

SPIRITUALITY

Is Virtue Possible?

What is virtue? Many seem to think that virtuous behavior has something to do with self-righteousness and judgmental haughtiness toward our neighbor. Others might believe that virtue is sinister, cold and aloof. Many simply have decided that virtue is not for the average faithful but for saints, and, perhaps, for priests and nuns.

All this stems from a concept of virtue that does not count on the action of Divine grace. Though a variety of virtues can exist in every human being, after the fall, it is most difficult to lead a virtuous life without the help of God. Perfect virtue is never self achieved excellence, is not human perfectionism, but always a gift from above. Sure, from our side, we have to collaborate with grace to become virtuous. It is, as Saint Francis de Sales puts it, our continuous responsibility "to remove the obstacles to grace." However, if we at least seriously try to collaborate with the Donor of all gifts to do so, he will never deny us the grace to become truly virtuous: "*Non ponentibus obicem Deus non denegat gratiam,*" teaches the Church: "To those who do not present an obstacle God will not deny grace."



Thus, through serious desire and prayer for an ever greater love of God, every one can become virtuous for "virtue is a good habit consonant with our nature," as Saint Augustine says. God wishes us to live according to the nature he has created for us and he gives us all the natural and supernatural help to overcome the frailty and weakness that has entered this nature through sin. Thus, virtue is not a steel corset artificially pressed upon us, but the completion of the good nature originally gifted to us by the Creator. The "*habitus operativus bonus,*" the operational good habit we acquire through continuous exercise of virtuous acts turns us into what we really are. Saint Francis de Sales again puts it in a nutshell: "Do not desire to become what you are not, but to be well what you are!" Sin and especially pride hinders us to be what we are, while humble virtue supported by grace shapes us in what we really meant to be: loving children of the Almighty Father.

Msgr. R. Michael Schmitz

FROM THE SEMINARY

Under the patronage of St. Thomas Aquinas, our academic training here at the seminary is of great importance. But as we progress in our formation we realize that our Superiors give us a lot more than an intel-



lectual formation. Our studies raise our thoughts to the contemplation of natural and supernatural truths. Our spiritual life is centered upon becoming Priest and Victim.

"Exam Week" provides a condensed version of this formation. This past month, for example, we had our first semester

finals covering many different subjects. As we prepared to pass exams on History of the Church 18th and 19th centuries, Canon Law, the Prophets, the Sacraments, the Liturgy, and Greek, we had to overcome some stress, remain confident and diligent, pay attention to our prayer life, keep up our house chores, and maintain a charitable atmosphere during the recreations.

February 8th, 2008 . . . a collective sigh of relief; it's the end of exams. But looking back we discover all the lessons to be learned. We do not study just to pass the tests, but to understand the subjects in view of our future ministry and ultimately for the salvation of souls. We realize that we should not stress ourselves out, but learn to be diligent in our studies and confident in Divine Providence. We realize that prayer is always essential and ought never to be neglected. By prayer we place ourselves in the presence of God and our intellects are illuminated by His divine light. We realize that we should not be caught up in our own little worries but should remain joyful and charitable towards our confrères.

As you can see, our academic formation entails a lot more than just studies. Please remember us in your prayers. Pray that we may be docile to the formation provided by our Superiors. Be assured of our daily prayers for you. St. Thomas Aquinas, pray for us!

Abbé Michael Stein

PRAY FOR OUR HOLY FATHER,

Pope Benedict XVI, and for his visit to the United States, April 15 – 20. May many graces flow for all!

THE INSTITUTE OF CHRIST THE KING SOVEREIGN PRIEST

is a society of apostolic life whose goal is the honor of God and the sanctification of priests in the service of the Church and souls. Its specific aim is missionary: to spread the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ in all spheres of human life. Our work is carried out under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception, to Whom the Institute is consecrated.

The Institute was founded in 1990 by Monsignor Gilles Wach and Father Philippe Mora in Gabon, Africa, where we still have missions. Today, the motherhouse and international seminary of the Institute is located in Gricigliano, in the Archdiocese of Florence, Italy.

Recognizing the importance of a deep harmony between faith, liturgy, and life, and the power of beauty in attracting the human senses to the things above, an integral part of the Institute's charism is the use of the extraordinary form of the Latin Rite according to the *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*.

Great care for a solemn liturgy, complete fidelity to the doctrine of the Church and the Holy Father, and awareness of the central role of Grace, especially Charity – these are essential elements of the Institute's spirituality, which is drawn from its three co-patrons, St. Benedict, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Francis de Sales. Our motto, taken from St. Paul, is "Live the truth in charity."

The Institute operates in more than 50 places in 12 countries, where our priests focus on the care of souls in many different ways. To assist our priests in their apostolic work, the Institute also has clerical oblates. In 2004, a community of religious sisters was canonically established to aid the priests in their mission through prayer and apostolic work.

AMERICAN OFFICES

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CHRISTUS
REGNAT

INSTITUTE OF CHRIST THE KING SOVEREIGN PRIEST

*Christ reigns*

Letter of the Vicar General

Dear Friend of the Institute of Christ the King!

This is a time of intense preparation! First of all, we have prepared ourselves throughout the Lenten Season, through sacrifice, prayer and fasting, for the Solemn celebrations of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Blessed Lord. The Easter Feast is the seal upon the work of salvation and the ultimate source of all the graces Holy Mother Church can so richly bestow on her children!

In addition to this most important and constant preparation for participation in the Redemption that the Son of God has wrought for us, there is yet another preparation we are going through in the United States: the Church prepares the first official visit of the present Vicar of Christ on earth, Pope Benedict XVI! The Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest expects this historical visit with special gratitude for the generous permission His Holiness has extended to the extraordinary form of the Latin Rite, which we celebrate, cherish and promote!

However, there is also a third, ongoing preparation the Institute of Christ the King has to care for: the preparation of our many seminarians toward becoming docile servants of the Eternal High Priest. Please, urgently help us with your prayers and your material support to prepare our American young men so that they may serve the crucified and risen Lord faithfully and be courageous witnesses of the Truth protected by the infallible teaching of the Roman Pontiff!

With my best prayerful wishes for a Blessed Easter, I remain yours very cordially,

R. Michael Schmitz
Msgr. R. Michael Schmitz
Provincial Superior for the United States





A WORLDWIDE

Father Leboq
at St. Patrick's in
Limerick, Ireland

The Institute of Christ the King is an international family. Many of you who came to the priestly Ordinations in St. Louis last year were able to experience this universal spirit. In fact, the Institute began its apostolic work in the Western African country of Gabon. In 1990, Bishop Obamba, the ordinary of Mouila at that time, invited our founders Msgr. Gilles Wach and Fr. Philippe Mora to his diocese to establish their community based on the Tradition of the Catholic Church, provided that the Institute would always supply him with priests -- thus we still have three missions in Gabon. From there, shortly after its foundation, the Institute moved its seminary to the Archdiocese of Florence, with the kind permission of the Cardinal Archbishop, and that

is where our priests have been formed since December 1990.

Currently, the Institute operates in twelve countries, in about fifty apostolates, which along with the cure of souls, include in some cases administering schools. Besides the United States and Gabon, our priests serve in Austria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. Your generous gifts make possible our apostolic work in the United States, and also support our American seminarians, who, one day as priests, will continue carrying out the mission of the Institute of Christ the King, of spreading the reign of Christ in souls and in society through the wealth of the tradition of our Holy Mother Church.

Apostolic Mission



Pilgrimage in Brasménil, Belgium



Baptism in
Mouila, Gabon



Procession at
Institute's school in
Port Marly, France



House of the Sacred
Heart, in Bayerisch
Gmain, Germany



Veritatem Facientes in Caritate · Live the Truth in Charity

NEWS from the Vineyard

As has become the tradition at St. Margaret Mary's in Oakland, in January a novena was held in preparation for the feast of St. Francis de Sales, our co-patron saint. At each novena Mass there was a guest homilist, each focusing on a different aspect of St. Francis de Sales -- his life and times, and his spirituality. On the third day, Father Michael Wiener had the honor of welcoming the Most Rev. Allen Vigneron, Bishop of Oakland, as the homilist.

During a week-long visit to the Washington, D.C. area, Msgr. R. Michael Schmitz had the grace of



celebrating Latin Mass at the Lourdes Chapel in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the very Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11th, which opened the 150th anniversary of Her apparitions. A large group of students attended.

In preparation for the Lenten Season, a Forty Hours devotion was held at St. Francis de Sales Oratory, in St. Louis. It began on Sunday, February 3rd, with a



Pontifical Mass celebrated by the Most Rev. Robert Hermann, Vicar General and Auxiliary Bishop of St. Louis, and closed with a Solemn High Mass on Tuesday, February 5th. There were many opportunities for confession and prayer throughout the three days of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

AT THE SHRINE in Chicago

The 25th day of each month has been dedicated to the Infant Jesus for some centuries. Devotion to Our Lord as a Child is an ancient practice, as attested by St. Anthony of Padua. St. Teresa of Avila, the great Carmelite reformer of the 16th century, was a very effective promoter of it, and Our Lord seems to have singled out her Order to divulge this devotion which so pleases Him. In the 1640s He manifested Himself very powerfully to one of her daughters, the Carmelite Sr. Marguerite of the Blessed Sacrament, in Dijon (France), encouraging devotion to His Infancy, especially through a novena from the 17th to the 25th of each month. Here at the Shrine of



Christ the King Sovereign Priest, we have been praying this monthly novena for quite some time, closing it with a special prayer of consecration to the Infant Jesus on the 25th. Now, on every 25th of the month we will have a High Mass at 7:00 pm honoring the Infant King, with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The first such Mass was on January 25th. You are heartily invited to come to this monthly devotional event, or to participate by uniting yourselves with us in prayer every 25th. The novena prayer and consecration are available at our website (www.institute-christ-king.org/resources) or you may call our office for a printed novena card.

www.institute-christ-king.org