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The Precious Blood Family

A TRIANNUAL OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES
OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD ATLANTIC PROVINCE



We wait for the blessed Day we hope for, when the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ will appear. Titus 2:13



THE PRECIOUS BLOOD FAMILY
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EDITORIAL

The SEASON OF ADVENT, short as it is, has two distinct stages. On December 17, a shift occurs marking the beginning of Late Advent evident in the readings at Mass, the antiphons in the Liturgy of the Hours, and the appearance at Vespers of the *O Antiphons* which accompany the Magnificat.

The first part of Advent, however, has its own treasures, not the least of which are the saints commemorated in the *Martyrology*, the Church's official canon of saints and blesseds. So this issue presents several of these figures from the first weeks of Advent with their thoughts on the season as well as Christmas to follow.

As for Late Advent, the commentary on the *O Antiphons* of the great pioneer of the liturgical movement, Dom Prosper Guéranger, will hopefully enhance your more immediate preparation for the Lord's Nativity.

Finally, the tremendous interest in Unidentified Aerial Phenomena makes for an Epiphany homily on our own "Visitor" from beyond the stars. We are also happy to include a seasonal offering from our contributing poet and a summary of what 2027 will bring to the website which serves as a companion to this publication.

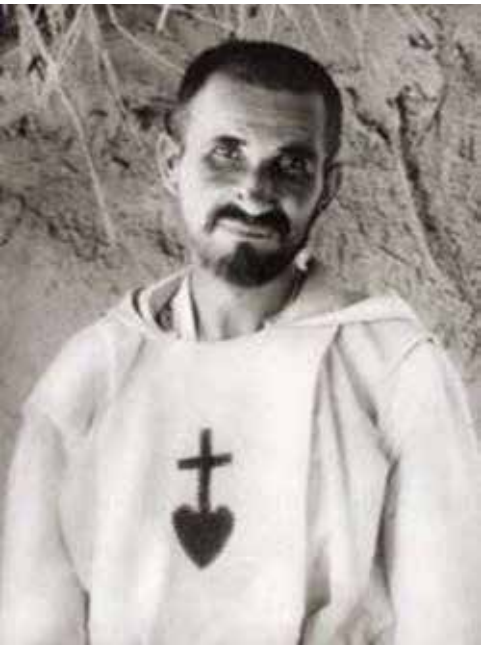
Blessings to all in these wondrous weeks of preparation and fulfillment as well as for the new year following.

Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S.

Saints of Early Advent

Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S

ST. CHARLES DE FOUCAULD (December 1)



Advent Meditation
Although that awaited Day will be Happy, how sweet today already is! You are there, my God, at Mary's bosom, you are there in that little house, adored by Her and by Joseph and the angels.
Take me to them, my Lord.

My Lord and my God, when I am in your Sanctuary, at the foot of the Tabernacle, are you not as close to me as you were to St. Joseph during Advent? When You give Yourself to me in Holy Communion, are You not as close to me, as in me, as You were in the Holy Virgin?

My God, how happy I am, how happy I am. But Lord, I beg You, convert me, may I be at the foot of the Tabernacle, may I be in the Holy Communion, may I be what I should be; may I no longer be indifferent, asleep before your Altar, so that I no longer receive your divine Body without reflection.

Convert me, convert me, my Lord, I pray in your Name! Remind me that You promised to grant all that we ask in Your Name and to give the good spirit to those who ask.

My God, give me the good spirit, Your Spirit, and make me spend this Advent and all the days of my life in a way that glorifies You as much as I can; As much as I can, as much as You will me to be, not nearly as much as the Blessed Virgin or St. Joseph, but as much as You will me to be, as much as I can with the Graces You give me; Let me join Your Holy Family so lovingly, humbly, overwhelmed in admiration, in contemplation, in love, at Your feet, during this Advent, and always.

And what I ask of You for me, I ask of You for all people, and above all for those I must especially pray for, in You, through You and for You. Amen.

Christmas Meditation
"I was born, born for you, born in a cave, in December, in the cold, on a wintry night, in poverty and in solitude, unknown even to the poorest. Why was I born in this way? So that you may believe in my love, since my love for you knows no limit. As I have loved you so much, put all your hope in me. I teach you to love me. Loving you with such tender love it was not enough for me to give myself to the world in the Incarnation. Ever since my birth I have shown myself to you and have put myself entirely into your hands. Ever since then you have been able to see me, hold me, hear me, serve me, console me. Love me, love me, for I am close to you. I give myself to you completely. In my great goodness I did not give myself to you just at my birth for a few days or years, but I gave myself into your hands for ever, till the end of time. I became this little child, so gentle and vulnerable, for you. Do not be afraid of me, come, take me in your arms and adore me, caress me as a

child loves to be caressed. See, I hold out my arms to you. Be not afraid to caress me, a little tender babe. I am your God, but I am gentle and smiling. Be not afraid, but full tenderness and love and confidence."

St. Charles de Foucauld (†1916) was a French cavalry officer, explorer, and geographer who underwent a radical spiritual conversion to become a Trappist monk, and later a hermit priest in the Algerian desert. Known as "Brother Charles of Jesus," he lived in radical poverty and hospitality among the Tuareg people. He was killed by bandits outside his Saharan hermitage in 1916.

ST. JOHN DAMASCENE (December 4)

Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, II

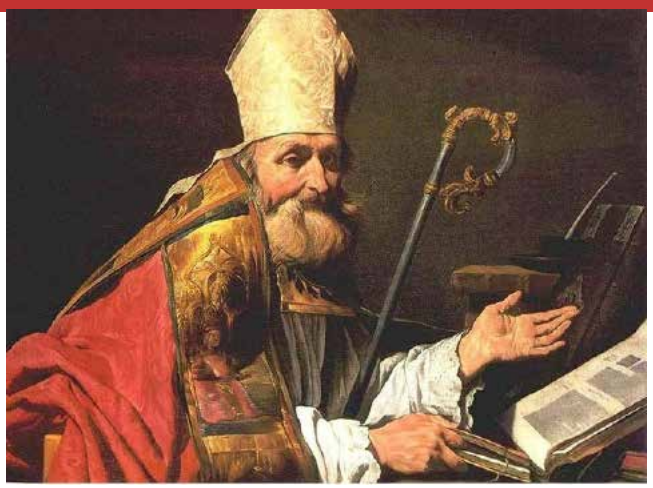
We both know and confess that God is without beginning, without end, eternal and everlasting, uncreate, unchangeable, invariable, simple, uncompound, incorporeal, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribed, infinite, unknowable, indefinable, incomprehensible, good, just, maker of all things created, almighty, all-ruling, all-surveying, of all overseer, sovereign, judge; and that God is One, that is to say, one essence; and that He is known, and has His being in three subsistences, in Father, I say, and Son and Holy Spirit; and that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are one in all respects, except in that of not being begotten, that of being begotten, and that of procession; and that the Only-begotten Son and Word of God and God, in His bowels of mercy, for our salvation, by the good pleasure of God and the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, being conceived without seed, was born uncorruptedly of the Holy Virgin and Mother of God, Mary, by the Holy Spirit, and became of her perfect Man; and that the Same is at once perfect God and perfect Man, of two natures, Godhead and Manhood, and in two natures possessing intelligence, will, energy, and freedom, and, in a word, perfect according to the measure and proportion proper to each, at once to the divinity, I say, and to the humanity, yet to one composite person; and that He suffered hunger and thirst and weariness, and was crucified, and for three days submitted to the experience of death and burial, and ascended to heaven, from which also He came to us, and shall come again. And the Holy Scripture is witness to this and the whole choir of the Saints.



But neither do we know, nor can we tell, what the essence of God is, or how it is in all, or how the Only-begotten Son and God, having emptied Himself, became Man of virgin blood, made by another law contrary to nature, or how He walked with dry feet upon the waters. It is not within our capacity, therefore, to say anything about God or even to think of Him, beyond the things which have been divinely revealed to us, whether by word or by manifestation, by the divine oracles at once of the Old Testament and of the New.

St. John Damascene (†c. 749), also known as John of Damascus, was a Syrian monk, priest, and polymath who served as a high-ranking tax official under the Muslim Umayyad Caliphate before entering monastic life. He is revered as a Doctor of the Church and widely considered as the last of the Greek Church Fathers. He is best known for his fierce theological defense of religious art during the Iconoclastic Controversy and for his magistral *The Source of Knowledge* and *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*.

Saints of Early Advent



ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN (December 7)

Advent Hymn

O COME, Redeemer of the earth,
and manifest thy virgin-birth.
Let every age in wonder fall:
such birth befits the God of all.

Begotten of no human will
but of the Spirit, Thou art still
the Word of God in flesh arrayed,
the promised fruit to man displayed.

The Virgin's womb that burden gained,
its virgin honor still unstained.
The banners there of virtue glow;
God in his temple dwells below.

Proceeding from His chamber free
that royal home of purity
a giant in twofold substance one,
rejoicing now His course to run.

O equal to the Father, Thou!
gird on Thy fleshly mantle now;
the weakness of our mortal state
with deathless might invigorate.

Thy cradle here shall glitter bright,
and darkness breathe a newer light
where endless faith shall shine serene
and twilight never intervene.

All praise, eternal Son, to Thee,
whose advent sets Thy people free,
whom, with the Father, we adore,
and Holy Ghost, for evermore. Amen.

CHRISTMAS HOMILY

You know what a great joy, and how such a great assembly of people there be when they celebrate the birthday of an earthly king. How commanders and leaders as well as all the soldiers array themselves in silk garments, girdled in precious, shining gold belts, and hasten in brilliant grandeur to stand before the face of their king. For they know that the joy of the king will multiply when he sees the especial beauty of their adornment, and that the greater his gladness, the greater zeal will they show during his solemnities (the king as a man does not see the heart and judges others' disposition toward him only according to externals. And therefore, whoever loves the king the most will dress for that day in bright clothing). Moreover, because they know that the king is often very generous on his birthday, and gives many alms either to his grandees or those of his house of who are poor and under his care, they try beforehand to fill his treasure chests with various riches so that when he wishes to give alms, he might be able to give them generously, and so that his desire to give alms would sooner dry up than his wealth. They do all of this with zeal, because they themselves hope to receive a great reward for it.

Brothers and sisters! If the sons of this age, for the sake of temporary honor, greet the birthday of their earthly king with such preparation, then how must we greet the birthday of our eternal King Jesus Christ, Who for our zeal toward Him will reward us not with temporary but eternal glory, and vouchsafe us the honor not of an earthly ruler that passes on to his successor, but of a heavenly kingdom, which has no successor? What shall be the reward about which the prophet speaks: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him* (Is. 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:9)?

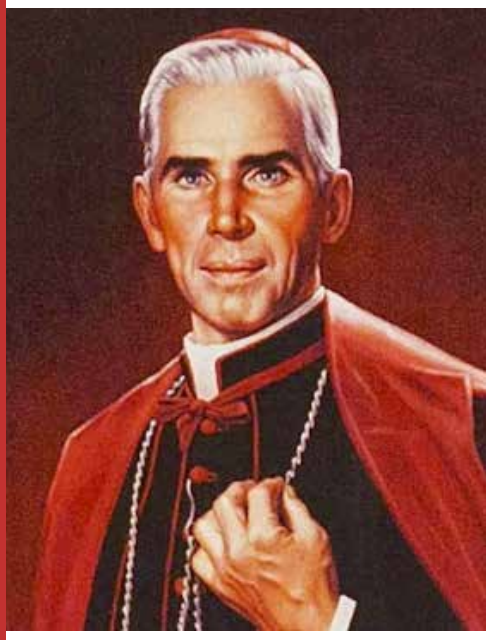
With what garments should we adorn ourselves? I say "ourselves", that is, our souls. Because our King Christ does not demand grand clothing but a disposition of soul; He does not look

upon the adornment of the body, but upon the hearts that serve Him; He does not marvel at the glitter of the corruptible belt girding our loins, but admires invincible chastity, which binds lust with shame. Thus, let us take care to appear before Him tested in faith, adorned in mercy, well-ordered in the example of our lives. Whoever sincerely loves Christ, let him adorn himself brightly by the keeping of His commandments, so that He would see that we truly believe in Him—for we have appeared in such grandeur during His solemnities—and be all the more gladdened as He sees spiritual purity in us. Let us make our hearts chaste beforehand, let us cleanse our consciences, illumine our spirits, and in purity and incorruptibility let us greet the coming of the All-Holy Lord, so that the birthday of the One born of the Most Pure Virgin might be celebrated by His chaste servants. Whoever comes on that day impure and defiled does not honor the Nativity of Christ. Although such a person might be present at the Lord's solemnities in body, in spirit he is far from the Savior. For the impure cannot associate with the holy, the miserly with the merciful, the corrupt with the virginal. And if such a person should enter into association with them, he will cause all the more insult because he does not know himself. Wishing to appear zealous he is in fact audacious, like the man in the Gospel who, when called to the wedding feast, dared to enter into the assembly of the holy without a wedding garment. And while one shone with righteousness, another shone with faith, and a third shone with chastity, he alone, having an impure conscience, aroused only terrible repugnance with his trembling amidst everyone's brilliance. And the more brightly shone the sanctity of those righteous people there, the more obvious was the defilement of the sinner who perhaps would not have created such revulsion had he not appeared amongst the hosts of saints. Therefore the king's servants bound him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness—not only because he was a sinner, but because as a sinner he claimed the reward reserved for the holy (Mt. 22:11–13).

Thus, in greeting the Nativity of our Lord, let us purify ourselves, brothers, from all defilement of sin. Let us fill His treasury with various gifts, so that on this holy day there would be something to comfort strangers, relieve the sorrows of widows, and clothe the needy. For can it be good if in one and the same house there be one servant making merry in silk garments, while another desponds, wearing rough tunics, the former sating himself with food while the other goes hungry in the cold? And what effect will our prayer have when we ask to be delivered from the evil one, but we ourselves do not want to be merciful to our brothers? Let us emulate our Lord. If it pleases Him to make the poor, along with us, participants in heavenly grace, then why shouldn't they participate with us in earthly riches? Brothers in the Mysteries should not be strangers to each other in possessions. We more surely acquire intercessors before the Lord when we feed at our own expense those who will give thanks to God. The poor man who blesses the Lord brings benefit to the one through whose cooperation the name of our Lord and Savior is blessed. The reward of a benefactor is such that he alone shows mercy in his home, but in church he prays to the Lord through the lips of many; and what he would not have dared to ask of God he unexpectedly receives at the intercessions of the many. Glorifying such cooperation, our blessed apostle says: *Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf* (2 Cor. 1:11); and in another passage: *That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost* (Rom. 15:16)! Amen.

St. Ambrose of Milan (†397) was a brilliant Roman lawyer and governor who was unexpectedly elected Bishop of Milan by popular acclaim before he was even baptized. He became one of the four original Latin Doctors of the Church and is celebrated for his fierce independence from the emperors and his profound influence on St. Augustine.

...and the name of that Paradise is Mary.



BLESSED FULTON SHEEN (December 9)

The Fullness of Christ

"'A Child is born.' To some He comes on this Christmas Day even in the remorse that follows, 'There is no room…'; to some He comes when their hearts are saddened by a life that has been taken away and can be gladdened only by a Life that is given; to some, He comes when their hearts are like conscious mangers cry out 'Lord, I am not worthy!'; to others, He comes as their study of science reminds them that the only star worth studying is the Star that leads to the Maker of the Stars; to others, He comes when their hearts are broken, that He might enter in and heal with wings wider than the world; to others, He comes in joy amidst the *Venite adoremus* of the angels; to others He comes because they are so young that they can remember no other Christmas—but to each and everyone He comes as if He had never come before in His own sweet way, He is the Child who is born. He, Jesus the Savior, He Emmanuel, He Christ at Christ's Mass on Christmas."

Manifestations of Christ

"As we gather about the crib of Bethlehem, we feel that we are in the presence of a new Paradise of Beauty and Love… and the name of that Paradise is Mary. And if we could have been there in that stable on that first Christmas night, we might have seen that Paradise of the Incarnation, but we should not be able to recollect whether her face was beautiful or not. For what would have impressed us, and made us forget all else, would have been the lovely, sinless soul that shone through her eyes like two celestial suns. If we could have stood at the gates to that Paradise, we would have less peered at it as into it, for what would have impressed us would not have been any external qualities, though these would have been ravishing, but rather the qualities of her soul—her simplicity, innocence, humility, and above all, her purity… Christmas takes on a new meaning when the Mother is seen with the Babe. In fact, the heavens and the earth seem almost to exchange places. Years ago, we used to think of the heavens as 'way up there.' Then one day the God of the heavens came to this earth, and that hour when she held the Babe in her arms, it became true to say that with her we now 'look down' at heaven."

Blessed Fulton Sheen (†1979) was a prolific author, preacher, and pioneer of religious broadcasting, best known for his Emmy Award-winning television program *Life Is Worth Living*. He was a long-time director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in New York City and later as Bishop of Rochester, New York.

What gladness for him who is living then, who will be able to see God with his own eyes,...



ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS (December 14)

Fifth, Seventh and Eighth, Ninth Romances

"Oh, clouds, rain down from your height,
earth needs you,
and let the earth open,
which has borne us thorns;
let it bring forth that flower
that would be its flowering."

Others said: "What gladness
for him who is living then,
who will be able to see God
with his own eyes,
and touch him with his hand
and walk with him
and enjoy the mysteries
which he will then ordain."

Now that the time had come
when it would be good
to ransom the bride
serving under the hard yoke
of that law
which Moses had given her,
the Father, with tender love,
spoke in this way:

"Now you see, Son, that your bride
was made in your image,
and so far as she is like you
she will suit you well;
yet she is different, in her flesh,
which your simple being does not have.
In perfect love
this law holds:
that the lover become
like the one he loves;
for the greater their likeness
the greater their delight.
Surely your bride's delight
would greatly increase
were she to see you like her,
in her own flesh."

"My will is yours,"
the Son replied,
"and my glory is
that your will be mine.
This is fitting, Father,
what you, the Most High, say;
for in this way
your goodness will be more evident,
your great power will be seen
and your justice and wisdom.

I will go and tell the world,
spreading the word
of your beauty and sweetness
and of your sovereignty.
I will go seek my bride
and take upon myself
her weariness and labors
in which she suffers so;
and that she may have life,
I will die for her,
and lifting her out of that deep,
I will restore her to you."

Then he summoned an archangel;
Saint Gabriel came,
And He sent him to a maiden,
Mary was her name,

Whose consent and acquiescence
Gave the mystery its birth;
It was the Trinity that clothed
With flesh the Living Word.

Though the three had worked the wonder
It was wrought in but this one,
And the incarnated Word
Was left in Mary's womb.

And He who had a father only
Now possessed a mother,
Though not of man was He conceived
But unlike any other.

And deep within her body
His life of flesh began:
For this reason He is called
The Son of God and Man.

When the time had come
for him to be born,
he went forth like the bridegroom
from his bridal chamber,
embracing his bride,
holding her in his arms,
whom the gracious Mother
laid in a manger
among some animals
that were there at that time.

Men sang songs
and angels melodies
celebrating the marriage
of Two such as these.

But God there in the manger
cried and moaned;
and these tears were jewels
the bride brought to the wedding.

The Mother gazed in sheer wonder
on such an exchange:
in God, man's weeping,
and in man, gladness,
to the one and the other
things usually so strange.
(Translation: Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD)

St. John of the Cross (†1591) was a Spanish priest, mystic, and Carmelite friar. Together with St. Teresa of Ávila, he worked to reform the Carmelite Order and, with her, founded the Discalced ("barefoot") Carmelites, a branch dedicated to a primitive, austere, and deeply contemplative monastic life. He is known as the "Mystical Doctor" and is the author of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, *The Living Flame of Love*, and the *Spiritual Canticle*. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest poets in the history of the Spanish language.



LATE ADVENT: THE O ANTIPHONS
December 17

O Wisdom, who came forth from the mouth of the Most High,
who reaches from one end to the other,
and order all things with strength and gentleness:
come and teach us the ways of prudence.

Commentary by Dom Guéranger

O uncreated Wisdom, who will soon make yourself visible to the world, let it be clear at this moment that you are disposing of all things! Behold, by your divine permission, an edict has just been issued by the Emperor Augustus to take a census of the universe. Every citizen of the Empire must register in his native city. The prince believed in his pride that he had shaken the entire human race to his advantage. Men

Adonai, come to redeem us!

are agitated by the millions on the globe, and traverse in all directions the immense Roman world; they think they obey a man, and it is God whom they obey. All this great agitation has but one purpose: it is to bring to Bethlehem a man and a woman who have their humble abode in Nazareth of Galilee; so that this woman, unknown to men and cherished by heaven, having arrived at the end of the ninth month since the conception of her son, may give birth in Bethlehem to that son of whom the Prophet said, "His coming forth is from the days of eternity;

O Bethlehem! thou art not the least of the thousand cities of Jacob; for he shall also come forth from thee." How strong you are, O divine Wisdom, to achieve your ends in such an invincible way, though hidden from men! How gentle you are, to do no violence to their freedom! but also, how paternal you are in your foresight for our needs! You chose Bethlehem to be born in, because Bethlehem means the House of Bread. You show us that you want to be our Bread, our food, our nourishment of life. Nourished by a God, we will no longer die. O Wisdom of the Father, living Bread come down from heaven, come soon into us, that we may draw near to you, and be enlightened by your brightness; and give us that prudence which leads to salvation.

December 18

O Adonai, Lord, head of the house of Israel,
who appeared to Moses in the flame
of the burning bush
and gave him the law on Sinai;
come and redeem us in the strength of your arm.

Commentary by Dom Guéranger

O Supreme Lord! Adonai, come to redeem us, no longer in your power, but in your humility. In the past, you manifested yourself to Moses, your servant, in the midst of a divine flame; you gave the Law to your people from the midst of thunderbolts and lightning: now it is no longer a question of frightening, but of saving.

That is why your most pure Mother Mary, having known, as well as her husband Joseph, of the Emperor's edict which will oblige them to undertake the journey to Bethlehem, is busy with the preparations for your happy birth. She is preparing for you, divine Sun, the humble swaddling clothes that will cover your nakedness and protect you from the cold in this world that you have made, at the hour when you appear, in the midst of night and silence. Thus you will deliver us from the bondage of our pride, and your arm will be felt more powerful, while it will seem weaker and more immobile to men. Everything is ready, O Jesus! Your swaddling clothes are waiting for you: leave soon and come to Bethlehem to redeem us from the hands of our enemy.

December 19

O Root of Jesse,
You are like a standard for the peoples,
before whom kings will stand in silence,
to whom the nations will offer their prayers:
come and deliver us; delay no longer.

Commentary by Dom Guéranger

So you are on your way, O sons of Jesse, to the city of your forefathers. The Ark of the Lord has risen up and is going forward, with the Lord in it, to the place of its rest. "How beautiful are your steps, O Daughter of the King, in the brightness of your shoe" (Cant. VII, 1), when you come to bring their salvation to the cities of Judah! The angels escort you, your faithful Spouse surrounds you with all his tenderness, heaven delights in you, and the earth trembles under the happy weight of its Creator and its august Queen. Go forth, O Mother of God and men, Almighty Propitiatory where is contained the divine Manna that keeps man from death! Our hearts follow you, accompany you, and, like your Royal Ancestor, we swear "not to enter our house, not to ascend our bed, not to close our eyelids, not to give rest to our temples, until we have found in our hearts a dwelling for the Lord whom you bear, a tent for the God of Jacob."



Come, then, thus veiled under the most pure sides of the sacred Ark, O offspring of Jesse, until you come forth from it to shine in the eyes of the peoples, as a standard of victory. Then shall the vanquished kings be silent before thee, and the nations shall make their vows unto thee. Make haste, O Messiah! Come and conquer all our enemies, and deliver us.

December 20

O Key of David, and sceptre of the house of Israel,
who opens, and no one can shut;
who shuts, and no one can open:
come, and bring forth the captive
out of prison
who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death.

Commentary by Dom Guéranger

O Son of David, heir to his throne and his power, you travel in your triumphal march through a land once subjugated by your forefather, now enslaved by the Gentiles. On every side of the road you recognize so many places that bear witness to the marvels of the justice and mercy of Jehovah your Father toward his people in the time of this ancient Covenant that is coming to an end. Soon, when the virginal cloud that covers you is removed, you will undertake new journeys on this same earth; you will pass through it doing good, and curing all languor and infirmity, and yet having no place to rest your head. At least, today, your mother's womb still offers you a sweet and peaceful refuge, where you receive only the most tender and respectful testimonies of love.

But, O Lord, you must come out of this happy retreat; you must shine, eternal Light, in the midst of darkness; for the captive whom you have come to deliver languishes in his prison. He sits in the shadow of death and will perish there, if you do not come quickly to open the doors with your almighty Key! This captive, O Jesus, is the human race, enslaved by its errors and vices: come and break the yoke that weighs it down and degrades it; this captive is our heart, too often enslaved to inclinations that it disavows: come, O divine Liberator, and set free all that you have deigned to make free by your grace, and raise up in us the dignity of your brothers.

December 21

O Rising Dawn!
splendor of eternal light!
Sun of justice,come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Commentary by Dom Guéranger

Divine Sun, O Jesus! You come to rescue

us from the eternal night: be forever blessed! But how much you exercise our faith, before you shine in all your splendour to our eyes! How much you love to veil your rays until the moment marked by your heavenly Father, when you must unfold all your fires! Now you are crossing Judea; you are approaching Jerusalem; the journey of Mary and Joseph is drawing to a close. On the way you meet a multitude of men going in all directions, each one going to his home town to fulfil the Edict of Enumeration.

Of all these men, none suspected you so near, O divine East! Mary, your Mother, is esteemed by them a common woman; at most, if they notice the majesty and incomparable modesty of this august Queen, they will vaguely feel the striking contrast between so sovereign a dignity and so humble a condition; still they soon forget this happy encounter. If they see with such indifference the mother, the son not yet born to the visible light, will they give him a thought? And yet this son is you, O Sun of Justice! Increase in us Faith, but also increase love. If these men loved you, O liberator of the human race, you would make yourself felt to them; their eyes would not yet see you, but at least their hearts would be ardent in their breasts, they would desire you, and they would hasten your arrival by their wishes and their sighs.
O Jesus, who thus crosses this world which you have made, and who does not force the homage of your creatures, we want to accompany you on the rest of your journey; we kiss on the earth the blessed footsteps of the one who carries you in her womb; we do not want to leave you until we have arrived with you at the happy Bethlehem, at this House of Bread, where at last our eyes will see you, O eternal splendour, our Lord and our God!



December 22

O King of the nations,
the object of their desires!
Come and save humanity whom you
formed from the clay of the earth.

Commentary by Dom Guéranger

O King of nations, you are drawing ever nearer to that Bethlehem where you are to be born. The journey is drawing to a close, and your august Mother, who is comforted and strengthened by such a sweet burden, is constantly conversing with you along the way. She adores your divine majesty, she thanks your mercy; she rejoices at having been chosen for the sublime ministry of serving as Mother to a God. She desires and fears at the same time the moment when her eyes will finally contemplate you. How can she, who considers herself the last of all creatures, render you services worthy of your sovereign greatness? How will she dare to raise you in her arms, press you to her heart, nurse you in her mortal bosom? And yet, when she comes to think that the hour approaches when, without ceasing to be her son, you will leave her and claim all the care of her tenderness, her heart fails and maternal love is confused with the love she has for her God, she is at the moment of expiring in this too unequal struggle of weak human nature against the strongest and most powerful of all the affections united in one heart.

But you support it, O Desired One of the nations, because you want it to reach that blessed end which will give the earth its Savior and men the cornerstone which will unite them in one family.

Blessed are you in the wonders of your power and goodness, O divine King, and come soon to save us, remembering that man is dear to you, since you kneaded him with your hands. Oh, come, for your work is degenerate; it has fallen into perdition; death has invaded it: take it back into your powerful hands, remake it; save it; for you still love it, and you are not ashamed of your work.

December 23

O Emmanuel,
our King and Lawgiver,
the expectation of the nations and their Saviour,
come and save us, O Lord our God!

Commentary by Dom Guéranger

O Emmanuel! King of Peace, you are entering Jerusalem today, the city of your choice, for there you have your Temple. Soon you will have your Cross and your Sepulchre there, and the day will come when you will establish your dreaded tribunal there. Now, you are entering this city of David and Solomon without noise or fanfare. It is only the place where you are passing through on your way to Bethlehem. However, Mary your mother and Joseph her husband do not pass through it without going up to the Temple to pay their vows and homage to the Lord, and then the oracle of the Prophet Haggai, who announced that the glory of the second Temple would be greater than that of the first, is fulfilled for the first time.

This Temple, in fact, at this moment possesses an Ark of the Covenant far more precious than that of Moses, but above all incomparable to any other sanctuary than to heaven itself, because of the dignity of the One it contains. It is the Lawgiver himself who is here, and not merely the stone table on which the Law is engraved. But soon the living Ark of the Lord descends the steps of the Temple, and prepares to leave for Bethlehem, where other oracles call it. We adore, O Emmanuel, all your steps through this world, and we admire with what fidelity you observe what has been written about you, so that nothing is lacking in the characters with which you must be endowed, O Messiah, in order to be recognized by your people. But remember that the hour is near, that all things are being prepared for your Nativity, and come to save us; come, that you may be called not only Emmanuel, but Jesus, that is, Savior.

A LETTER FROM BETHLEHEM

ANTONIO SELVAGGI

Arise, shine; for your light has come.
(Isaiah 60:1)

Greetings, Zechariah: Peace be upon you and your household.

I trust this letter will find you and Elizabeth well, dear friend. I've heard from relatives nearby that your son John is growing fast and has developed quite the voice. As you are aware, Mary and I have traveled to Bethlehem to complete the census—what a troublesome journey it was getting here! From Nazareth, we managed to avoid every thief and dodge every wild beast along those treacherous, bumpy roads (where does our tax money go?). The evenings had cooled more than usual, and the tent leaked, but Mary kept a steadfast spirit.

Once we arrived in Bethlehem, we looked for an inn so that we could rest, but everywhere was booked. Fortunately, I spotted a grotto, and we lodged there. "The stable will have to do," Mary said, as she cleaned out a trough where we would lay our son, Jesus. When I held him in my hands, he clenched my fingers tight, and Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes. When he blinked his eyes, it was as though the reflection of a flickering flame were soothing the soul into holiness. I had lit a small fire to stay warm because, well, you know how Mary gets when her feet grow cold—and I washed them too! Looking down at my own feet, I realized I could use new sandals, but perhaps some other time. I wish you could see him. He is as beautiful as his mother, a bundle of heaven on earth. I can't wait to take him to the shop.

There was this incredibly bright star casting its light through the cold, dark night, and it

reminded me of Isaiah's prophetic words: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined* (Is 9:2). And so, I leaned over and slowly whispered a little song into Jesus' tender ear. As he affectionately tugged at my beard, he made a wonderful chorus of gurgling and cooing sounds. I sang to him:

You are the light that eases the mind
and softens the heart,
Your breath is the breeze that uplifts the soul.
The mountains and valleys echo your name
throughout Galilee,
Three kings honor you with gold, frankincense,
and myrrh.
Shepherds hear the angels and flock to you.
The stars sparkle in the sky, proclaiming
your Davidic ancestry.
Our bond, our seal, our covenant.
I love your light—
Soft yellow on everything
That reaches for you.
So calm, so soothing, so pleasant and docile.
You came to us out of the evening's
darkest blue sky;
Pure, innocent, happy, and full of life.
For to us a child is born,
To us a child is given (Is 9.6).
You are the light that casts out doubt
and the shadow of death.
You are the light that embraces the world
By your birth, by God's grace.
For the Lord is our everlasting light,
And the radiance of your face
bespeaks of His glory.
To walk in the light is to walk with confidence.
To walk in the Light is to step through the
threshold of hope,
You are our salvation,
born out of our spiritual darkness.
For the Lord will be our everlasting light,
And our God will be our glory (Is 60:19).
The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
Rests in you, and now you in us.
As one whom his mother comforts,
So I will comfort you;
You shall be comforted
In Jerusalem (Is 66:13).
Your mother is
my soul's holy eternal peace,
And you are my blessed son of divine,
Infinite Beauty.



Our rest here is short-lived, my dear friend; now I must leave you. I feel the cold closing in, and the desert sand seems to dance all around me. Even the starlight casts a shadowy display of post and beam on this straw-strewn ground. I recall during our last visit, you asked me if I was still having unusually vivid dreams, and the answer is "yes," though not without a sudden rush of trepidation. My heart stirs and my thoughts quicken. Tears stream down my cheeks, for tomorrow we leave for Egypt and traverse quietly under the cover of darkness. Wishing you and your family a heartfelt joy on this, the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord (Is 2:5).

—**Joseph**

Antonio Selvaggi resides in Toronto, Ontario.

DISCLOSURE DAY

Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S

They were aliens for sure! Those strange stargazers from the East who came in search of the infant King. Whoever those exotic visitors were, wherever they came from, they were not from around there. They must have made quite an impression on the residents of the Holy City. Yet, despite the art and music they have inspired, Matthew's interests lay elsewhere. For the Magi are the first representatives of the Gentiles who would become coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. In other words, Epiphany manifests for the first time the universal scope of the Christian religion, far beyond the confines of Palestine. And the church has struggled ever since with just how far.

Now the Star of Bethlehem certainly qualifies as UAP, or "Unidentified Aerial Phenomena," the Pentagon's term for UFOs. And "disclosure" is as good a translation of *epiphany* as any on this day when Christ was manifested to the Gentile world. The same could be said of the word *phenomenon*, meaning an "appearance." Indeed, today's feast is all about the Divine Disclosure Project, including its very own UAP: the Star of Bethlehem, which astronomers, historians and amateur sleuths have been trying to identify for centuries. Much like governments today, trying to figure out where the UAPs in our skies are coming from, and who, if anyone, is operating them! The kind that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence placed in its "other" category: objects that "appeared to remain stationary in winds aloft, move against the wind, maneuver abruptly, or move at considerable speed, without discernible means of propulsion." (June 25, 2021)

Whatever they are, they are making news. Everything from last summer's Spielberg film, to congressional hearings, to the release of classified documents by the government, to countless podcasts by researchers, experiencers, and insider whistleblowers, even abductees, the world is abuzz with interest in possible visitors to planet Earth from other star systems, dimensions, or timelines. A little like the stir caused by the arrival of the Magi, when Herod *was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him*.

One whistleblower by the name of David Grusch, a former intelligence officer, claims there have been multiple retrievals of crashed UAPs of "non-human" space craft along with alien "biologics." The military industrial complex, in addition to decades of cover-up and disinformation campaigns, so he says, have been busy reverse engineering extraterrestrial materials funded by enormous sums of money secretly pirated from government sources.

Now let us suppose, just for fun, that all or most of this is true. (Let us hope they are Vulcans and not Klingons!). The implications would be enormous on every front you can imagine—religion, along with everything else. Catholics, however, are unafraid. For example, Pope St. John Paul II was once asked in a public audience by a youngster, "Holy Father, are there any aliens?" Tellingly, the saint did not reply, "No, that would be contrary to our faith," or "If they exist, then. . ." Instead, he said simply, "Always remember: they are children of God, as we are." (Anecdote related by Msgr. Corrado Balducci; June 8, 2001.)

That may be why Pope Francis in turn—perhaps in jest, and perhaps seriously—startled a few people when he asked one time, "If....an expedition of Martians came, and some of them came to us... And one says, 'But I want to be baptized!' What would happen?" The pontiff continued, "When the Lord shows us the way, who are we to say, 'No, Lord, it is not prudent!.... Who are we to close doors? In the early Church, even today, there is the ministry of [usher]. And what did the [usher] do? He opened the door, received the people, allowed them to pass. But it was never the ministry of the closed door, never." Br. Guy Consolmagno, who used to direct the

Vatican Observatory (Yes, you read that right, the Vatican operates an observatory and guess where it has one of its telescopes —in Arizona, yes, Arizona!) Br. Guy has said, "Any entity—no matter how many tentacles it has—has a soul." And would he baptize an alien? "Only if they asked," he said. (September 17, 2010) And I cannot imagine that the current Pope, with his emphasis on welcoming the stranger, would disagree, though I am not aware of any statement by Leo on the subject.

Of course, as one perceptive journalist noted at the time, "to think Francis was talking just about aliens is to miss his main point. Pope Francis was "using Martians to illustrate that the church must be open to whatever, or whoever, may seem socially foreign and unaccepted.... as he was preaching about a specific New Testament story: early Christians were wondering if Jews and Gentiles could associate, and God gave the Apostle Peter a vision that salvation extended beyond the deepest cultural divides. It was a moment of internal crisis for the early church" (Elizabeth Dias, *Time*; May 14, 2014).

Which is, of course, the point of Matthew's story of the Epiphany. It's all about an encounter between the Christ Child and peoples who might otherwise have remained alien to each other. Matthew's imaginative portrayal is given its deeper significance by Paul who speaks of a *mystery* hidden in the eternal designs of God, something so far-reaching it had to be to *made known to [him] by revelation*. A mystery, he says, *not made known to people in other generations [but which has] now been revealed to [God's] holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.* (Cf. II)

In other words, Epiphany manifests for the first time the universal scope of the Christian religion, far beyond the confines of Palestine, symbolized by the Magi from the East. And the church has struggled ever since with just how far those confines might reach. Such is the "Phenomenon" identified for us today as brought to earth by the *Only-Begotten Son of God, a light for the nations* (Cf. Collect and Preface).

Those struggles for inclusion, of course, are rooted in a divine revelation which, by its very nature, will always have something about it to confound us. It is, after all, mystery. It's possible the Magi were left wondering if they read their star charts correctly, wondering what the future could hold for such a Child, once Herod realized their deception and set about murdering the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem: Herod who was a master of disinformation, attempting himself to deceive the Magi about his real intentions toward the Child, the person most threatened by Disclosure.

So we might ask if Matthew's tale was in the "interest of full disclosure," as they say. Well, not exactly full, because there is always more to the story. It continues to evolve in time and space. God has unfinished business with humanity and, no doubt, the universe at large. The plan that Paul got wind of is far from fully disclosed. For all we know, the Magi from the East may be the least exotic visitors heading our way. And if they do arrive—or have already—we'll have to factor the consequences into the Mystery, won 't we?

Fortunately, a number of Catholic scientists and theologians are helping us prepare for their disclosure. For example, the late Paul Thigpen writes, "a serious and sustained engagement with the subject of nonhuman intelligence, and the growing concern worldwide with unidentified aerial phenomena, will require prompt and multifaceted action by the Catholic Church…. Current developments are now pressing us with more urgency to seek an answer. Centuries ago, certain visionary Catholic thinkers were far ahead of their time in speculating about this and other cosmic matters. Today, the Church has the opportunity again to demonstrate global leadership in searching for more of the truth about the greatness of God's creation, and in learning to live in accordance with whatever discoveries we may make."

Among those thinkers was no less a figure than St. Thomas Aquinas who, on a question as central to the Christian faith as the Incarnation, entertained the possibility of others: "It may not be said that a Divine Person so assumed one human nature as to be unable to assume another. For it would seem to follow from this that the Person of the Divine Nature was so [circumscribed] by one human nature as to be unable to assume another . . . and this is impossible, for the Uncreated cannot be [circumscribed] by any creature" (*ST* III.3.7). In other words, whether probable or not, God is not limited to engagement with our world or our species.

Should such exist, further questions arise as to whether other Incarnations of a Trinitarian Person were also redemptive as with the human race. Others include whether a community comparable to the Church exists elsewhere in the universe, or whether sacraments analogous to ours are celebrated. Are there inspired writings akin to the Bible among such races? What would be the moral norms governing another sentient species? Would they have a missionary mandate? Is an eventual interspecies encounter folded within God's Providential plan in a universe of immeasurable vastness?

Obviously, no answer to these questions is possible at this time. But if I were to lead an interspecies dialogue on theological matters, and if advanced technology were the hallmark of potential visitors from other realms of time and space, I would ask them to apply their scientific instruments to three artifacts which might supply reasonable credentials from the human side: the Shroud of Turin, the Tilma of Guadalupe and the Eucharistic miracle of Lanciano. These artifacts of the Catholic faith have been extensively studied with our own available technology and to date no final explanation has been given to their extraordinary properties. If the same could be said after examination by an advanced species, it seems to me the avenue of dialogue would find itself in a very interesting position indeed.

But we don't have to wait until then. However more complex the cosmos might

be than we imagine, and whatever the future holds for transformations of human consciousness, we can always start here and now to welcome new arrivals. For there are human beings aplenty who are "alien" to us, no? All kinds of people as troubling to us as those strange visitors were to Herod. No need for them to be from another planet, though they might as well be, in these tribal times when people are light-years apart in just about every way you can think, living as we do in our own "other dimensions." Forget about close encounters of the fifth kind; we can barely manage the first!

Still, Epiphany gives us an opportunity to acknowledge our cramped view of others, our exclusive clubs, our one-dimensional lives, and to open ourselves to whatever gifts the "other" might bring. It begins with the Wholly Other who was manifested on this day. To quote the famous Christmas hymn of St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Tu scendi dalle stelle* ("He came down from the stars"), the harbinger of a new humanity and of universal peace. And he did it all without a warp drive!

ONLINE RESOURCES

Christopher Baglow, "Extraterrestrial Life and Catholic Theology," *Saint Benedict Institute*, February 3, 2022, https://www.saintbenedictinstitute.org/blog/extraterrestrial-life-and-catholic-theology-video-and-photos

Christopher Baglow, "What Can Catholic Theology Say About Extraterrestrials?", *Church Life Journal*, February 9, 2022, https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/what-can-catholic-theology-say-about-extraterrestrials/

Paul Thigpen, "A Very Short Introduction to the History of Catholic Debates About the Multiverse and Extraterrestrial Intelligence," *Church Life Journal*, March 12, 2024, https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/a-very-short-introduction-to-the-history-of-catholic-debates-about-the-multiverse-and-extraterrestrial-intelligence/

Paul Thigpen, *NHI, UAP, and the Catholic Faith. How will the Church Respond?, Sol Foundation White Paper,* July/August 2024, https://thesolfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Sol_WhitePaper_Vol1N5.pdf

Paul Thigpen, "Aliens and the Catholic Church." *Catholic Answers*, December 4, 2024, https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/aliens-and-the-catholic-church

Richard Declue, "Would Extraterrestrial Intelligence Disprove Christianity"?, *Word on Fire*, May 7, 2024, https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/would-extraterrestrial-intelligence-disprove-christianity/

Theresa Civantos Barber, "Would alien life shake faith? Catholics aren't worried," *Aleteia*; June 7, 2026, https://aleteia.org/2026/06/17/would-alien-life-shake-faith-catholics-arent-worried/.

sanguischristi.com in 2027



As we welcome a new liturgical year on November 29, the First Sunday of Advent, please note the following offerings that will be available on this "Virtual Mission House" for 2027.

REGULAR FEATURES

Sunday Liturgy—a weekly resource to help prepare for the Sunday liturgy including the proper chants, collect, readings for Year B of the Lectionary cycle (NRSV translation), homily, intercessions, and music, along with a series of quotations—the *Catena Nova*—a homage to the classic collection of patristic quotes on the Sunday Gospel by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Acta Sanctorum and Feast Days—weekly entries on the lives of the saints in homage to the encyclopedic work of the Bollandists. Saints and blesseds are featured from both the General Roman Calendar and the Roman Martyrology. Entries include a biography, scripture reading, writings by or about the person, a musical selection and a collect. Entries for feasts and solemnities of the Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary are also provided.

Precious Blood Book of Days—daily quotations on the Blood of Christ from saints and blesseds commemorated that day in the General Calendar or the Martyrology as well as other authors on the anniversary of their death.

SEASONAL FEATURES

Advent—the last in a series on the Book of Revelation with commentary by Swiss analyst and founder of depth psychology Carl Jung along with a musical selection and collect.

Church Unity Octave—Entries will be provided to observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity from January 18-25 guided this year by representatives of the churches in Ireland.

Lent—Each day of the Lenten season will feature an entry from the prophet Jeremiah with commentary from St. Augustine's *City of God*, a musical selection and collect. Devotional services will also be provided suitable especially for the Fridays of Lent.

Month of May—the fourth in a series of daily entries providing a Scripture passage, reading, musical selection and collect in honor of the virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Month of the Precious Blood—each day of July will include an entry on the Precious Blood of Christ including readings from scripture and other authors with a musical selection and collect.

Season of Creation (September 1-October 4) — a daily entry including Scripture, a passage from the recent document of the International Theological Commission, *Caring for Our Common Home: A Responsible and Fraternal Response to the Triune God*, art, musical selection and prayer from ecumenical resources. Additional theme TBA.

Month of the Holy Rosary—a daily decade with Scripture quotes and a collect reflecting on a broad range of mysteries adjacent to the traditional ones.

Month of the Holy Souls—the fifth in a series of Scripture and other readings, music and collects for each day of November for reflection and prayer on behalf of the faithful departed.

OCCASIONAL FEATURES

Novena to St. Joseph (March 10-18);

Pentecost Novena with meditations from St. John of the Cross' *Spiritual Canticle* (May 7-15);

Novena to the Transforming Light from the feast of the Transfiguration to the Vigil of the Assumption (August 6-14).

I hope this wide array of biblical, theological, spiritual and liturgical resources will enrich your ongoing Christian formation throughout the coming year of our Lord.

Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S. is a member of the Atlantic Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and resides in Rochester, New York.

OUR APOSTOLATE



C.PP.S. MISSION PROJECTS

C.PP.S. MISSION PROJECTS has been deeply rooted in specific localities, above all by a significant presence in Tanzania for the past 50 years. Our projects have provided essential services such as clean water, education, healthcare, and sustainable development, focusing on marginalized communities.

The call to missionary discipleship, however, goes beyond geographical boundaries. We are being called to new horizons in response to the urgent needs of the Church. Rooted in the spirituality of the Precious Blood, C.PP.S. Mission Projects is now prioritizing evangelization, formation, and social development in underserved communities worldwide.

As we entrust the Tanzanian initiatives to local leadership, we remain committed to fostering new missionary endeavors that bring Christ's reconciling love to the margins of society.

Find us at cppsmissionprojects.ngo.

Wise Counsel from Blessed Giovanni Merlini

"If we are still alive, it is by the grace of a kindly God who gives us a new opportunity to prepare ourselves for the great rendering of accounts."

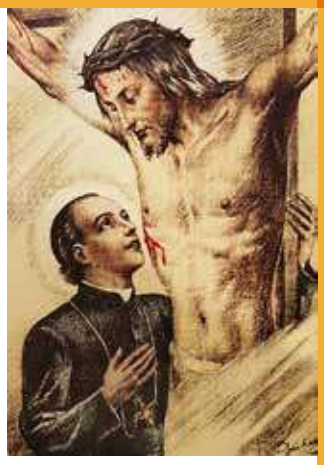
"Internal and external travails are a hedge to the soul, like in a vineyard… Consider them this way and accept them in peace and humility: resignation, hence trust in God."

"One day we will understand the order God has maintained to lead us to salvation, and we will not cease thanking Him!"

"If your soul cannot find Jesus, just stay with Jesus. Those who are in a dark room do not see the companion, but they know he is there and that is enough for them not to be afraid!"

"One should abandon oneself totally to the divine will, not wanting to do anything if it is not what God wants. The afflictions, the perplexities, the agitations, and everything else, as long as they come with peace and are directed to the foot of the cross, it will go well..."

"As much as you can, promote mercy with its companions: pitying, consoling, comforting, encouraging, helping, foreseeing... and with this exercise say: My God, deal with me mercifully as I strive to show mercy to others. In this, we will experience great comfort, and while examining ourselves, we will find that we have a heart for our neighbors."



Unio Sanguis Christi

The Union of the Blood of Christ (Unio Sanguis Christi, USC) is the spiritual family fostered by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, founded by St. Gaspar del Bufalo. Established by Fr. Francesco Albertini, its aim is to promote devotion to the Blood of Christ. Members commit themselves to live and promote the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

RULE OF LIFE Members follow a program of spirituality solidly based on the traditions of the Catholic Church. Motivated by the love of Christ, who died for us, rather than by any moral obligation, members practice a rule of life inspired by Christ's unselfish love. Conversion and reconciliation are ongoing processes fostered by an appreciation for the Word of God, nurtured by the Eucharist, and wrapped in a life of prayer.

HOW TO ENROLL Any practicing Catholic may become a member of the Union upon completion of a period of formation. For information on joining or starting the USC in your parish, please contact Fr. Gerardo Laguartilla, C.PP.S., at **uscatlanticprovince@gmail.com**.

Mass Association

Since 1883, with the approval of Pope Leo XIII, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood throughout the world have offered 4,000 Masses annually for those enrolled in their Mass Association. Enrollments can be made on behalf of both the living and the deceased.

HOW TO ENROLL

In Person or by Mail: Shrine of St. Gaspar
540 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, ON M6C 1A4

By Telephone: 416.653.4486

Online: Visit **preciousbloodatlantic.org** and click on 'Donations'.

Suggested Offering: $25.00, plus $4.00 postage if the Certificate is mailed.



Additionally, you can request a single Mass or make a donation to support the spirituality of the Precious Blood and the work of the Missionaries by completing the required fields on the website.



Vocations

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood continue St. Gaspar's Ministry of the Word by preaching renewal and conversion through missions and retreats. We bring the love of God to parishes, schools, hospitals, and prisons.

As missionaries, we work where the Church needs us most and where the Good News has not been heard. We walk with Jesus by sharing the joys and sufferings of the people with whom we work.

For more information, please contact Precious Blood Vocations at 705.507.4288 or email **preciousvocations@gmail.com**.



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