Genoa (continued)

She died of natural causes in 1510. Saint Catherine was canonized by Pope Clement XII in 1737. Saint Catherine inspires us to bring our feelings of loneliness and despair to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, knowing that Christ’s divine love is waiting to heal us.

Document Information: Excerpts from www.newadvent.org, www.saintpatrickdc.org

Rhonda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Women Saints*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1991. Pages 337-339

PIETY

Our fourth gift of the Holy Spirit

The gift of piety is the fourth of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we will consider in this study.

28. How do you define piety?

As we review the “Love of Neighbor” and the “Love of God” chapters this week, we learn more about the gift of piety. As Fr. John Hardon explains,

“Piety . . . disposes us to show reverence for God as a most loving Father and for men as the sons of God . . . the virtue of piety urges us to serve everyone related to us by the bonds of blood, the gift makes us ready not only to worship God but also to honor his children.” (The Catholic Catechism, page 203)

In the “Catechesis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit”, Pope John Paul II shows:

“With the gift of piety the Spirit infuses into the believer a new capacity for love of the brethren, making his heart participate in some manner in the very meekness of the Heart of Christ. The ‘pious’ Christian always sees others as children of the same Father, called to be a part of the family of God which is the Church.” (Catechesis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Pope John Paul II, May 28, 1989)

Piety then involves not only love of God, but also a corresponding love of neighbor that wills only the best for others. Even when the people around us are annoying, bitter or sinful, we are called to want the best for them that God can offer. Sometimes simply saying a short, silent prayer for that person may impact their lives in ways unknown to us until we reach heaven. Short prayers such as “Lord, let this soul not be lost” or “Dear God, I know you love this person as much as you love me; help them and protect them,” not only can positively change our attitude about the person, but can have an eternal effect on their souls. In this way, we would truly be carrying out our mission as lay apostles and evangelizing without saying a word.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church discusses popular piety in paragraphs 1674-1676. This is basically the form that piety takes in the Christian life, such as particular devotions, pilgrimages, or sacramentals. **Read these paragraphs from the Catechism and answer the following questions:**

29. After reading paragraph 1674, discuss several of your favorite pious practices.

30. Can pious expressions replace the Mass and the sacraments?

31. According to Paragraph 1676, why is it so important for bishops and pastors to exercise care in the promotion of pious practices?

{118} [82] We have talked about solitude in previous weeks. Anne continually stresses that solitude is how we can hear Jesus speak and know what He wants from us. She mentions solitude and quiet in nearly every part of *Climbing the Mountain*. We need to “*withdraw(s) from the swirling and retreat(s) into the calm waters of the spiritual realm.*”

32. Can you feel the world swirling around you? In spite of your best efforts, do you feel unable to find that quiet that Anne speaks about so frequently? Discuss with your group.

{118} [82] Anne says:

“The apostle who is making progress will sit with Christ in silence and connect to the Lord’s disappointment in the non-service and indifference of many souls . . . The more others do not serve, the more this apostle serves.”

33. {119} [83] What does the “seasoned apostle” understand?

34. {119} [83] What does Anne say about clarity of vision?

“Joy in service is the motto for a lay apostle....so with God’s grace let us do the extra work with . . . cheerfulness”

{120-121} [84-85]

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850-1917)

“We must pray without tiring, for the salvation of mankind does not depend on material success; nor on sciences that cloud the intellect. Neither does it depend on arms and human industries, but on Jesus alone.”

www.catholic-forum.com

Maria Francesca Cabrini was born in Lombardy, Italy in 1850, one of 13 children raised on a farm. “She was two months premature and suffered from poor health throughout her life.” She received a convent education and training as a teacher. She longed to join a religious order close to her birthplace but was turned down twice because she was not considered healthy enough.

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini (continued)

In 1880, her bishop asked her to found the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart to care for poor children in schools and hospitals, based upon her work at the House of Providence Orphanage in Cadagone, Italy. “[The sisters’] days were structured with prayer, silence and service to those in need.”

“Pope Leo XIII was so impressed by her zeal and organizational abilities” that he decided to send her to minister to the Italian immigrants in the United States. She and six other sisters were sent to New York City in 1889. “The sisters lived in bug-infested accommodations and begged for money” to fund the opening of their first house.

Saint Frances Cabrini was not discouraged by obstacles. “Hearing of Italian miners working deep underground for months with no access to news of their families in Italy, Mother Cabrini gathered up the letters and went down into the mines herself to deliver them. She also walked through heavy snow in the Andes Mountains to cross barriers considered impossible in order to minister. Often, when they were either without funds or food, the money or the ingredients for meals would appear miraculously.”

“Mother Cabrini founded 67 institutions, including schools, hospitals, and orphanages in the United States, Europe, and South America.” “She crossed the seas 25 times and opened institutions in 9 countries.”

Like many of the people she worked with, Saint Frances Cabrini became a United States citizen during her life. After her death in 1917, reports of some 150,000 miracles flooded the Vatican. She was canonized in 1946 by Pope Pius XII. Mother Cabrini reminds us “not to be daunted by difficulties and obstacles but to start worthy initiatives and to be confident that the ways and means will be given in answer to prayers and requests for assistance through Christ our Lord.”

Document Information: Excerpts from www.catholic-forum.com,
www.motherscabin.org/legacy/legac.asp

Danielle A. Knott, Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini. Chicago, IL: Liturgy Training Publications
Rite magazine, Volume 37, November/December 2006

Rhonda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Women Saints*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1991. Pages 222-223

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Further Study:

Other:

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN Week 9

Read the *Climbing the Mountain* text **Discouragement and Service to Others**, pages {123-131} [87-95]. Then, read the following and answer the questions:

PART III: CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN II

DISCOURAGEMENT

Anne begins this section by talking about discouragement. It is a familiar challenge to most of us, often on a daily basis. It seems to particularly occur after a setback in some area of our life, as in that “why bother, nothing ever goes well for me anyway” feeling. Or it can also come in the middle of those mind-numbing, never-ending chores and duties that we have to pursue each and every day, 365 days a year. Often we decry our lives that seem void of any excitement or change, and spend considerable time observing our neighbor’s much more exciting and vibrant life—at least from our perspective. It is to the times such as these that Anne speaks so eloquently.

1. {123} [87] How does Anne explain discouragement?

Any of us with children who are active in sports can certainly understand this analogy. We want our children to perform well and will support the coach’s best efforts to get them to their peak of performance. When the team begins to whine and complain, our sympathy is most likely with the coach and not with the team members.

2. How does Anne say we must conduct ourselves when discouraged?

{123} [87] Anne says:

“Our discouragement does not change anything, least of all our duties . . . The seasoned apostle rises, discouragement notwithstanding, pledges his allegiance to his God, makes the Morning Offering, steps into the day and begins to serve.”

Here again, we are reminded of the coach analogy above that we would apply to our children. While Our Lord may have patience with our complaining, He also knows how much work is to be done and certainly wants us to get on with it.

3. Name a few things that have helped you to overcome discouragement and lethargy in pursuing your duties?

4. Talk about some examples in Scripture or in the lives of some saints who experienced discouragement.

For example, Mother Teresa of Calcutta suffered through a very long dry spell while she was serving God in the slums of India. At this writing, she is on the way to becoming a canonized saint. So we can see that it is possible to overcome our own lack of will, inertia, or whatever we choose to call it and continue to serve God in our vocation. And perhaps we too can become saints one day.

{123} [87] Anne says “*We must pray ourselves through this discouragement and we will join the ranks of the greatest apostles.*”

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Maria Maravillas De Jesus (1891-1974)

“The only thing we must do is allow ourselves to be led by the most loving Providence of God . . . You will see how everything works out; have great confidence in the Lord.”

www.clairval.com (Newsletter from Oct. 18, 2000; permission to quote pending)

Maria de las Maravillas was born in Madrid, Spain in 1891. She grew up in a devout Catholic family. “At the time her father was the Spanish Ambassador to the Holy See.”

Saint Maria knew from childhood that she had a call to the religious life. At the age of 5, she took a vow of chastity and devoted herself to charitable works. After reading the writings of Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Jesus, she felt called to become a Discalced Carmelite.

In 1919, Saint Maria entered the Discalced Carmelites of El Escorial in Madrid. She made her final profession in 1924. Saint Maria had been called by God to found the Carmel of Cerro de los Angeles. “This was the first of the series of Teresian Carmelite Monasteries that she would establish, according to the Rule and Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelites,” in Spain as well as India. She was very careful to note she was not called to found a new order, but only sought to live more deeply the ideals of Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross.

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Maria Maravillas De Jesus (continued)

“Her role as prioress (or Mother Superior) would be permanent in the various monasteries she founded throughout her life, notwithstanding the natural aversion and sense of inadequacy she felt in accepting positions of responsibility. Saint Maria’s spirit of obedience and love for the Church and for her Carmelite sisters, however, gave her the strength and diligence to carry out this duty with love.”

“But she also remained a mystery even to the nuns closest to her. Only her spiritual directors knew the “dark night of the soul” that she lived throughout her life, which kept her in profound spiritual aridity and trials and made total faith and abandonment to the will of God her guide.”

After 2 heart attacks, Saint Maria died peacefully in 1974. She was canonized a saint by Pope John Paul II in 1998. Saint Maria is an example of the great value of the contemplative life, reminding us we are all called to meet God in quiet meditation.

Document Information: Excerpts from www.catholic-forum.com, www.vatican.va, Homily of Pope John Paul II

COUNSEL

Our fifth gift of the Holy Spirit

The gift of Counsel touches and redirects us when we are faced with feelings of discouragement. According to Pope John Paul II, counsel:

*“is given to the Christian to enlighten the conscience in moral choices which daily life presents . . . one is aware of the necessity of neutralizing certain destructive factors which easily find their way into the human spirit when it is agitated by passions, and of introducing healthy positive elements into it. The Spirit of God responds to this plea through the gift of Counsel, by which he enriches and perfects the virtue of **prudence** and guides the soul from within, enlightening it about what to do, especially when it is a matter of important choices . . . or about a path to be followed among difficulties and obstacles.”*

(Catechesis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Pope John Paul II, May 7, 1989)

{123} [87] Anne explains that discouragement “is the opposite of prudence”; therefore if we ask for the gift of Counsel from the Holy Spirit, that gift will enable us to overcome our weaknesses in this regard and continue on with our vocation.

Pope John Paul II continues, “*Thus, the conscience becomes like the ‘healthy eye’ of which the Gospel speaks (Matthew 6:21), an eye which acquires, as it were, a new pupil, by means of which it is able to see better what to do in a given situation, no matter how intricate and difficult.*”

5. Read the definition of prudence (one of the four cardinal virtues) in paragraph 1806 of the Catechism below and describe in your own words the connection between prudence and counsel.

Paragraph 1806: “*Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; “the prudent man looks where he is going.” (Prov 14:15) . . . “It is not to be confused with timidity or fear....With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.”*

6. Based on the definition of prudence, why do you think Anne calls discouragement the opposite of prudence?

We never know, in our work as apostles for Jesus, when others may call upon us for advice or encouragement. It is the gift of counsel that enables us to give wise and holy advice to others, just as Anne is providing advice and encouragement to us through her writings.

7. Describe an opportunity that you have had for providing counsel and encouragement to another.

8. Were you able to witness the fruits of your efforts?

9. {124} [88] Anne says that sometimes we feel discouraged when Jesus is asking us to change our course. Can you remember a time when discouragement caused you to change course in some service? Can you see now how changing course was more fruitful than staying on your original course?

{124-125} [88-89] Anne tells us that even those who are ill can serve. In fact, she says, *“an illness, in and of itself, creates a predisposition for an increase in holiness.”*

10. Do you have an example of this effect of illness in your life or the life of others?

{125} [89] Anne also gives us a reason to allow others to help us, even though our independent human nature often balks at offers of assistance.

“When someone is ill, that soul can feel they are a burden. Perhaps we are a burden to others because they are forced to think less of themselves and more of others. This can only do them good. Pray for them, that they will not waste the opportunity to also advance in holiness, as this is another situation that predisposes a soul to growth.”

Anne is suggesting here that we should not rob others of any opportunity to grow in their own holiness. After all, by serving us in some small way, perhaps they are assisted in their climb or, for some, just beginning to see the mountain for the first time.

11. Give an example of a time when you reluctantly allowed someone to help you and describe how it benefited both of you.

12. {125} [89] Do you believe, as Anne says, “there is a heavenly answer and truth for all experiences on earth”?

13. {125} [89] Anne says, “Very often, to protect our humility, the Lord Himself will conceal the fruits of our efforts.” Has this happened to you or someone you know?

Anne tells us that we should not be too concerned about witnessing the fruits of our efforts. This is, indeed, a hard pill for many of us to swallow. While we may enjoy helping others, often without being noticed, our fallen human nature occasionally wants to get a pat on the back or a word of thanks or encouragement. In each of us, there is a little child crying out “What about me? Look at me!” to those around us who are benefiting from our efforts. Any parents of teenage children need look no further than their own homes in order to understand this concept.

{126} [90] Anne tells us to work on Holy Indifference (as identified by St. Ignatius of Loyola), which is the practice of working hard while at the same time, being “detached from the outcome of our efforts.” It reminds us of Mother Teresa’s words, “God has not called us to be successful; but only to be faithful.” As Anne says “*we will become more trusting in His providence and plan and more willing to work [in spiritual darkness] for the good of the kingdom.*”

14. Give an example of a time when your best efforts went unnoticed by others and describe some of the feelings you experienced.

15. Would the practice of Holy Indifference have made a difference in your attitude?

16. Discuss with your group one or two concrete things that you can do to remember to practice Holy Indifference in the future.

SERVICE TO OTHERS

{129} [93] Anne tells us that “*A life lived in Christ will be a life lived in service. . . . [Jesus] came to show us how to live and how to serve.*” Jesus is our greatest and best example of service. He came to earth and, while God, lived a simple life, serving others right up to His final breath on the Cross. He indeed, showed us how to live—in simplicity, humility and love for each other.

17. Besides serving your family, how else do you serve?

{129-130}[93-94] Anne gives an excellent example of service and how we “*must be gentle in service to others.*” We have all been in the situations she describes, working while others relax and enjoy themselves. In those instances, the most important thing that we can control is the spirit in which we serve. We can cry, whine and complain or we can become angry or bitter. But the best way is to do as Jesus did, humbly complete our tasks without regard to the opinions of others or our own feelings about our state. Our attitude is entirely up to us. It is the one thing that we can control.

18. In what situations of service is your attitude most difficult to control?

Anne’s words about service bring to mind the story in the Gospels about Martha and Mary. Read Luke 10:38-42.

19. Which of the two women, Martha or Mary, do you most identify with and why?

20. What does Jesus’ response to Martha’s complaint tell us about His expectations of us in our duties?

21. Lest we think that all Martha did was complain, read John 11:11-44. In this passage we can see Martha’s great faith in Jesus and her certainty that He is the

Messiah she has been waiting for. Do you think that she is expecting Jesus to raise her brother from the dead? _____

In the passage from John, Martha is the more active of the two sisters. She runs to meet Jesus, while “*Mary sat at home.*” This passage and the passage from Luke describe Martha as more impulsive or assertive than Mary. It is clear from both of these accounts that the sisters were very different people, each with distinct gifts to offer the kingdom, and yet Jesus loved them both. This lesson is a good reminder for us when accepting differences—both our own and those of the important people in our lives.

Many of us in today’s fast-paced world find that we are Marthas, but secretly wish to be Marys. The demands on our time are so numerous that we can often lose sight of the blessings of simply being in the presence of Jesus, as Mary did. Nonetheless, Jesus loves us all, whether actively busy or simply basking in His presence.

22. Discuss each woman’s reaction to Jesus when they first encounter Him after the death of Lazarus.

23. {130} [94] Anne tells us not to _____ and _____.

24. {130-131} [94-95] What is “a trap that can turn us into a Pharisee”?

25. {131} [95] We want to ensure that, by our service, we enjoy our reward in _____ and not on _____.

A healthy _____ will keep us aware of our own _____ and unaware of the failings of _____.

26. Do you know anyone who serves with a sense of humor, tolerance and humility?

Anne concludes this section by reminding us to be always “*alert to the distorted reasoning promoted by the enemy.*” We should not refrain from service simply because our motives are not 100% pure. If we all did that, no one would ever serve this side of heaven. At least by recognizing our imperfect motives, we are on our way to perfecting them and bringing glory to Christ.

“The lay apostle in this time, and indeed in every time, must work very hard to compensate for those who are not serving...We cannot fail!”
{131} [95]

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Dorothy Day (1897-1980)

“People say, “What is the sense of our small effort?” They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time.”

www.womenshistory.about.com

“Dorothy Day was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1897 and grew up in Chicago, Illinois. In 1914, she went to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on a scholarship.” Two years later she dropped out and moved to Greenwich Village in New York. In her youth, Dorothy lived a very bohemian lifestyle filled with social activism. She had two common law marriages, an abortion, and a daughter out of wedlock. She writes about this time in her life in her semi-autobiographical novel, “The Eleventh Virgin” and in her autobiography, “The Long Loneliness”.

“With the birth of her daughter, Tamara, she began a period of spiritual awakening which led to her embrace of Catholicism.” She was baptized in 1927.

With Peter Maurin, Dorothy founded the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933. The movement started with the Catholic Worker newspaper, created to stake out a neutral, pacifist position in the 1930s. “This grew into a “house of hospitality” in the slums of New York City and then a series of farms for the poor to live together communally. The movement spread to other cities in the U.S., Canada, and the UK; more than 30 independent but affiliated CW communities had been founded by 1941.” Well over 100 communities exist today in over 9 countries.

Dorothy was known for her social justice campaigns in defense of the poor, forsaken, hungry and homeless. She had a progressive attitude toward social and economic rights with a very orthodox and traditional sense of Catholic morality and piety. She was a Benedictine Oblate whose favorite prayers included the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross.

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Dorothy Day (continued)

“In 1972, Dorothy was awarded the Pacem in Terris Award. It was named after a 1963 encyclical letter by Pope John XXIII that calls upon all people of good will to secure peace among all nations.”

Dorothy Day died in 1980. “[She] was proposed for sainthood by the Claretian Missionaries in 1983. Pope John Paul II granted the Archdiocese of New York permission to open Dorothy’s “cause” in March of 2000, calling her a Servant of God.” Dorothy Day’s life is an example to us of how “a rocky past of sin can be transformed most beautifully by Christ into a life of heroic virtue.”

Document Information: Excerpts from
www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/index.cfm

Rhonda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Women Saints*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1991. Pages 232-235

HOW DO WE DESIGNATE SAINTHOOD?

“A saint is a person so grasped by a religious vision that it becomes central to his or her life in a way that radically changes the person and leads others to glimpse the value of that vision.”

-Lawrence S. Cunningham, *The Meaning of Saints (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1980), 65.*

The following is a snapshot of the Roman Catholic Church’s Canonization Process:

1. A beatification process can be initiated five years after the death of someone with the reputation for holiness or of someone who was killed out of hatred for the faith, though the Pope can waive the five-year waiting period. The petitioner can be either an individual or a group of individuals that is recognized by the Church authorities, whose task it is to finance and promote the enterprise.
2. The petitioner selects a lawyer, recognized by the bishop of the diocese where the Servant of God died. This lawyer represents the petitioner before the **Congregation of the Causes of Saints (CCS)**, the Vatican office that reviews these matters. Then the lawyer requests the bishop to launch a formal diocesan inquest into his/her life. The bishop then consults with other bishops and publicly asks the faithful to report to him any information they may have of the Servant of God.

3. If the bishop decides to officially initiate the cause, he selects two theological-censors to review the writings of the Servant of God. If they agree, a questionnaire is prepared to give to witnesses. The list of questions is based upon the information collected previously. Then the CCS must certify that no Vatican office would merit a suspension of the investigation.
4. The bishop questions witnesses before a diocesan tribunal. The witnesses include both eyewitnesses and those who had reviewed the Servant of God's writings. They are examined using the questionnaire but not exclusively. At this time the bishop must also confirm that no public cult is accorded to the Servant of God. When this investigation is complete, two copies of the facts are sent to the CCS.
5. The CCS verifies the validity of the diocesan inquest. After verification, the CCS publishes a formal summary which includes: a critical biography of the Servant of God and a collection of witness testimonies and documents relating to the Servant of God's life.
6. This formal publication is examined by 3 different bodies of experts: historians, theologians, and prelates, who work for the CCS. When the 3 groups agree unanimously, the CCS draws up a decree which is read before the Pope in a public audience. From that time forward the Servant of God is known as Venerable.
7. In the case of martyrs, a date is set for the solemn beatification. For non-martyrs, another decree is required: one exceptional miracle must be proven to have been wrought through the Venerable's intercession.
8. Authorization by the CCS of the miracle, through an investigation by a group of physicians and scientists, is required. If a favorable judgment is found, the pope formalizes his recognition of the miracle through a decree. Only then can a non-martyr's beatification be scheduled.
9. The beatification normally takes place in Rome but can instead be celebrated in the candidate's home country. The ceremony can be officiated by the Pope or by a Cardinal appointed by him as his representative. After the solemn act, the Venerable is referred to as Blessed.
10. For the Blessed to be canonized, the petitioner must find one more exceptional miracle that took place after the beatification. The same procedure used to verify the miracle before beatification is repeated. Once the Pope recognizes this miracle by decree, a special meeting is called among the Pope and Cardinals to determine the date of canonization. After this ceremony the Blessed is presented as Saint and given to the whole Church for emulation.

Document Information: www.newsaints.faithweb.com

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Further Study:

Other:

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN Week 10

Read Joy in Service and Love of Jesus, pages {133-153} [97-117]. Then read the following and answer the questions:

PART III: CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN III

JOY IN SERVICE

{133}[97] Anne declares that joy in service “*may be the single most important topic that is covered.*” She explains that when souls are working for Jesus, in any capacity whatsoever, there is great joy available to them to accompany their work. That concept seems a bit backward to us—we probably believe that we should feel great joy when working for Christ, even if we don’t. But Anne tells us that joy is **available** to us, which means that perhaps **we should ask** for it in abundance, especially during those times when we don’t feel particularly joyful in service. After all, what can be joyful about carpooling children year after year, making those school lunches year after year, cleaning our kitchens and bathrooms year after year and writing that same monthly report for our boss year after year? It is especially in these boring tasks, that we should storm heaven for the grace and the joy to continue to serve. After all, Jesus may have planned it that after we submit our 87th report or pack our 500th lunch, that an even greater number of graces will be showered down upon another soul somewhere in the world or in our own family. This brings to mind St. Monica again, who persisted against all odds and after years of fervent prayer, God granted her request for the conversion of her son.

1. Have you ever experienced this great joy? Was it contagious?

2. Have you ever experienced darkness caused by non-service? Was it contagious?

3. What is it about non-service that causes a self-perpetuating darkness?

4. Why is there a premium on joy?

{133} [97] Anne explains that we obtain joy in service by understanding that everything we do, everyday, “*we do with and for Jesus Christ.*” He is constantly with us and desires to speak to us; therefore we should be constantly in communication with Him throughout the day. That can be difficult in this busy and noisy world that we live in, but it is possible to accomplish this, according to Anne.

5. Do you or anyone you know have that gift of being in constant communication with Jesus on a daily basis? How do you/they do it?

{134} [98] Anne tells us that Jesus “*restore(s) peace in the world by exchanging our willingness and service for heavenly graces.*” Our daily service is fueling the renewal, and Anne encourages us to believe this. We should not continually reflect on the darkness of the world; that action simply spreads the fear and despair that are the fruits of darkness.

6. Do you believe that your daily service is fueling the renewal?

7. Is it difficult for you to focus on the “*joyful state of heaven*” instead of the “*dreadful state of the world*”? Why or why not?

{135} [99] Anne tells us that when all else fails, we should adopt an attitude of forced cheerfulness, which itself is contagious.

8. Has forced cheerfulness ever led you to sincere cheerfulness? Do you believe happiness is a choice?

{135} [99] Anne explains that the souls in heaven experience great joy and peace because they “*have relinquished their wills in that they experience God’s love and commit themselves to Him once and for all . . . They get it.*” We, on the other hand, don’t fully “get it,” but by working for Jesus, we have at least begun to align our wills with God’s and are trying to overcome our worldly appetites and vices. We are starting to overcome selfishness and look to others’ needs ahead of our own.

9. Do you struggle with selfish thoughts and desires? How do you overcome these feelings?

{136} [100] Anne says, “. . . *joy in service is living for the **soul** and not the **body**, or living for **God** and not **self**.*” We smile and shake our heads in agreement when Anne says, “*I am patiently fed up with the demands of my body.*” Many of us struggle continually with bodily demands. From vanity about our appearance - our height, our weight, and the shape of our nose, to the constant call of our inner selves and the world to lose weight, eat right, sleep more and exercise - our bodies can take on a life of their own at times. Often we can ask ourselves, “Who’s in charge here anyway?” It is a comfort to know that, in heaven, we need no longer be concerned with bodily issues.

10. Do your own bodily concerns distract you from your duty at times? Can you think of any ways to minimize this distraction?

FASTING

Many religions utilize the practice of fasting.

*“Fasting is abstention from food motivated by religious reasons such as **repentance** or **the preparation for a special mission**, and is normally accompanied by prayer. Fasting may be quantitative (amount) or qualitative (kind).”* (A Concise Dictionary of Theology, O’Collins and Farrugia, Paulist Press, p. 77)

FASTING (continued)

Furthermore, in Scripture we find an example of repentance in Matthew and an example of preparation for a special mission in Acts:

"When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you." (Matthew 6:16-18, footnotes omitted.)

"Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Symeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who was a close friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, completing their fasting and prayer, they laid hands on them and sent them off." (Acts 13:1-3, footnotes omitted)

{136-137} [100-101] Anne summarizes this section by pointing out that “. . . *God has willed that we live this time in exile,*” doing His work. “. . . *we are here to choose God or not to choose God. The extent that we choose God determines the extent of the goodness God can flow through us here on earth.*” We need to constantly strive to do our duty in love and Jesus will see “*our willingness and see what He can do with us.*” It bears repeating, that phrase of Mother Teresa’s, “*God has not called us to be successful; but only to be faithful.*”

11. {137} [101] What does Anne say about “if Christ possessed” her?

12. {138} [102] According to Anne, does the experienced apostle consider what he’s gaining from the service?

13. {138} [102] What does Anne say is the gift of holy companions?

We can provide a loving example, encouragement and, most importantly, concrete help for those who need it. Most likely, our example to other apostles is more important than even our example to those who are not yet approaching the mountain. The phrase “holy companions” that Anne uses is a beautiful term and perfectly summarizes what our attitude and service to fellow apostles should be.

14. {138} [102] What does Anne say about Jesus’ not allowing a holy companion?

15. When has Jesus allowed holy companions to accompany you on your climb? Describe.

16. Name a few things that holy companions in your life have done for you, both physically and spiritually.

{139} [103] Anne speaks eloquently of Mary and her role in our salvation. “*God lets her do pretty much what she wants. Why wouldn’t He? Mary’s will matches His to perfection.*” But we underestimate her power, granted to her by God, and she utilizes that power in a feminine way. She truly is the Mother of all and we can never go wrong asking, begging, pleading for her intercession.

17. Have you underestimated the power of the Mother?

{138} [102] In summary, Anne gives us the analogy of carrying a backpack filled with our “*flaws, faults and failings*” as well as our crosses up the mountain.

“Each cross is like a precious stone we are delivering to Jesus. The heavier the weight of the cross, the more beautiful and valuable is the gem that we will hand Him . . . Based on the value of each soul, the value of the cross we carry is priceless.”

{138-139} [102-103]

LOVE OF JESUS

{141} [105] Anne tells us that our love of Jesus is actually a response to His love for us.

18. “The love of Jesus is like _____ . We cannot _____ , we cannot always identify its origin, but it has a great impact on us and can actually _____.”

“God’s love must be entertained by the soul in order to grow. If the soul has a heart surrounded by ice . . . the result of sin and of the wounds inflicted by the world” then Jesus is not allowed by the soul to break through. Thus, the soul is robbed of divine love while it is in a state of “ice” or mortal sin. However, Anne tells us that Jesus needs only the tiniest crack in order to break through our hardness of heart and complacency and heal our hearts and souls.

19. Have you had an experience when Jesus found the smallest crack in your hardness and swept in with His love and mercy?

{142} [106] Anne tells us that the most powerful force on earth is the love of Jesus. This force compels all that we do that is good and holy. Just as with those we love on earth, we keep an eye on Jesus and truly want to please Him and work toward His goals. But in order to truly love Jesus, we must know Him. *“The more we come to **know** Jesus, the more we love Him.”*

20. {142} [106] What does she say we must do if we feel no compelling or passionate love for Jesus?

21. {143} [107] How does Anne suggest we come to know Jesus?

KNOWLEDGE
Our sixth gift of the Holy Spirit

We can come to know Jesus in many ways; through His creation, His word, His Church, His Sacraments and His anointed leaders. It is not necessary to be a great theologian or to have a university degree to come to know Jesus. Most of the time it involves spending time with Him in quiet reflection and prayer, listening for His voice, following His will and working in submission to Him. In this way, with practice, we can come to know our Savior and love Him more and more each day.

Fr. Hardon tells us that knowledge is:

“sometimes called ‘the science of the saints’ . . . It enables us . . . to judge everything from a supernatural viewpoint . . . Closely tied in with this gift is the lesson of past experience, after a person has learned the emptiness of things created and the hollowness of sin.” (The Catholic Catechism, Fr. John Hardon, page 202)

According to Pope John Paul II, in this way of looking at everything in a supernatural way,

“(man) feels impelled to translate this discovery into praise, song, prayer, and thanksgiving. This is what the Book of Psalms suggests so often and in so many ways.” (Catechesis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Pope John Paul II, April 23, 1989)

22. Read Psalms 8 and 148. How do these praises lift up your heart and help you to focus on God and His majesty?

Thus we see that the gift of knowledge not only enables us to know God and therefore to love Him, but it also enables us to see the relationship of the created to the Creator and to have the right understanding of the place of each.

Pope John Paul II continues:

“Man discovers at the same time the infinite distance which separates things from the Creator, their intrinsic limitation, the danger that they can present, when, through, sin, he makes improper use of them. It is a discovery which leads him to realize with remorse his misery and impels him to turn with greater drive and confidence to him who alone can fully satisfy the need of the infinite which assails him.” (Catechesis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Pope John Paul II, April 23, 1989)

23. Give some examples of things that we make improper use of today.

24. Our world today is particularly vulnerable to casting the earth and nature in a divine way, without regard to the Creator Himself. Can you give some examples of this misguided “worship”?

In closing this section on knowledge, it helps to look at the example of Mary, “*who by the example of her personal journey of faith teaches us to travel ‘among the events of the world, **having our hearts fixed on where true joy resides.**’*” (Prayer of the Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time) (Catechesis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Pope John Paul II, April 23, 1989)

25. What to you represents “true joy” in the events of the world? How can you elevate this to what Mary perceived as “true joy”?

Have you considered the Passion?

Find a quiet place and spend 30 minutes truly experiencing the Passion. You can read a Passion narrative (located in any of the four Gospels), pray the Stations of the Cross, or spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Pray and meditate in silence. Ask yourself how Jesus must have felt, as Anne says, in anticipation of what He knew was coming—knowing that He would be savaged and ridiculed. Consider that Jesus did it all for love of you.

{144} [108] After your meditation, consider Anne’s words: *“Love of Jesus makes it a lot more bearable to be mistreated by others . . . we begin to expect this treatment, we think less of rebelling against this treatment and defending ourselves, and we see that being treated thus for Christ puts us into a group of wonderful apostles.”*

26. As we discussed earlier, when you love someone, you begin to see their goals as your goals. Have these reflections helped you see more clearly and embrace more readily the goals of a loved one?

27. Have you seen Jesus’ goals in your life differently through this study?

{145-146} [109-110] Anne tells us *“All things end at love of Jesus and all things begin there.”* This is very important for us to remember as we walk through our day. Jesus’ love is our constant companion. He walks with us in all we do and He desires to be united with us at all times. The enemy of God knows this and desires to distract and divert our hearts, minds and souls away from Christ, away from our climb up the mountain. The “messy kitchen in the morning” example is a priceless reminder of the various ways that we can see our vocation as well as the ways that both God and the enemy see it. Probably the best way to remember this example as we move forward in our lives is with Anne’s comment that *“It is one morning, which will be added to the tapestry of each family member’s entire life.”*

28. Tell your group of a “tapestry” memory from your family of origin and how it has either increased your faith and/or caused you to veer off the path of holiness.

29. {145} [109] Anne says that love of Jesus “wraps everything in one package, our life, which He will someday present to the Father.” Are you prepared today for Him to present the tapestry of your life to the Father?

{145-146} [109-110] Anne’s description of a good day cleaning the kitchen is a beautiful example for all of us to aspire to. As she progresses, she is constantly in supplication for herself and others and is cognizant of her role in the salvation of mankind. Although this can be very difficult for us to do, Anne has set the bar high in this regard and we would do well to emulate her prayerfulness. But lest we think that she is a saint, she also describes her bad days and somehow, in these, we can find much more to relate to!

30. How are your bad days like Anne’s bad days?

{147-148} [111-112] How often have we complained about the unfairness of our lives and how unappreciated we are? Complaining is a habit. It is a habit that is initiated when we don’t see a ready solution to the situation we are presented. Jesus uses these times to encourage our growth in holiness. The enemy uses these times as a possible opening to sow seeds of discontent. Jesus tells us that, if we refuse to come to Him in our struggles and bitterness, then we are walking with His enemy instead. Those words shock us, since none of us want to walk with the enemy. But often our actions are not in conformance with our desires and beliefs.

31. Name a few times in Scripture of the apostles frustration or anger which caused them to bring their complaints to Jesus.

32. What are some ways you express your rebellion to God? What happens when you do that?

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint Gianna Beretta Molla (1922-1962)

“Our body is a cenacle, a monstrance: through its crystal the world should see God.”

www.saintgianna.org/reflectionsofst.htm

Gianna Beretta was born in Magenta, Italy in 1922. She was the 10th of 13 children. Her parents instilled in their children “a strong sense of prayer and trust in God’s providence.” Two of Saint Gianna’s brothers became priests, and one sister became a nun.

Saint Gianna felt called to the medical profession. “She earned doctoral degrees in medicine and surgery in 1949 at the University of Pavia. The following year she opened a clinic in Mesero, near [her hometown]. Two years later she took advanced studies in pediatrics at the University of Milan. Thereafter, Dr. Beretta specialized in the care of mothers and babies, and also the elderly and poor.”

In 1955, Saint Gianna married Pietro Molla. They were a happy couple. She bore 3 children in the next 4 years. Saint Gianna was successful in harmonizing her careers of mother, wife, and medic. However, when she became pregnant in 1961, she was diagnosed with a large growth developing in her womb. The cyst could be removed, but the operation would mean death to the unborn baby. Saint Gianna refused the operation. “During the next 7 months Saint Gianna forced herself to keep busy with her various duties, meanwhile praying as never before that God would preserve the unborn child. A few days before the baby was born, Saint Gianna told her doctors, ‘If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate; choose the child. I insist on it.’”

Gianna Emanuela Molla was born in good health in 1962. Unfortunately, her mother died, while bearing unspeakable pain only a week later. Saint Gianna’s daughter is a physician today and is very active in the pro-life movement.

Saint Gianna was canonized in 2004 by Pope John Paul II.

Document Information: Excerpts from www.catholic-forum.com,
www.stthomasirondequoit.com

DIGNITY

{149} [113] The final portion of the Love of Jesus section deals with the dignity of each soul. Since human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, each person has a unique dignity and value inherent in the fact of simply being human that calls for the utmost respect and value that the world can bestow. Anne speaks about some of the modern day practices that strip dignity from humanity. These include abortion, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, contraception, pre-marital relations, homosexuality, pornography, and adultery. Her description of what a contraceptive mentality in the world has wrought is distressing—a world filled with child abuse, mistreatment of women, confused men, broken families and a whole host of other ills.

33. Can you relate a story from your life experience that demonstrates the results of this mentality?

Pope Paul VI foresaw many of these practices when he wrote, in 1968, *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical on human life. If you have time, read the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. While only 15 pages long, it is a treasure trove of encouragement and information regarding the most basic of human rights, the right to life.

34. {149} [113] Anne tells us that “The lay apostle is called to live _____, according to his _____. . . . [This] reflects God’s plan that _____ be reserved for those in a _____.”

35. What practice, discussed in the Catechism paragraphs 2370-2371 (under the Sixth Commandment), does the Church offer for those married couples who wish to space out there children?

{150}[114] Anne tells us that the reason that many young people are rejecting their vocations today is because they have not received the proper formation due to their parents living outside of the proper union inherent in God’s plan. However flawed parents might be, if they are living in a blessed union, Anne tells us that God can pour down His graces upon their family and compensate for parental failings.

36. Read paragraphs 2224 to 2231 in the Catechism (under the Fourth Commandment). What, if anything, surprises you about these words detailing the duties of parents to their children?

37. Reflect on your own formation and what may be lacking. What is Jesus asking you to do in regards to your own adult formation?

38. Are you responsible for another's formation? Do you ask Jesus for help on this holy task?

{150} [114] Anne's admonition also extends to those in homosexual unions, which are "a bad alternative to a holy lifestyle and (are) not something that can or should be sanctioned by souls who work for Jesus Christ." Anne urges us, as lay apostles and followers of Jesus, to "encourage all souls to stop ignoring this dangerous deceit."

39. Preaching morality can be an uncomfortable challenge and must always be done with great love. What are some loving ways in which we can speak the truth on any of these issues?

{151} [115] Anne says, "we are all acutely aware that many souls wish to be in blessed unions or wish to be freed from unions that are not sacramental."

40. Read paragraphs 1625-1629 in the Catechism and explain in your own words what can constitute the grounds for an annulment.

Anne concludes this section by advising us not to judge others or ourselves too harshly.

41. {151} [115] Which one of us can say that we have not repeated a mistake? What does Anne say about this?

{152-153}[116-117] She encourages us to be aware of self-destructive attitudes, direct from the enemy, of our unworthiness to serve due to past hurts. We can also use our wounds and less than fortunate experiences as an excuse for not serving.

42. Can you remember a time when you used your wounds as an excuse for not serving?

{153} [117] Anne tells us in no uncertain terms that some day we will surely regret this attitude.

43. {152-153} [116-117] What does Jesus desire for our hurts and wounds?

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Further Study:

Other:

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Mother Angelica (1923-)

“Prayer is the lifting of our hearts and minds to God. For no matter what we’re saying, we’re asking, “Do you love me?” And no matter how He answers, He’s saying, “Yes, I do.”

Mother Angelica, *Answers, Not Promises*, pages 95-96.

Rita Antoinette Rizzo was born in 1923 in Canton, Ohio. Her father abandoned the family when she was very young, and her parents divorced in 1929. Rita’s mother, Mae, struggled with chronic depression. Rita’s early years were marred by poverty and unhappiness.

In Rita's early adolescence, she was walking downtown and began to cross a busy street. She heard a woman scream. Looking back, Rita saw a car coming towards her with great speed. With no time to avoid being hit, she closed her eyes and waited. At that moment, as if two strong hands had lifted her to safety, she found herself standing on the sidewalk. This event instilled a new sense of purpose in Rita's life. What would God do with her?

Rita did not attend college. In 1941, she suffered from extreme stomach pain. Doctors were unable to remedy the ailment. Rita was miraculously cured of this pain after praying a novena to St. Therese in 1943.

Against her mother’s wishes, Rita felt called to the religious life. In 1944, she visited the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration (PCPAs), a cloistered contemplative order, then known as the Franciscan Nuns of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and felt as if she were home. At 21, Rita entered the Adoration Monastery of the PCPAs and was later given the name Sister Mary Angelica of the Annunciation. The order moved Sister Angelica to Sancta Clara Monastery in Canton, Ohio. There, a prior severe knee problem was immediately miraculously alleviated. In 1953, she took her final vows.

Sister Angelica then fell and suffered a severe back injury which eventually required a body cast. She prayed, “Please, Lord Jesus, if You allow me to walk again I will build a monastery for Your glory. And I will build it in the South!” After surgery and months of hospitalization, she was miraculously able to walk (though she continued to suffer from severe leg and back pain until another miracle occurred some 30 years later). She immediately started preparations to establish a new monastery. She obtained all necessary permissions and raised funds by making and selling fishing lures. Mother Angelica and four other sisters headed south, establishing Our Lady of Angels Monastery in Irondale, Alabama in 1962. The first postulant to be received was Mae, Mother Angelica’s mother. A few months later, Sister Mary Veronica, the former abbess of the Sancta Clara Monastery, transferred to Our Lady of Angels Monastery.

A fifth miracle occurred in the summer of 1970, when Mother Angelica was visited in Alabama by a Josephite priest who was part of the Catholic charismatic movement. The Priest prayed that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. A week later, Mother

SAINTLY CLIMBER - Mother Angelica (continued)

Angelica was hit by a severe cold, leaving her bedridden. Suddenly, she was "over-powered in the Spirit" leaving her speechless and motionless for hours. According to Mother Angelica, when it passed, "her previously severe cold symptoms had completely vanished...It was a sensation beyond description that seemed to parallel the stories of the early Franciscan monks who had likewise been 'slain in the Spirit.'"

In 1973, Mother Angelica started writing booklets on spiritual life. Within three years she had authored 50 books and recorded 150 audio cassette teaching tapes. Once given the opportunity to make video tapes, she immediately realized the impact TV could have on spreading the faith. She converted a garage behind the monastery into a television studio. Mother Angelica founded the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) in 1981. The first programs were aired via satellite to cable companies and home satellite dishes. Today, it is the largest religious broadcasting empire in the world, miraculously surpassing efforts by the United States bishops and several millionaires.

In 1987 she founded an active Religious institute of Brothers and Priests: Missionaries of the Eternal Word (now called Franciscan Missionaries of the Eternal Word). In 1992, she founded WEWN to broadcast Catholic programs worldwide via short wave radio. Access to WEWN's radio programs is now available to AM/FM radio stations worldwide via satellite. In 1996, she founded the EWTN Religious Catalogue and the EWTN Online Services, www.ewtn.com.

In all of her vicissitudes, Mother Angelica had one very important backer – Pope John Paul II, who showed her many signs of favor in the face of her difficulties both within and outside of the Church. She is an outstanding example of a person who embraced Pope John Paul II's exhortation to carry out the New Evangelization to the ends of the earth. Arguably, she and Pope John Paul II proclaimed the Gospels to more people than any two people in history.

Mother Angelica was praying with Italian mystic, Paola Albertini, in 1998 when she was miraculously healed of the severe leg and back pain resulting from her back injury some 30 years earlier. In recent years, Mother Angelica has suffered from some health setbacks. She lives in a secluded monastery in Hanceville, Alabama, and is no longer making live appearances on EWTN. But reruns of her "Mother Angelica Live" show, as well as "The Holy Rosary with Mother Angelica and the Nuns" appear regularly on the network.

Through Mother Angelica's example, we are reminded to persevere in the face of extraordinary obstacles and difficulties and to take great risks for God, while overcoming our own doubts, weaknesses and fears.

Document Info: Excerpts from www.olamshrine.com, raymondarroyo.com, daily catholic.org and Mother Angelica, *Answers, Not Promises*, pages 95-96.

***CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN* Week 11**

Read Love of Divine Will, Unity with Jesus, and Faith pages {155-169} [119-133]; and Frequent Confession pages {299-301} [295-297]. Then, read the following and answer the questions.

PART III: CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN IV

LOVE OF THE DIVINE WILL

Read Matthew 6: 9-13. In the prayer that Jesus gave us, we say “*thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*”

1. From the readings, what have you learned that this means?

{155} [119] Anne discusses how our wills and God’s will are often miles apart. While it is holy and wonderful if our wills are together, the reality is that frequently we are on the other side of the canyon from where Our Lord is in His will for our lives. She talks about the prayer of “gentle coercion” where we explain to God why our ideas are better than His and how they will benefit Him in the future. Fortunately for us, as she explains, “*God is not an easy sell . . . He has marked out a path that accommodates . . . the best possible path for us.*”

2. Have you ever tried the “prayer of gentle coercion”? How did it work out?

3. {155} [119] “The will of God can be _____ to us if we are not _____ to it.”

4. What sin is it when we believe that our ideas and plans are better than God’s?

In today’s world, we see many who, even though they believe in God, spend much time trying to convince God that they are right and He needs to be a bit less rigid in His thinking and especially in His laws. How many times have we heard people, who may not be living as God intended, excuse themselves with the words, “After all, I’m a good person. I’ve never killed anyone.”

5. Do you know anyone with this attitude? What is a good response?

{156} [120] Anne tells us that humility (the opposite of pride) is the virtue that we should cultivate in following God’s will. Humility in following Jesus will allow great graces to flow down and enable us to carry on with our duties. These graces will lead us to love more and to desire to serve Jesus more fully—a beautiful circle of service and love.

6. Do you “often marvel at our nothingness, along with what seems to be accomplished through us despite this nothingness”? Give examples.

7. Have you ever had a “consistent feeling that (you) would like to do better for Him and that (you) should do better for Him”?

8. {156-157} [120-121] All the souls in heaven live in the Divine Will. According to Anne, what feelings do we feel when we’re not in the Divine Will that the saints in heaven will never feel?

9. Does this resonate with you? Share about a time when you’ve followed His will and when you have not.

10. {157} [121] According to Anne, what is the best way to ensure that we remain in the Divine Will?

**SAINTLY CLIMBER - Saint John of the Cross, Doctor of the Church
(1542-1591)**

“In giving us His Son, His only Word, He spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word— and He has no more to say . . . because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son.”

www.catholic-forum.com

John Yepes was born in 1542 at Fontiveros, Spain. His father died when he was young. His family struggled with poverty and moved from village to village. At the age of nine he moved to Medina del Campo. There he worked in a hospital and studied humanities at the Society of Jesus (Jesuit) school from 1559-1563. Saint John entered the Carmel order and in 1564 moved to Salamanca to study at the University and at the Colegio de San Andres.

“Saint John was ordained in 1567 and then indicated his intent to join the Carthusian order, which appealed to him because of its encouragement of solitary and silent contemplation. Before this, however, he traveled to Medina del Campo, where he met the charismatic Saint Teresa of Avila. She immediately talked to him about her reformation projects for the Carmelite order and asked him to delay his entry into the Carthusians.”

“Saint John worked as a helper to Saint Teresa until 1577, founding monasteries around Spain and taking active part in their government. These foundations and the reformation processes were resisted by a great number of Carmelite friars, feeling the changes were too strict. After refusing to relocate per his superiors’ orders and because of his reform attempts, Saint John was taken prisoner and jailed in Toledo. He was subjected to public lashings at least weekly, and held in isolation in a cell not big enough for his body. He escaped 9 months later, in 1578.”

While imprisoned he had composed a great part of his most famous poem “Spiritual Canticle.” His sufferings and spiritual endeavors are reflected in all of his writings, including “Dark Night of the Soul” and “The Ascent of Mount Carmel”. Saint John of the Cross calls us to empty ourselves so that we can be filled with God.

Saint John died in 1591. He was canonized by Benedict XIII in 1726.

Document Information: Excerpts from www.catholic-forum.com
Englebert, Omer. *The Lives of the Saints*, Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1994, pages 447-448.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Anne tells us that it is never God's will that we should sin. Even though, as humans, it is inevitable, we can always and should always, beg for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance (also known as Confession or Reconciliation).

11. {158} [122] What does Anne tell us about the sacrament of Penance?

She explains that the higher we climb on the mountain, the higher the bar is set for our behavior.

12. Can you give a Scripture quote that confirms this?

As followers of Jesus, we have been given the keys to the kingdom; therefore He expects His followers to adhere to a higher standard and to set an example for others.

The Catechism discusses the Sacrament of Penance in Paragraphs 1422 to 1498. If you have time, it is well worth reading these sections. The section on the effects of the Sacrament is particularly revealing:

“Reconciliation ‘is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation’ . . . This sacrament reconciles us with the Church . . . it does not simply heal the one restored to ecclesial communion, but has also a revitalizing effect on the life of the Church which suffered from the sin of one of her members. Re-established or strengthened in the communion of saints, the sinner is made stronger by the exchange of spiritual goods among all the living members of the Body of Christ, whether still on pilgrimage or already in the heavenly homeland.” (CCC paragraphs 1468-1469)

13. Did you know that your personal sin also affects the members of the Church? Does this fact help you to understand the importance of the Sacrament of Penance?

14. {158} [122] A lay apostle agrees to Confession once a month. Why?

One of the best spiritual practices that we can adopt is that of frequent Penance. Penance (along with the Holy Eucharist) is one of the two sacraments that we can receive as often as we desire, and it is where God calls us back to Himself and in His great mercy, forgives our sins. We should eagerly receive this sacrament, in order to cleanse our sins and to hear Our Lord speak to us through the priest in the confessional.

15. What obstacles do you face in receiving the Sacrament of Penance regularly? If desired, could you overcome these obstacles? How?

{300} [296] Pope John Paul II states:

“My invitation then was to make every effort to face the crisis of “the sense of sin” apparent in today’s culture. But I was even more insistent in calling for a rediscovery of Christ as . . . the one in whom God shows us His compassionate heart and reconciles us fully with Himself.”

{300} [296] Fr. McCarthy states,

*“It is in the Sacrament of Confession that three awesome, wondrous miracles of grace take place. First, every bit of sin and guilt is washed clean through the Blood of the Lamb . . . Second, all bitterness, unjust anger and resentment are released. Third, the penitents are given the awesome power to **completely forgive themselves** and get on with their lives.”*

16. How has the Sacrament of Penance changed your life?

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my GOD, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

FEAR OF THE LORD
Our seventh Gift of the Holy Spirit

The discussion of Penance brings us to an examination of the last of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, fear of the Lord. While, at first glance, this gift appears to relate to our cringing in the face of God’s wrath, it really isn’t about that at all. Fear of the Lord is based instead on our unselfish love of God, who we cannot stand to offend through sin. It comes by way of our awe of God’s great love and majesty and our realization that we are nothing without Him. We begin to love Him deeply and, in this unselfish love of ours, we greatly dread offending Him.

“When I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, my fear, though servile, is basically motivated by the love of God, whom I am afraid of losing by my sins, since heaven is the possession of God, and hell is the loss of Him for eternity. To that extent, even servile fear cannot be separated from supernatural charity. On a higher plane, however, when the object of my fear is not personal loss, though it be heaven, but injury to the divine majesty, then the motive is not only an implicit love of God, but also love to a sublime degree.” (The Catholic Catechism, Fr. John Hardon, page 205)

17. Based on the above quote, what are our two motivations for following God’s will? And which is the greater of the two?

Pope John Paul II, in his *Catechesis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (June 11, 1989), has this to say about the gift of the fear of the Lord:

“Sacred Scripture affirms that ‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom’ (Psalm 111:10) . . . The believer goes and places himself before God with a ‘contrite spirit’ and a ‘humbled heart’ (Psalm 51:19), knowing well that he must await his own salvation ‘with fear and trembling’ (Phil 2:12). Nonetheless, that does not mean an irrational fear, but a sense of responsibility and fidelity to the law.”

18. Read the entire text of Psalm 51, which is David’s psalm of repentance when confronted with his sin with Bathsheba. How does this psalm reflect the gift of the fear of the Lord? Can you see David’s love for the Lord shine through despite his sinfulness?

Pope John Paul II closes this Catechesis with the words *“The practice of the Christian virtues and especially of **humility**, temperance, chastity and mortification of the senses, depends on this holy and just fear, united in the soul with love for God.”*

These words particularly affirm what Anne is telling us about practicing these virtues, especially humility, while we perform the duties of our vocation. These virtues make us more like Christ. Without great love for Him, why else would we practice them?

{158-159} [122-123], Anne says,

“Sometimes God needs something from us that we do not want to give . . . How often have we had a . . . prompt from heaven and been filled with revulsion saying, “God, I just pray you are not going to ask me to do that!” The request does not go away . . . God remains still and the request stands.”

19. Has this happened to you? What did you do?

20. {159} [123] According to Anne, what should we do if we feel revulsion by God's will for us?

“We are asked to put ourselves on the line for Jesus, as He put Himself on the line for us.”

{159} [123] Anne also speaks of souls who

“torment themselves over matters that God does not want from them, thereby ignoring the obvious requests God is making such as kindness, patience, and love for those around us.”

This brings us back to the point that God may not want us to do “big” things. For most of us, our climb up the mountain involves the daily, mundane struggles of life, not the heroic self-sacrifice exhibited by the martyrs, the missionaries in foreign lands or the Pope. No, our struggle is much simpler and yet, that makes it more tedious as well. For who, in performing “big” tasks for God, would whine, complain and exhibit bitterness in that whirlwind of excitement? Often, we all dream of doing “big” things for God, after being caught up with Him intimately during a retreat or a spiritual talk, but we must realize that fulfilling our vocation is a “big” thing to Him. What is mundane and tedious to us gives Our Lord the greatest pleasure—who knows, perhaps even more pleasure than that provided by those who are holier than we are. Remember that Our Lord knows exactly where we came from and what we are capable of. Fulfilling our duties in the face of these obstacles is exactly what He wants from us.

21. There is one famous saint who is an exemplar of this simple teaching. Who is she?

22. Have you ever wanted to do “big” things for God? Have you done them? How do they compare to the more tedious aspects of your vocation?

“If we are in the habit of serving in small things, we will serve in big things.”
{159} [123]

23. {161} [125] “ . . . if a soul is not rooted in the _____
the soul is subject to being _____ and away
from the _____.”

UNITY WITH JESUS

{163}[127] Anne tells us that

“When one considers that the soul is united to Jesus always . . . then that soul will live differently . . . He is with us in each moment in time. If we grasp the barest understanding of this fact, we will alter our words, our actions, and our response to others.”

24. If that is true, then why is our world so sinful today?

25. According to Anne, what will change the world?

26. {165} [129] What happens when we insert heavenly goals in place of earthly goals?

27. Is there a problem or challenge in your life that seems less burdensome when viewed from heaven’s perspective instead of an earthly perspective? Is there an apparent failure that was in fact a success?

28. Name several ways in which you are able to remember that Jesus is always with you throughout your day?

29. Reflect on Matthew's Gospel (28:19-20) Do you really believe this?

30. {166} [130] What advice does Anne give to souls who “*search frantically, looking for this state of mystical paradise*”?

{167} [131] Anne tells us something that should make us all fervently desire to work and sacrifice for God's Kingdom. She says:

“Truly, the lay apostle has been given assurance that if that apostle works for Jesus, Jesus will care for all of his needs, including the conversion of the apostle's family.”

Since we all have people in our lives, including ourselves, who are in need of conversion, then this fact should make us leap to the front of the line because, as we know:

GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES!

{169} [133] Anne concludes *Climbing the Mountain* with an exhortation to faith. It is a gift, plain and simple. This gift is one in which we delight one day and feel as if it is a heavy burden on others. That does not mean that the gift is lacking in anything. It simply means that we are human, subject to our own whims and those of the world we live in. Anne leaves us with this message of hope:

“We must try for joy in service, joy in suffering, and even joy in doubt. The most beautiful perfect storm of suffering combines all three. Imagine the beauty of such a jewel when viewed from heaven.”

STRENGTHENING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Prayer Requests:

Support Requests:

Further Study:

Other:

SAINTLY CLIMBERS - Saint Josephine Bakhita (1869-1947)

“I have given everything to my Master: He will take care of me... The best thing for us is not what we consider best, but what the Lord wants of us!”

www.catholic-forum.com

Bakhita was born in Olgossa, Darfur, Sudan in 1869. Her father was the brother of the village chief. “At the age of 6 or 7 she was kidnapped by Arab slave traders and over the course of the next 8 years she was sold and resold 5 times in the markets of El Obeid and Khartoum. The trauma of her abduction caused her to forget her own name; the name we know her by, Bakhita was given to her by the slavers.” It is Arabic for lucky or fortunate. She took the Christian name of Josephine in adulthood.

Saint Josephine suffered much brutality during her captivity. “On one occasion she was beaten so severely that she spent a month unable to move from a straw bed.” Her most horrific memory involved the branding process her 4th owner put her through. It was a combination of scarification and tattooing. It involved rubbing open knife cuts with salt and flour to ensure scaring. More than 60 patterns were cut into Saint Josephine’s breasts, belly, and arms.

In 1883, Saint Josephine was purchased by an Italian consul, who planned to free her but instead gave her to his friend Augusto Michieli. She accompanied the Michieli family to Italy in 1885 and worked as a nanny. During her care of the Michieli child she was introduced to the Canossian Sisters in Venice. In 1890, Saint Josephine was baptized at her own instigation and took the Christian name of Josephine.

Saint Josephine was asked by Mrs. Michieli to move to Africa with the family. But she wanted to stay with the Canossian Sisters in Italy. The Italian courts ruled her free and for the first time Saint Josephine found herself in charge of her own destiny. She joined the order in 1896 and was assigned to a house in Schio, in the northern province of Vicenza. There she remained for the rest of her life.

During her 45 years at Schio, Saint Josephine’s duties included answering the door to the house. There she was in frequent contact with the local community, especially the children. Her gentleness, calming voice, and ever-present smile became well known to the community. “Her special charisma and reputation for sanctity were noticed by her order, and she was instructed to publish her memoirs and to give talks about her experiences.” She became well-sought-after as a speaker. “Her last years were marked by pain and sickness, but she retained her cheerfulness, and if asked how she was, would always smile and answer ‘as the Master desires.’”

Saint Josephine died in 1947. She was canonized in 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

Document Information: Excerpts from, www.stthomasirondequoit.com,

Study Guide for *Climbing the Mountain*