

Sermons

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The weapons of immaculate love against the enemy

Sermon of 14 December 2024, 5.00 pm – Mass of Our Lady during Advent

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear brothers and sisters, the evening reflections on the apparitions or encounters of 1949 are all based on this one Gospel. Everything that is taught to us time and again in these twelve apparitions about the Immaculate One, about Mary as the Immaculate One, is founded on the angel's words: 'You are full of grace.' She could have described this fullness of grace differently at the time. Had the Angel come to her and said, 'You are the Immaculate Conception', that would indeed have been the truth, but it would probably have frightened her even more, for she would not have understood what that meant. Instead, he told her that she was full of grace. Later, at Lourdes, she could just as easily have said, 'I am the Full of Grace', 'I am the one endowed with grace'. Instead, she said: 'I am the Immaculate Conception.' For the Immaculate Conception is the explanation, the deepest justification of what it means to be full of grace. Let us explore this thought once more this evening, having already begun to reflect on it this morning. It concerns the eighth encounter, the eighth apparition.

One can imagine that Mother Gabriele was in her room that evening, praying, perhaps before the Blessed Sacrament or before a statue, an image of the Immaculate Conception, the Mother of Fátima as the Immaculate Conception. Then the Mother of God comes and bows her head, today with great kindness, whereas it is usually said that she bows her head kindly. She says: 'Behold, my child.' At first she addresses Mother Gabriele personally, but then she always addresses everyone. I would like to emphasise this point explicitly: this is not a mystical grace reserved exclusively for her. Mother Gabriele was, by her very nature, a mystic; that is to say, she had a mystical relationship with God, with the Mother of God, and with the holy angels. She had visions, received inspirations, and communicated with them, as it were, in a supernatural way, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Among the deepest and most personal aspects of her life was the fact that, at God's behest, she had to write about her mystical experience. It was the most intimate love that God had revealed and shown to her – the kind of love one does not usually speak of. Yet God and the angels wanted her to write this down in obedience, even when, for example, she described how she felt in union with God after receiving Holy Communion. This state, she said, was ultimately indescribable.

What she subsequently conveyed from the holy angels and from the apparition of the Mother of God, we call 'charismatic', for a charism is intended for the building up of the Body of Christ – a supernatural gift that serves this purpose. It is not binding; it is not a requirement of faith that one must agree with, but rather a help, a gift. And this gift, exactly 75 years ago, was directed towards the times to come, towards what we are expecting today. Thus the Mother of God says, as I read out this morning and repeat here once more: 'Behold, my child, I wish to teach those who venerate and love me in this image: patient love, ever-helping love, open love, burning love, silent love which, in truth, speaks before God

. It must have been an image of Fatima, of the Mother of God; whether it was a picture or a statue is essentially the same. What follows is set out in quotation marks in the account, and are therefore the literal words of the Mother of God, even if conveyed in German – perhaps she even spoke in the Tyrolean dialect, who knows: These will be your weapons in the battle against the infernal enemy. Not a single weapon, but your weapons in the battle against the infernal enemy.

When Mother Gabriele looked at Mary during this encounter, she recognised in her soul the priestly woman. Not as an actual vision of the soul, but as a deep spiritual sensation, she recognised Mary as the priestly woman in her purity, in her self-sacrifice before God, in her simultaneously priestly and maternal role as Mediatrix of all graces, as all-powerful intercessor. These are theologically unspeakably profound and important statements. When we consider what it means for Mary to be priestly, we must think of the High Priest, who is always both the one who offers sacrifice and the one who is himself sacrificed. In her, this priestly nature is simultaneously united with the maternal. If a man were to act in a priestly capacity, this would not become maternal; it would remain within the male sacrifice of self-surrender. In her, however, the priestly becomes maternal and becomes the Mediatrix of Graces. Thus, this image reveals the immaculate priestly dignity, which is at once maternal, a mediator of graces, and, moreover, an all-powerful intercessor. Of course, only God is all-powerful, yet no one possesses such power of intercession as she does. When we address her in the Hail Mary and this realisation takes root deep within us, we may say to her: ‘You, all-powerful intercessor, pray for us.’ Pray for us through this omnipotence which you possess with God, with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. In the Litany of Loreto, she is not explicitly called ‘intercessory omnipotence’, but rather ‘Advocate with God’ and ‘Refuge’; yet ‘intercessory omnipotence’ is also a title that befits her: if she prays for us before God, then all things are possible for her. Thus we see in this once again what she herself heard from the angel: ‘With God nothing is impossible.’ And we may say: ‘You make all things possible with God, for your all-powerful intercession makes all things possible with God.’

Once again: what does she wish to teach us? Here, too, she appears as a teacher, wishing to teach those who venerate and love her under this image. First and foremost, patient love. We know what patience means, and to live patiently in love is a masterpiece. When I hear this, I think: Yes, that really is it; that is what I lack – to persevere in patience, not to get flustered, to remain patient, and at the same time to remain loving. We recognise this lack; but when we realise that this is precisely what she wishes to teach us, it is something marvellous. Then there is the ever-helping love: her love is always directed towards helping; her intercessory omnipotence always wants to help and can always help; there is nothing she cannot help with. Then there is the ever-sacrificing love, which always gives itself – that is the priestly aspect of her love. Added to this is the burning love, which always burns with patience and intercession. Yesterday we spoke of the prayer of the heart and of how, in the case of Padre Pio, his body is said to have reached a temperature of 45 degrees; with Mary, too, we may imagine this love as one that is ever burning. Finally, the silent love that remains silent before people: we bear many things in silence, we do not speak of them. Yet this silent love speaks before God; before God, it is a clear language. Think of the silent love of Jesus on the cross, a mystery in itself, a miracle in itself: in three hours, he may have spent one

or two minutes for the words he spoke, but spent the rest of those three hours in silent prayer. This silence was not lifeless; it was a constant prayer before God, for even the words Jesus spoke sprang from prayer, from the heart; the rest was silence, which was always alive before the Father and remains so to this day. When, on Fridays, we observe the three hours at the Cross and are allowed to be before the Blessed Sacrament, we can, however difficult it may be for us as human beings, empathise with this mystery – simply in the knowledge that, before us, silent love speaks to God.

This silent love therefore wishes to teach us this as well, and in doing so it tells us something which, as far as I know, has never before been seen in this light: that these forms of love – the patient, the ever-helping, the ever-sacrificing, the burning, the silent love – are the weapons against the infernal enemy. Normally, when we think of weapons against the enemy, we think of exorcistic weapons – those that drive the enemy back, deter him, hinder him, or banish him. What must we do against the enemy? We must be preserved from him, protected from him, freed from him, and we must put him to flight. We cannot kill him, but we can banish him; he can be bound, but he cannot be killed. And it is precisely these forms of love that are weapons against him. Thus, this encounter is yet another in which the Mother of God wishes to teach us, and the more we venerate her as the Immaculate One, the more deeply this teaching is revealed to us. Perhaps the Rosary of the Immaculate Conception should feature even more prominently in our daily routine; perhaps even just a single decade from the perspective of the Immaculate Conception, so that we may put what we have learnt into practice more deeply in our lives.

The Rosary of the Immaculate Conception has only five mysteries, but we can expand them many times over. Through your Immaculate Conception, we can respond to everything. Through your Immaculate Conception, open up the Word of God to us. Through your Immaculate Conception, teach us forgiveness. Through your Immaculate Conception, teach us sacrifice. Through your Immaculate Conception, teach us silence. And in the same way, we can form a further rosary of five mysteries from this: Through your Immaculate Conception, teach us patient love. Through your Immaculate Conception, teach us open, ardent love. Through your Immaculate Conception, teach us silent love, which speaks to God through deeds. Through your Immaculate Conception, let this love be our weapon against the enemy. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Gaudete – the joyful anticipation of the Saviour

Sermon of 15 December 2024, 4.00 am – Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, today is Gaudete Sunday, and this Sunday invites us to rejoice. This is, in fact, a sense of anticipation, and we often say that anticipation is the greatest joy – the anticipation of the coming of the Messiah, of the coming of the Saviour, who is, after all, already here. What is the true reason for this joy? If we consider what God is to us, all that he has done, and what he has in store for us, this reflection alone is a source of certainty. After all, it is not a promise being made to humanity for the first time when we speak of salvation. We already have all the testimonies; we know how many have been saved; we know that everything is truly happening just as he said it would, for all who believe in him. It is therefore a joy founded on many testimonies, on the truths, on the promise, on what he has in store for us, on what he has done and is doing, so that we may truly rejoice in it.

We are also familiar with this problem from Nietzsche, who said, in essence: if Christians looked more redeemed, it would be easier to believe in their Saviour. But what does reality look like? And so the question arises: what is actually holding us back? Do we rejoice, do we carry that joy within us, or what is preventing us from doing so? This is not about a superficial joy, nor is it about a joy that I only feel because I have just received a blessing, because God has given me something, or because I have, let's say, won the lottery – which isn't true anyway. But what sort of joy is it, then? What is stopping me from feeling it, or do I truly carry it within me? It is the joy that Paul speaks of today, a joy that he himself carried within him – Paul, who worried, who wept a great deal, who wept through the night for each and every one of them. How can this very Paul, who was truly at the mercy of others, who was tormented and beaten, who says of himself, 'We have become the scum of the earth' – how can he say: 'Rejoice, rejoice always, and let all people experience your kindness and benevolence'? What sort of joy is this? It is one that lies, in essence, as deep within as the sea: when storms come, everything above the sea's surface is tossed about, yet this joy penetrates to the depths—to the depths of a sea ten thousand metres deep—so that down there one is unaware of the storm raging above. This is a profound joy which, truly, if we have the grace of salvation, if we are pure in heart and clear in conscience, if we truly stand in God's grace, live in the grace of Baptism and cooperate with that grace, ought to be the underlying mood within us all.

So, in concrete terms, what robs us of this joy, what prevents us from truly rejoicing? Even if we go to confession regularly and know ourselves to be largely free from grave sins, the question remains: what is it that really holds us back? Joy is, amongst other things, a fruit of the Holy Spirit; peace, joy and all that goes with them are listed amongst the fruits of the Spirit. I recall an example. For a year, I helped out at a Russian parish in Freiburg, a Catholic-Russian church following our liturgy. The priest there had spent a long time in prison; he was a veteran, a truly dynamic figure who had been sustained by the prayers of the faithful and had eventually been released in dramatic circumstances. During the interrogations, he is said to have resisted so fiercely on one occasion that he lifted the table out of the room and hurled it at his interrogators, for which he was thrown out without anyone striking him. He went through a great deal in prison, suffered much harassment, yet there was one thing that could

take away: an inner joy that he always carried within him, because he bore the seal of faith. He also had the certainty that he would one day be set free – and this did indeed come to pass.

So we too must ask ourselves what is really holding us back. Perhaps we do not even think about what is actually holding us back. I believe that, even within our own circles, nothing should really hold us back; this joy ought to fill us, ought to urge us to be truly kind, warm-hearted, happy and joyful, overflowing with the grace of redemption, which we now also have before our eyes as we contemplate the Immaculate One. If nothing were holding us back, we ought truly to be filled with joy. But something is holding us back. Saint Paul calls it 'worries'. What are you worrying about? We preoccupy ourselves with worries that so quickly rob us of our joy, whilst the true Christian actually entrusts everything he has to God; we, on the other hand, worry about everything. St Paul, however, says: 'Do not worry about anything; pray, give thanks, and entrust everything to God.' These are worries about our daily bread and a hundred other things – a whole list of worries with which we preoccupy ourselves. We then say that this is not a sin. Perhaps it isn't, but it is an obstacle to joy. As Christians, we entrust our worries to God, which does not mean that we have nothing to do or nothing to suffer, but our joy must not be taken from us in the process. Essentially, it makes us unworthy if, in our worries, we take too much into our own hands, if we want to keep too much to ourselves, instead of saying: 'Dear God, help me to do what I have to do, but let me first hand over my worry to you and only then do what you want.'

What does it take? There is a movement called 'Mothers in Prayer' – I'm not exactly sure what stage it's at today, but the ideal from which it arose remains. Mothers – certainly not farmwives – who had taken their children to nursery and school would then meet up for a coffee and a natter, just as we do here: in the morning, the mothers take the children to nursery and then meet up a hundred metres further on in a café, where they spend the morning. What did they talk about there? Their worries about the children, their husbands and so on. And they came up with the idea of entrusting all these worries they were discussing to the Mother of God – and once something had been entrusted, not a word more was to be said about it; instead, the time was spent in prayer. One must realise how little one should actually cling to these worries: entrusting them is like a sale. Once I've sold something, it's gone; it no longer belongs to me; perhaps a memory remains, but I no longer need to worry about it. It's the same with a worry that has been entrusted – it's gone, and how God, how the Mother of God then resolves it, is their business. In the heyday of this movement, this brought the mothers great joy: They used the time for prayer, whilst others gave up, and it changed their lives, above all because it lifted the burden of worry from their hearts. The cross remains, of course, but when I carry the cross I am meant to bear, it is essentially a privilege – I am allowed to follow Jesus in carrying the cross, to cooperate with him in redemption through my own cross. But once I am freed from worry, what remains is gratitude, the joy that I am allowed to play my part. It is worry, on the other hand, that prevents us from experiencing joy. We find it difficult to put this into practice, even though no one can prove it wrong and we know it to be true. Living it out is an act of faith – but it will truly fill us with joy.

Thus, our anticipation turns once more to Saint John, whose feast day is at the heart of today's Gospel, the Forerunner who himself confesses that he is not the Messiah. It was he who was the first to encounter the Saviour, whilst still in his mother's womb, where he already leapt for joy – that encounter which we recently contemplated in the Visitation, when Mary visited Elizabeth at dawn. John never lost that joy from the time he was in his mother's womb, not even in the solitude of the desert, where he prepared himself and called the people to repentance. He is the embodiment of all the joy of the Old Testament. He is not the Messiah, nor does he wish to be; he is merely the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, preparing the way for the Messiah – and that is a source of immense joy for him. The supreme embodiment of this joy, however, is of course Mary. In her, the whole promise of joy that we know from the prophecies becomes a reality: in Isaiah, the description of the paradisiacal peace that is to come; or in the prophet Zephaniah, who writes: 'Rejoice, O barren one; break forth into singing, for the Saviour is coming to redeem you.' And the Psalms sing: 'I rejoiced when they told me, "We are going to the house of the Lord."' In Mary, this anticipation is already established even before her own conception; in her Immaculate Conception, she is the embodiment of the joy of the entire Old Testament. When the angel greets her: 'Hail, full of grace', this joy is very much alive – just as, at Mary's greeting, the child in Elizabeth's womb leapt for joy, and even more so in the angel's greeting to Mary herself, even though she is startled at first. It is also this joy with which she gives her whole 'yes' in her 'Fiat mihi'; her entire joy at the coming event is contained therein.

Today's theme is 'Gaudete', but we must not simply pass over it without examining ourselves: Is my joy truly sincere? Is it present within me? Does it fill me to such an extent that others can sense it, that others are inspired by it, even without my saying a word? If this is not the case, then we must, as quickly as possible – even before Christmas – clear away whatever is holding us back. We must not simply let this carry on as it is, especially not now. Let us think this through to its conclusion: even if a war were to break out on my watch, an earthquake were to strike tomorrow, I were to lose my very existence the day after tomorrow, or were a chip even to be implanted in us – whatever might happen: if our soul is in God, there is one thing that cannot be taken from us, even if our children were taken from us, even if all our possessions were destroyed: the grace of God. If I am in God, what then can separate me from the love of Christ? What can separate me from God? And if you have God, you have everything; everything else can be forgotten. If this truth is not planted within us, not rooted within us, then joy cannot endure within us. But the source of joy, true joy, is there, and that cannot be taken from us. If we are baptised, if we live in God's grace, no one can take that from us. That is why this must be the light that shines; this must be our witness. Let us pray that we may be witnesses to this joy, in everything, amidst all tears, in all circumstances – for this is truly the fundamental spirit we must bear witness to, because it is true and because it is genuine.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Christmas Vigil – Waiting like the people in the wilderness

Sermon of 24 December 2024, 4.00 am – Christmas Vigil

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear friends, today is the day of the Vigil. Both the Introit, the opening verse, and the Gradual use texts that were relevant at the time when the people were starving in the desert – it was truly a catastrophe, and they rebelled against Moses. Yet Moses proclaimed to them in the Holy Spirit: ‘Wait just one more day; tomorrow you will see salvation, tomorrow you will behold the glory of God.’ That was the promise of the manna they were to receive, and so it came to pass: God miraculously sustained them with manna for forty years. In the desert, where there is nothing, one is entirely dependent; and so, on the one hand, it was God’s miraculous intervention, whilst on the other, the people knew they were entirely dependent on their God. Even though it was difficult, it was the most beautiful time of God’s relationship with his people, because they relied on him completely and trusted him. This, too, is the introduction to this Solemnity today, the greatness of which we cannot fully recognise or comprehend.

Let us pray that no callousness takes root within us which, as is usually the case with everything, would allow even this feast to become mundane and ordinary. The readings we hear are of the greatest depth; we celebrate the feast, perhaps doing much outwardly to make it beautiful, and then think that is all that is required. Yet if we do not find an inner connection to it, nothing has been achieved. We must find an inner connection, so that the gates open, so that it shakes us to the core, moves us, takes hold of us, fills us with gratitude and wonder, and tears us out of ourselves, so that we truly see the grandeur—indeed, the paradox—of this feast. If it does not shake us, then we have not truly understood it. We are familiar with one kind of deep stirring when we have sinned: then a person bursts into repentance, recognises their guilt, feels the pain of it, and this calls down God’s mercy. Where a person presents themselves before God in repentance and a sense of guilt, this always draws down His mercy in abundance. But here, on this feast day, it is not about that kind of repentance, but about a different kind of deep emotion: the greatness of our God, the greatness of his mercy, the greatness of his power and glory, which he has shown us. In the Old Testament, the people repeatedly sang of God’s great deeds; it was part of the liturgy to remember God’s great deeds. And the greatest act of salvation is, for us, truly the grace of redemption.

When I think of the other Christian denominations – Protestant Christians, for example, who celebrate Christmas with us – for them it is a Christian commemoration. But to experience it sacramentally is something quite different, even if they may believe otherwise.

To experience Christmas sacramentally is the greatest thing there is: we truly have the Child amongst us, and the miracle of the Incarnation is present in the Holy Eucharist. This miracle means that we are, in fact, celebrating everything at once, regardless of where we are. When we celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we celebrate the Nativity, we celebrate the Crucifixion, the Death, the Resurrection, the Union, the Ascension – we celebrate everything, for the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist makes all of this present, brings it to life, not merely in memory, but physically, bodily. In what we are now celebrating at the altar, a thousand, indeed millions, of mysteries are veiled. Even as we offer the sacrifice of the Cross there, the divine event of the Nativity—the anticipation of this Holy Evening—takes place simultaneously within that very same sacrifice of the Cross, so that Jesus, who is present amongst us both as Bridegroom and as the Crucified One, also becomes present to us as a Child—just as mystics have experienced: In the Eucharistic miracle of Lanciano, the divine Heart, flesh and blood, becomes ever-present, and some saints have experienced the Child Jesus at the Consecration on Christmas Day as truly present – even though it remains, after all, the sacrifice of the Cross. Thus, even now, this miracle of the Incarnation draws near to us once more, so vividly that we may imagine ourselves truly present at the birth of Jesus. For He wants us to be there, just as we all are there, just as the angels are present – indeed, this applies to the whole of creation.

I once had a very modern exegete as a professor, at a time when, under the influence of neo-positivism, much was being called into question. Yet there was one thing he explained to us at Christmas: when Jesus came into this world, the whole of creation wanted to share in it, wanted to offer something. So the stars shone down from the heavens, the angels sang the Gloria, the earth prepared the ground and provided the stable, the animals were represented by the ox and the donkey, and nature offered hay and straw – the whole of creation offered its contribution. The shepherds offered their wonder. Everyone played a part; the whole of creation took part in this event. St Francis wanted to bring this to life, which is why he built the nativity scene: he was a man of deep feeling and wanted to be able to empathise with it all, and he arranged everything in such a way that one can understand it. And then he asked: What do we humans have to offer the Child, what can we present to him? His answer was: Our salvation lies in the fact that, despite our weakness, despite our wretchedness, Mary is our representative. She is the Mother of Jesus, but at the same time also the representative of all humanity, who offers love and honour to the Infant Jesus. In her we may take refuge; in her, despite our weaknesses, we may, as it were, hide from the Child, find shelter in her, so that we may stand before the Child, share in his presence, and become worthy. We can only pray that we may make ourselves worthy of all the promises associated with this – including the promise that hangs over this day: ‘All flesh shall see the salvation of God; today you shall see his glory.’ For now it is still veiled, but one day we shall behold it in all its splendour. And this is precisely what moves us most deeply: that, although everything is still veiled, we already have God and man before us, even now, in these days, in the form of a Child.

The Gospel according to Matthew, which we hear today in preparation for this evening’s vigil, presents this Child to us just as the angel describes him, as he is miraculously brought into the world. There is debate as to whether Mary, like an ordinary

gave birth to her child. Yet it is part of the dogma that Mary gave birth miraculously, that her body remained unharmed: the dogma of the Immaculate Conception states that she remained unharmed both before and after the birth. It was a miraculous birth, attended by the holy angels, so that Mary herself was not consciously aware of it. As tradition tells us, she was in a state of ecstasy and then saw the Child before her as a tiny baby, whereupon all her love, all her joy, all her jubilation burst forth. We must not overlook St Joseph, whose faith was so severely tested, right to the very end. His trust had already been put to the test during Mary's pregnancy, and then, as we know, he was called by the angel to give the child a name, thereby becoming the father who, from that moment on, took on the care of the child as well as that of the mother. And today, on the vigil, we remember that, despite everything, he had faith – no one trusted as deeply as he did, except, immediately after him, the Mother Mary herself – and yet he experienced nothing but rejection and rejection. For Saint Joseph, this trial further heightened his sense of responsibility; it was a trial so existentially threatening that, under normal circumstances, it would have called everything into question: that he was unable to find a place for this child, for the mother who was in dire need, and that all his prayers went unanswered. He pleaded in tears and was not heard. How is that possible, when he knew who Mary was, knew which child had been entrusted to him, and was aware of his responsibility? Yet in the end they were led into the stable, the very place where we now celebrate the miracle, and for him, too, this was a beautiful, a fulfilling reality. This joy following the trial, which then filled everyone, must touch us deeply, must move us inwardly.

If we do not take this sense of being moved by the Incarnation and the Nativity into our hearts, we will not be able to follow Jesus later on his journey through life, on the Way of the Cross; it will then always remain merely superficial, and we will also find it difficult to endure the trials of the Cross. It must take shape within us; it must become human within us, for there is a saying to the effect that it is of no use if God has become human a thousand times, but not within you. It is truly a matter of becoming new, of reliving the Incarnation within each of us. This is precisely what is at stake today and during these days; it is offered to us a thousandfold; it is up to us whether we are inwardly ready for it or not. The time that follows will show whether we can pass the tests or fall behind. It is precisely what lies ahead of us – including in external events – that demands of us that we truly experience this mystery; God offers it to us in a marvellous way, a thousand times over, and the holy angels accompany us in this. So let us make the most of this time to experience it truly and deeply. Let us ask the Heavenly Mother and the holy angels that we may not miss out on anything, that nothing of what God has prepared for us may pass us by.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

From the Creation of the Angels to the Epistle to the Galatians

Sermon of 2 December 2024, 3.30 pm – Sunday in the Octave of Christmas

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On this Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, which falls between the feasts of the Christmas season, the readings for this particular Sunday apply. In order to better understand the passage from St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, we must consider the whole story once more from the beginning.

We know that, after the Creation, the first beings created in heaven were the angels – countless, indeed billions upon billions of spiritual beings, too many for us to count. They were all initially created in glory; that was, so to speak, their first paradisiacal state. Then, however, God withdrew from them and put them to the test – not with a trick question, but with a genuine decision that each individual angel had to face, for it was not a collective decision but a deeply personal one. They were to decide whether they wished to serve the plan of that God whom they recognised as God: that this God wished to become human, to take on human form and, through a woman – already a foreshadowing of Mary – to enter this world, in order thus to serve his own creation, humankind. God asked them, as it were, in human terms: 'Are you prepared to serve me, your God, in this way?' And then the astonishing thing happened: of all beings, the first to be created, the greatest of all angels, said 'No' – it had come to this, that the great angels of all should allow themselves to be so humiliated. This greatest among them swept others away with him from all the choirs; it is difficult to put a figure on how many there were, but there were not hundreds, but millions, indeed billions of devils. They are innumerable, and no two are alike; although some stand on the same level, every devil is different, and some stand out in particular. Yet they all wish to be active – they do not wish to sit idly in hell, but to work, to be in action, so as to drag creatures down into hell all the more. All this happened even before God created Paradise.

We are then familiar with the test to which humanity was subjected: how one of the fallen leaders disguised himself as a serpent and led Adam and Eve astray with trick questions, so that they ate of the fruit. All these spirits therefore knew that this God wished to become human. And now comes the interesting part: when the time had come – after millions of years, as some might doubt, though I myself am convinced that, reckoned from the time of the holy angels, it was after ten million years – God set His plan in motion. He first chose a people, led them out, and had it proclaimed through special prophets that the Messiah would soon come; thus this people already had an idea of the Messiah. He chose the people of Israel, set them apart from the other nations and bestowed special graces upon them, such as the revelation of his will: he showed them the Commandments and revealed much of what he expected of them. Although this set this people apart from the others, and the Law given to them was indeed something special – yet it was not yet the actual salvation. It was only when the time was fulfilled that God sent his Son: that is what Christmas is all about. Even back then, there were some who, through the Holy Spirit, recognised that

it was truly the Messiah – think of Mary herself, of Saint Joseph, of Elizabeth, who recognised him. Let us also consider what today's Gospel tells us, which takes place during the child's very first days of life. This does not refer to the circumcision, which took place eight days after the birth and is not specifically described in Holy Scripture, but to what we celebrate today as the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, or Candlemas.

In the Temple at that time was the elderly Simeon, who had already recognised the truth: the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that this child was destined to be a sign that would lead to the fall and the rise of many in Israel – that he was the promised Messiah. He knew in advance that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah, and that kept him going; day and night he was in the Temple, where he lived as a retired high priest. There was also the elderly widow Hannah, who had likewise received a revelation that she would see the Messiah, and who therefore waited for him in the Temple, praying and fasting day and night. One must imagine the temple as it really was: not a quiet place, but the busiest spot in all of Jerusalem, where everything of importance took place – comparable, for example, to a large market here – a place teeming with people and bustling activity, including the trading that Jesus would later drive out of the temple. When a baby was carried into this throng, no one could have guessed that it was the Messiah; people expected the Messiah to be a king who would liberate Israel, and yet here came merely a poor family who stood out, if at all, only because of their poverty. No one could have imagined that this was the Messiah – only Simeon and Hannah recognised him. That is why it is also said that Mary and Joseph were amazed: not because the two of them had proclaimed something fundamentally new to them, but at how they could possibly have known this at all. It was, after all, the Holy Spirit who had revealed it to them. Simeon then praised God with the words: 'Now, Lord, you are letting your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation.' Hannah, too, was overjoyed and praised God.

It is remarkable that the enemy himself, of all people—that angel who had once been put to the test—failed to recognise the Messiah: God had concealed this from the Devil. Although he repeatedly suspected something, he had imagined the coming of the Messiah quite differently and could not conceive that this Messiah would disguise himself in such a way, would make himself so humble. And so he literally vanished from view, from the Devil's radar, who had been prepared for something entirely different from what he had once been tested with; for him, this Messiah dissolved, as it were, into nothingness. Yet the Devil had a vague inkling somewhere, for there came the wise men from the East, there came the shepherds, there came the angels – all this was too strange to mean nothing, and so he had probably already begun his attacks. But he only truly recognised it at the moment of Jesus' death on the cross. Until then, he had repeatedly doubted whether this could really be the Messiah, even in the face of all that Jesus had said and done. It was only when Jesus had died on the cross that the devil was defeated, his power broken, and from that moment on there has been only one victor: the Messiah, Jesus.

But now comes the crucial step: how do we come to this Messiah who has triumphed? The people of that time saw him, experienced his miracles – but how do we today come to this victory, to the gifts he has won for us, to that

in which we believe? Above all, we come to it through the sacraments; in them, a person gains access to all the merits of victory, to the graces of salvation.

Here, once again, a comparison helps us, for today another child is being baptised among us, and we were all, of course, baptised as children. Yet one must imagine that baptism did not even exist in the world at one time. The people of Israel were, admittedly, specially chosen and more virtuous than others, but one could probably only estimate the total number of people living on earth at the time of Jesus – bear in mind that the other continents had long been populated: America, for example, was not discovered until the fifteenth century, but was already inhabited by Native American tribes, as was India, where missionaries later arrived. For the Apostles, however, Asia and Europe were essentially the only parts of the world they were aware of; when people spoke of the Roman Emperor as the Emperor of the whole world, they actually meant the Near East and Europe. All these peoples, however, had their own religions from the very beginning, and even the people of Israel, who, through revelation, possessed the one true religion of God and were thus set apart, nevertheless remained subject to the Law, which heavily enslaved them. The other religions, however, were nothing but bondage through and through: sacrifices were offered to the gods, and these gods struck out cruelly. This was also the case with nature religions, such as the religion of Pachamama – it, too, kept people in bondage. Just imagine: if we were now, in the year two thousand, after so many victories of Christianity, to return to Pachamama and place her once more at the centre of the Catholic Church – where, in fact, the grace of Baptism was meant to set people free – then she would be reintroduced, and the other religions would once again be elevated to the same level, even though it was precisely they that had imposed bondage upon people. Baptism was the true liberation from this bondage to religions. It began only with the Apostles, to whom Jesus had given the commission to baptise, and those who were baptised at that time usually experienced a miracle immediately: they felt inner healing, were instantly filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in foreign tongues, and were able to perform miracles – they were tangibly transformed; it made a real difference. Those who were baptised came together to form the early church, and their way of life also made a difference: when the apostles prayed, five thousand people were added in a single day, and a further thousand shortly afterwards – because people saw that these people lived differently, possessing an inner freedom and inner happiness that others did not have.

As Saint Paul says: Baptism, by virtue of the merits of Jesus, the Son, has made us what we were not before. It is true that we were all children of God even before that, from the moment of creation, for there is no human being who was not created by God – yet, as a consequence of original sin, we were subject to the laws of nature, of nations and of religions. Now, however, it is Baptism that lifts us out of this bondage and sets us free, making us children of God. So, whilst we were already children, we have now, as Paul says, been accepted as children – adopted children, adopted by God as His own. Baptism is this act of adoption. And what are children? To their parents, and indeed to us, children are everything – they are the heirs who will one day inherit everything. This is precisely the new reality to which Paul refers: if we are children of God, then we are no longer servants, but heirs of God, and everything that belongs to God belongs to us. Even now, as children of God,

the whole world already belongs to us, without any restriction to this or that piece of property; we are heirs to everything. That is what makes the crucial difference.

But what further distinguishes us as children is this: we are not merely heirs, but through baptism we have received the ability to grow into heavenly graces, so that grace—the very life of God—can grow within us. Outside of baptism, this divine life does not exist within us, and consequently it cannot grow either. Through baptism, however, divine life is implanted within us – and that is a huge difference compared to a merely natural life. This divine life is invisible to us, yet visible to the spirits: when a person lives in God’s grace – for instance, in the grace of Baptism alone – then, in the language of light, this is such a powerful light that every devil and every angel immediately recognises what is happening. And as we continue to grow in grace by receiving the other sacraments, this difference becomes even greater: The devil knows full well that no mortal human being could endure even a single such grace – the grace of Baptism, and all the more so the grace of Holy Communion – in its unveiled form; no human being could survive the sheer bliss and glory of beholding it unveiled. And when a person lives regularly in this grace, when they live from the sacraments, then this grace enables them to transform every resistance, every difficulty, every suffering, every cross in such a way that it unites them ever more closely with God, allowing them to grow ever more into heaven, into eternity. There is then no longer any cross, no suffering, no difficulty that, in God’s grace, would not become a means of inner growth. That is a tremendous difference – and the people who were not Christians to begin with noticed precisely that: how is it possible that these people can deal with their crosses and their sufferings in this way? That is extraordinary, that is not normal, as people would have said back then.

Yet this is precisely what ought to distinguish Christians. And that is why Christianity, despite all its graces, has today fallen into such a crisis that this difference is scarcely noticed any more – the difference between a Christian who lives by the sacraments and one who lives as a pagan. Some of them may even live better lives than we do; they may be more faithful to their natural conscience—which distinguishes between good and evil—than Christians, who after all possess all the grace that holds in store a stronger weapon, a brighter light, a greater grace for every problem and every suffering, so that everything spiritual turns out for the best and becomes a source of growth. That is what ought to set us apart. And that is why Christmas is, time and again, a return to the beginning, a sort of root canal treatment: so that we can start afresh, so that everything that has taken root within us is cleansed right down to the very root. That is the truth – and if we cannot prove it, we must allow it to be tested by the trial of time. For one might hold it against us: the followers of Pachamama and other religions live better lives than you do; that is a disgrace, a disgrace upon Israel, a disgrace upon us.

That is why Christianity as such is a faith, a religion that allows itself to be enslaved by nothing in this world. Admittedly, we will not change the external laws; admittedly, we remain subject to death, suffer the same illnesses and the same afflictions as everyone else – yet our inner, spiritual way of dealing with them is fundamentally

different. And if we cannot live this out, cannot bear witness to it, then we might as well pack it in. When we are weak, when we fail at something, we have our own sacrament for that: we can repent, confess, and straight away we are back on the right track; straight away the stream of grace flows once more. But if we cannot live it out, we must pack it in. We might as well say that we doubt whether Jesus really lived – and when we look at the so-called Christians living amongst us today, we would indeed have to doubt whether Jesus really became human, whether he was really born. Have we really begun to doubt? Is all this true? If we cannot bear witness to it, and an outsider who has converted and comes to us – perhaps having read the Bible, or even studied the Catechism – then travels to Germany or Austria to see how it is lived out, and thinks to himself, ‘This must surely be marvellous’ – and then says: ‘For heaven’s sake, I can’t find a single person who lives out what’s written there’ – then that is a disgrace. That is the disgrace that should actually make us blush when such people see us. We ought to be ashamed of bringing such disgrace upon our God if we do not live it out. This is no joke; it is truly the truth.

It is just like with talents: if, in a worldly sense, we have great gifts or qualifications – for example, a talent for sport that could become genius – but we do not practise it, do not allow it to flourish when put to the test, then we might as well forget about that talent – we will no longer even know whether it really existed. This can only be ascertained through the test of time, when our actions bear witness to it. It is exactly the same in Christianity, and that is precisely what is once again at stake from the very foundations today. Even if we dwindle in number, even if we become a small group – as Pope Benedict foresaw: that Christianity would almost entirely disappear from public view, that what was built up with the great churches and cathedrals would retain its significance but become empty, devoid of vitality, whilst the few retreat into obscurity and persecution – even then, it remains true. The late Cardinal Caffarra, one of those cardinals who wrote to Pope Francis, Bergoglio, expressing their doubts, also said before his death that Christianity must start all over again from scratch – just as in a piece of music, where, if one has to start again from the beginning, one says ‘da capo’: everything must start all over again because so much has gone wrong. And yet: in the lives of individuals, the saints, the right path is still there; though their numbers are dwindling, they are scarcely visible, they live in obscurity – but if they were missing, it would all be over. Thank God they still exist, even if there are only a few amongst us who truly live by it.

I do not wish to merely convince myself of this zeal, yet when I think of the current situation, it pains me deeply. I find myself asking: Where have we ended up? Where have we ended up? And what might it look like if we were truly living it? It is up to us. It is not so difficult, after all – Saint John, whose letters we will be reading in the coming weeks, says it: It is not difficult; we simply have to love. When we live out love, it is not difficult; even the most difficult things dissolve, because God’s love for us is greater than all that is laid upon us as a trial. And on top of that, we have the saints; we have the Heavenly Mother, who is our example

and who is so close to us and accompanies us in everything; we have the holy angels – so we have no excuse.

Praised be Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A New Beginning in Faith and the Symbolic Language of the Angels

Sermon of 3 January 2025, 5.30 pm – Votive Mass in honour of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear sisters and brothers, today we are celebrating the first Sacred Heart Friday of the new year, and this is always a new beginning. So let us also ask how we can make a fresh start time and again in our lives of faith. The holy angels help us in this, through their own language, the language of symbols: there is no angel who does not reveal themselves through a particular symbolism. Throughout the whole year, every single day we have at least one holy angel – on some days even two – who reveal to us who they are, with their majesty and their heavenly choir – and always in this rich symbolic language, through which we can recognise what they wish to tell us.

This symbolic language of the angels is very similar to the language in which Jesus himself preached, for he almost always spoke first in parables. A parable opens up a unique way of expressing something: those who have ears, let them hear; those who can understand it, understand it; but to those who cannot understand it, it simply remains a mystery. And these parables hold within them an inexhaustible wealth of potential for renewal and expressive power; the more often one contemplates them, the more one discovers in them. In the same way, the holy angels also have their favourite symbols – the image of the Church, the image of the seed, the symbol of light, the image of the sea, and many others besides. Today, however, at the start of the new year and on this Sacred Heart Friday, another symbol comes to mind, one which is scarcely found in classical theology or in the classical spirituality of asceticism in relation to human sanctification – and yet, as you will soon realise, it is a highly significant symbol.

All around us lie agricultural fields, many fields that are sown, ploughed and tilled. Let us now imagine that such a field were left unploughed for a long time: if a field is left unploughed for ten years and one then plants something in it, one has no idea what sort of wild growth has taken root there. It's no different in the garden, which also has to be dug over year after year – essentially, it's the same process. But if a field is properly ploughed, it becomes

a completely new, fallow field, and the ploughing usually brings to light everything that has been hidden within it.

As a boy, I really enjoyed ploughing with oxen, less so with horses. In Brazil, we had to clear a steeply sloping area of virgin forest, and tractors were of no help there because the slopes were far too steep to be ploughed by machine. So we ploughed there with six oxen, on almost every one of the roughly three hundred working days in the year – Sundays excluded, of course. The oxen were perfectly suited to the task; it wouldn't have worked with horses, as they couldn't keep their footing on the slopes. The oxen, however, first cleared the jungle and then ploughed the newly cleared land. It was quite an adventure: you had to train them well, but once they were trained, they obeyed almost to the letter, just like dogs – it was truly marvellous to watch, and I loved working with them and training them. If an ox wouldn't pull properly whilst ploughing, the labourers would come and say that this ox was no good any more; then I would take charge of him, and if we jokingly threatened him that he'd soon be slaughtered, he would usually get back to work diligently straight away – a slight exaggeration, perhaps, but it was true. And once the jungle had been cleared and the farmland tilled, it was astonishing to see the growth that took place there. Within a few years, we'd built up a livestock farm from scratch, clearing and ploughing everything with oxen, so that we were soon able to produce four hundred litres of milk a day – enough to feed the seminary and the whole household, and even to sell some milk on the side.

It was once the same here in Europe: I recall that it was largely the Benedictines, following in the footsteps of Saint Benedict, who brought Christian culture to us, including in the field of agriculture. One of their innovations was that they taught us how to plough; interestingly, ploughing was not yet known in the early centuries, and agricultural yields were correspondingly low. Once people began to plough, agricultural yields rose dramatically. This is easy to understand, for farmers know how important ploughing is, even if we city-dwellers hardly ever give it a second thought: without ploughing, nothing works. And just as it is with the field – though it is, of course, different with a meadow – so it is with our soul: it is like the field. Let us recall the prayer after Holy Mass, which states that the seed which you have sown in our earth is sown back into the earth, so that it may bear rich fruit at every Holy Communion – and this seed is the Body of Christ himself; it is his very heart, which we place within our own hearts. Does this seed not truly deserve a well-prepared field?

In terms of symbolism, I believe we can easily understand all this, for the language of the angels is so easy to grasp when approached through imagery. But now the real task begins, namely putting it into spiritual practice: so what do I need to plough up? What must I plough up spiritually? What is waiting to be ploughed up? I didn't have time earlier to look it up again, but there is indeed a Way of the Cross, probably from the 1970s, before the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, in which an angel comes and says: 'I must plough up your soul.' And he then ploughed up one field after another.

After the first plough-cut, so the story goes, he first ploughed up our faith, and as he did so, the worms came out. As he ploughed, it became clear just how worm-eaten this faith was, how much superstition and superficiality it contained – the faith simply had to be ploughed up. Faith is, after all, one of the first virtues instilled in us at baptism, and it must be continually renewed. If we consider that faith, were it truly of the right sort, could work miracles even as a single seed, a mustard seed, then faith must be ploughed up so that it may be continually renewed within us – then we must ask ourselves: Is the substance of my faith actually correct? Is everything really as it should be? This is a crucial question: what does my faith actually entail, if I were to really examine it?

As a priest, I once conducted a survey after Sunday Mass – when there were lots of people there – with a few representatives, to find out what the faithful, who after all are all baptised and attend church, actually believe. And I can tell you: out of a hundred respondents, a hundred different creeds emerged. We all recite the Creed together in church on Sundays, but as for what individuals actually believed and what they didn't – for heaven's sake – I found myself thinking, 'What on earth have I got myself into?' All sorts of things were mentioned: 'I believe this', 'I don't believe that', and so on. They spoke honestly, and it became a real talking point afterwards. I said to them: 'You've been baptised, haven't you? Don't you know what our faith is?' It was completely new to them that we must hold fast to the faith, that the faith is binding upon us, that we must shape our lives according to it. And just look at everything that had crept in: esotericism had crept in, Eastern meditation techniques – all sorts of things had become mixed up with the faith. It is indeed the case, it is truly so: our faith must be ploughed up so that we may rediscover the seed of the Catholic faith. And the sad thing is that we often can no longer find this seed of the Catholic faith, into which we were baptised. Just think of the state of Bergoglian teaching today: priests who celebrate the sacraments in unity with Bergoglio are no longer celebrating from the Catholic seed. I can profess the Catholic truths, but if I recognise Bergoglio as Pope, then I am already adhering to a different creed – that is no longer Catholic. And the seed that then springs from such a mixed faith can no longer be the best; everything is disrupted. We also think of how Pachamama has found its way into the foundations of our faith, how other religions have become intermingled with it. That is why our faith must be ploughed up, and we must – because the Heart of Jesus wills it – plant the seed of faith within us anew and in its purest form. This is truly a task for each of us, even now, at the start of the new year: that we profess what our faith truly is, even if we were the only ones carrying this light within us. What faith have I made my own through a vow, to what faith have I committed myself? If we stray from the true faith even at this point, then we might as well go home straight away – with such a faith we cannot go into battle, nor can we expect any miracles from it. A faith without the right foundation offers no hope of miracles.

We could go on like this. The angel made this very clear back then, at that crossroads before Pentecost, by also turning over the soil of love. He pointed out that our love was ambiguous, and asked what was draining the vitality from our field, the very soil in which love is meant to grow. How little is truly left for God? How rarely does He come first? How many things are there in this field, in which love is planted, that feed off it – what is it that I love so much? Things then came to light such as: how I become attached to people, how I become attached to animals, how I become attached to cars and houses, how I suddenly dote on my dogs and my cat to an excessive degree. Yet everything has its proper order, its place in the plan of love, in the whole of creation – but in the right order. When something is overemphasised, when your dog means more to you than Holy Mass, or in a relationship the cat more than your spouse, then we soon realise how love has been displaced, how it needs to be ploughed over.

I can give you an example of this straight away. In my former parish hall, the mayor was also the chairman of the parish council – a truly good man who helped a great deal and worked hard, but who was often out late in the evenings and certainly still had some work to do on his faith. On one occasion, when the conversation turned to faith and love, he confessed that he wished to be loved at least as much by his wife – for his wife, he said, actually loved the cat more than him. If he came home late in the evening after a meeting had dragged on, and arrived later than he'd promised, he'd immediately be told off: 'Where on earth have you been all this time? What have you been up to? You promised to be home by ten, and you're only back at midnight – what a mess!' If, on the other hand, the cat didn't come home until after midnight, the reaction was simply: 'Oh, where have you been? What happened?' – and she was stroked and greeted with 'Thank goodness you're back.' 'That's exactly how it plays out with us all the time,' he said, 'and I just wish I could be loved as much as the cat.' It was meant as a joke, mind you – the two of them were very happily married – but at heart it was true: isn't that the case for some of us too? That is not the order of love; that is not the order God has given us.

So if we were to dig this up and replant it anew, we could replant everything one by one – our trust, our other virtues; everything would have to be ploughed up so that a genuine new beginning might emerge. We don't have time now to go into this in detail, but we can do it; one thing after another, everything really must be ploughed up. Why? Because it is too precious: the divine Heart of Jesus, the seed of his love, wishes to find a pure field within us. We must be prepared, purified and cleansed, so that we honestly make room for nothing else but this seed of the divine Heart. His love deserves it. And if we do this, there will also be abundant growth: then love will grow within us, then we will bear fruit, then we will also experience miracles in our faith, then we will be able to be true witnesses to the faith.

This is truly an invitation, especially now, at the start of the new year – we are not forced to do it, but we can. This ploughing up can, for example, take the form of a truly good, thorough confession, for confession is the plough with which we turn everything over so that something new can grow. Yet it is not only confession that helps in this, but

so does the old, tried-and-tested programme of conversion, of rethinking, of reorientation, of realignment. Our Heavenly Mother is always our model and benchmark in this, as she is always wholly and undividedly there for God; she is also at our side, we are so close to her, she is so close to us, we are consecrated in her heart, indeed we even ask for the exchange of hearts. And it is quite unthinkable that, in this exchanged heart, weeds could run rampant or the field remain unploughed. So you see how necessary it is for the seed to bear truly abundant fruit. Do we have the courage to really set about this?

Praise be to Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Apostles at the Gate of Heavenly Jerusalem

Sermon of 8 January 2025, 5.30 pm – Votive Mass in honour of the Holy Apostles

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

During this Christmas season, let us honour the Holy Apostles today. So let us return with them to the beginning of the Gospel – to the Apostles, who perhaps only learnt of the very beginnings later on, so that some of them only sought out the Mother of God afterwards to find out how it had all actually begun. These Apostles were trained by Jesus himself and were then commissioned to proclaim all this. They began this mission here on earth, yet it is far from complete: that is why they stand at the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem as the Apostles of the Lamb, there where we repeatedly bestow these blessings, and their mission will only be fulfilled when all the multitudes have entered. The Apostles are, as it were, the representatives of the whole of creation: on the one hand, they have the Lamb's commission to proclaim the Gospel; on the other hand, they will also receive the entering multitudes at the end. Thus, we too invoke the Apostles every day in the liturgy; in the Act of Contrition we ask for their intercession; and we are constantly in contact with them, for God has assigned us to them. Above them, however, stands the Heavenly Mother, who has already been established as Queen of the Apostles and Mediatrix of All Graces.

As we now celebrate the Christmas season, the key, I believe, lies in that passage of the Gospel where Peter asks Jesus what they will receive in return for having left everything to follow him. Jesus then gives them the promise that they will sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. And what does he say to the others? What will they receive as their reward? We know these words: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and it has not entered the heart of any human being what God has prepared for those who love him.' But now the question arises: what may we, who

are not apostles, expect as a reward? What does God want from each of us—from those whom he is now leading to salvation, whom he is now training, from those who now believe in him? Does he want them to leave everything behind, to radically forsake everything like the apostles? There is a key to what he actually wants, and this key is within reach of every one of us: he always wants the heart. He wants the heart of every person. He gives his heart, and he wants our heart. And if anyone gives their heart entirely to him, to the Baby Jesus, then Jesus gives them everything in return.

Essentially, that is precisely the key: that God wants every person's heart, that he even wants a complete exchange of hearts, that what really matters is whether a person can truly give their heart entirely. Where I will be in heaven, and what position I will hold there, is not really the decisive factor – the only thing that matters is whether a person is able to truly give their heart to this Child Jesus. This is no mere daydream; it is something radical – as radical as it is in marriage, when two people give their hearts to one another: it means a willingness to lay down one's life for the other, even within marriage. And it is precisely in this that marriage is a reflection of how Jesus gives himself to the Church, as Saint Paul describes it.

To understand this even better, the language of the angels helps us once again: an angel, of course, has no heart in the physical sense, but if we translate what we mean by 'heart' into the language of angels, then after his examination the angel says: 'I give you my heart.' By this he does not mean a physical organ, but his whole being: 'I am entirely yours, I surrender myself completely to you; you may dispose of me as you wish.' This is a decision for all eternity, without any lapse, without any shadow, without any wavering, without the slightest flaw – always perfect. For us humans, this is where the real problem lies: although we say, 'I give you my heart', and we take vows and make consecrations, how often does a person take these back time and again? For the heart to truly live, for me to truly give my heart away, for me to let Jesus live within me, from childhood onwards, this is a life-and-death struggle, because within ourselves we feel time and again that, as time goes on, our own life no longer beats solely for God and his plans. Therein lies the self-deception, and therein we deceive ourselves: when what we call devotion is, in truth, often nothing more than unchecked growth, a lack of discipline in which all manner of things lurk. If, on the other hand, we look to Mary, we see a truly perfect surrender to the will of God. That is why Christians, even to this day, have failed to grasp sufficiently that Christianity as such is a wholehearted Christianity, that is to say, a total commitment. And that is why, fundamentally, there are so few true Christians: most merely drift through life, whilst a true Christian, from the moment of baptism, has made a radical decision for God, to give him their heart, to belong to him. That is our training – that we want to belong to God, that we want to be there for him.

This applies just as much to those in consecrated life, to priests: they take the most beautiful vows, the highest promises of devotion; at first they are happy about this, yet in reality, in many ways, they live for themselves. The saints, on the other hand – and no saint was born with holiness – are those who, from the very beginning, took this following of Christ radically seriously, or, to put it in Marian terms, who allowed God to do with them as He wished. We usually do the opposite: we do

our God as we please. Ultimately, God has surrendered Himself to humankind, surrendered Himself completely – humankind can do with Him as it pleases. We can do whatever we want with his Word; we can do whatever we want with his Eucharistic life, for he has placed his Eucharistic life in our hands; people can do with it whatever they wish, for he is defenceless – he has made himself defenceless. And we can do whatever we want with his love.

But if a person makes a decision at that level where faith does not operate through external compulsion – where, in other words, I do not need a supernatural apparition, nor supernatural grace, nor feel any inner compulsion that would leave me no choice but to act as I do – then God leaves that person, as it were, standing on the ground of nothingness, so that they may choose Him. This is a decision made in the dark, but one that must stand the test of daily trials. It is in these daily trials that it becomes clear whether I have truly given my heart to God – whether my behaviour, towards my neighbour, towards myself, and towards everyone else, is truly an expression of this belonging to him. One can contemplate this mystery of God's Incarnation from many angles, yet time and again it becomes clear what consequences arise from God exposing and surrendering himself to humankind in this way: people do with him as they please, and only in the rarest of cases do they want what he wants. They want to help bring their own plans to fruition; they want him to be as they imagine him to be; and if that does not fit with their ideas, they say it is not true. In fact, however, the reality is this: even the bishops' conferences and the synods do with the good Lord whatever they please.

The Lord allows this, yet the consequences are either glorious – if I surrender myself completely to Him, it brings miracle upon miracle, grace upon grace – or they truly lead people into the abyss. Despite all the graces God offers, we thus dig our own graves, into which we must then bury what we have brought upon ourselves. The holy Apostles watch over us; they admonish us and invite us to look to them, to look to the Corinthians, to look to the Fathers, but also to the truths of the Gospel which we are to live by. These truths are, in essence, not complicated; they require no great study, but only one basic concept, one fundamental prerequisite: that we know and grasp the truth. It does not take much if one possesses a few keys. If, for example, I grasp what the Cross means and contemplate it time and again, that alone clarifies many things in life. If I take the First Commandment or the Golden Rule, then I have such a key and do not need to study much – then I quickly know what it is all about. The Golden Rule says: 'Do not do to anyone what you would not want done to yourself.' And this applies just as much to God, in our relationship with him.

So this evening with the Apostles is yet another invitation to ask what we receive in return. And we see: when we give our hearts to Jesus, he in turn gives us the unspeakable abundance of what is in his own heart – something we cannot even begin to comprehend. When Jesus speaks in the Gospel of what his own will receive, it sounds wonderful, yet there is far more to these words than we can easily grasp. He truly bestows all his glory, and this glory that is prepared for us is so unimaginable that I am constantly made aware of it

, especially in the dead of night when all is quiet and I am praying: when I read about the holy angels, how they are described, how glorious, how indescribably glorious that which lies ahead of us is. And yet we struggle, and yet we find it so difficult to make this decision wholeheartedly: that Jesus belongs completely, unconditionally, in my heart. This, too, is an invitation, especially today: that we truly examine ourselves – whether I recognise it, whether I want it, and whether I then, step by step, actually do it and break free from what otherwise holds me captive. For we are all caught up in systems, even within Christianity, that are fundamentally unworthy of Christianity, because we have been brought up in the Christian faith so half-heartedly, so superficially.

Let us look back at the first apostles who heard the Gospel: almost all of them made a swift and wholehearted decision. They knew that choosing him might bring them martyrdom as early as the very next day, and in the first centuries that is precisely what often happened, and very soon. But they were happy, they were happy; they even felt unworthy of it. This must apply to us once more, as we stand here at this time: it requires our wholehearted commitment to Christianity; it requires our complete commitment. We do not wish to force anyone, yet against all counter-arguments and supposedly clever objections stand the facts: this is the law of the Gospel, which we cannot set aside. Let us therefore ask our Heavenly Mother to inspire us time and again through her example. During a catechesis on the angels, in preparation for the Feast of the Guardian Angels, we once spoke about ‘taking our measure’, and most of the feedback afterwards centred on the idea that we should take our measure from Mary – something we would never have imagined. But now I have come to realise what God actually wants from me: when I take my measure from Mary, it always means the whole. Yes, that is how it is – let us pray for this.

Praised be Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Encounter with Christ in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

Sermon of 27 January 2025, 5.00 pm – St John Chrysostom

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us not forget that the most direct encounter with our Lord and God always takes place within the sacraments – above all in the Holy Eucharist at this hour, but also in the Sacrament of Penance. The Word we hear in the Gospel is always the Word of God; yet it is woven into that sacramental act which we call the Holy Mass. When we hear and receive it within the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, it is the same Word of God, but it is set in

a completely different context, proclaimed in a completely different setting. That is why, precisely in this encounter with Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, our active participation is always required – our innermost being, our whole involvement. But how is it possible for us to truly believe that God is so present today that he speaks to us? The Holy Father was seen weeping as he proclaimed the final Gospel; and when asked the reason for his tears, he said that God speaks to people, yet people are preoccupied with something else – they are not in this immediate contact with him.

This applies particularly to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and it is part of what we have been discussing in recent weeks: the demons of everyday life. Let us not forget that when we participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we are drawn into the heavenly liturgy – specifically the Byzantine liturgy, the Liturgy of St Chrysostom, when we celebrate it. I simply cannot forget this: I took part in it for a whole year, even though there were only a few participants; yet every celebration was sung in four-part harmony and its texts were so solemn that, no matter where one comes from, one is drawn in as if into another world. Forces are unleashed within us, something comes alive within us, a fire is kindled somewhere within us, something is set resonating within us. Essentially, it should be the case that all the forces of body and soul are set in motion, that everything within us comes to life when we celebrate the Holy Liturgy and take part in this great event: that we celebrate the sacrifice of the Cross, which is made present, the great act of redemption, which is now commemorated in a different setting than it once was on Golgotha. On Golgotha, it was the drama of the bloody sacrifice itself, shaped by the entire combative atmosphere of that setting. Now, however, this liturgy is set within the solemnity of the company of angels, the sacred surroundings, so that if we are not inwardly moved by it, we simply let it pass us by. Then it does not unfold within us the effect that God intended for it and which we so urgently need for our struggle, our trials, and our daily lives.

During the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, all the springs are opened. In a hundred different ways, the floodgates are opened so that we may draw from them, act, celebrate, live, experience, savour, be present, love and suffer. It is a marvellous, harmonious interplay – the cosmic event, the greatest event unfolding before the eyes of Heaven, and yet at the same time taking place before us in such a hidden, veiled manner, shrouded in a thousand veils. That is why it forms part of this theme of struggle; it is not a preview of the catechesis, but an indication that the devil is striving with all his might to prevent us from attaining true inner participation, from drawing near to the Blood of Christ, from joining in the celebration, from allowing everything within us, in our souls, to resonate, and from being able to be recipients, givers, bestowers, co-celebrants, co-livers and co-experiencers. How wonderful it would be if this were truly always alive within us!

We are thus called to purification, for we have a holy angel who teaches us purity of heart: amongst others, the guardian angel of Saint Andrew the Apostle, whom we honour today, even though it is not his feast day. This protection offered by Saint Andrew is something special – he stands at the Gate of the Pure in the heavenly Jerusalem. He wishes to show us how pure God desires each of our thoughts to be, how pure he desires our actions

. If only we could see how much of our own ego still remains in our words, in our actions, in our behaviour; how much of it is still worldly, earthly – and how little is truly pure! When Jesus calls us the light of the world today, this light ought to be recognisable as His image: light from the Light, light from His Light. Our personal touch, our own personality, always plays a part in this, yet the light of God must always remain recognisable in everything.

When the moon is illuminated by the sun, when it receives its light, it reflects it – but only imperfectly; even the shadows we see on the moon have a significance, for the moon is at the same time an image of the transitory, because these shadows show that it does not reflect the image of the sun quite directly. If, on the other hand, we look at the stars – the real stars, the star systems – we see that they either reflect their own radiance or they reflect the solar system. They are illuminated by a light that is not their own, but which – in each star's own unique way – fills them completely. Every star has its own characteristics, its own significance, its own radiance, its own influence; yet the light itself is always the light of the sun, is always the light of God. So too should our light – each of us – be: Even though this comparison with the stars is primarily an image of the angels, it is at the same time an image of how purely God wishes this light within us, in everything, to shine so unadulterated that one can recognise: this is truly a star that reflects, without distortion, the light by which it is illuminated. This applies to all our words, to our deeds, to our actions.

So even today, there lies a grace in observing within ourselves to what extent we truly are such a mirror of God in all things – and in this, above all, what we do not experience with the stars, but experience most keenly with the sun itself: were we in its vicinity, we could not endure its heat. Therefore, true, living closeness in faith – to the heart of God, to the sun, to this event – would burn us just as the sun would; we could not bear it. Yet it would be just as wrong if it failed to warm us to the extent that we can bear and to the extent that it is meant to bring us to life. That is why, particularly during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, as we participate in this most sacred act, Jesus' words that we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth should serve as a wake-up call within us. Where do we stand? What is the state of our participation, our celebration? To what extent are we in darkness, such that although we are present, it does not penetrate us, does not shake us, does not transform us, and has no impact, no effect? If, when we go out, no inner fulfilment remains, then we must ask ourselves whether there is really any point in carrying on in this way – whether we ought not to realign ourselves so that we may truly come to such participation, such involvement, as God has intended, as He so earnestly desires, so that this longing may find an echo within us.

Let us pray for this: that He may make us ever more ready for it, and that Christ may become ever more alive and ever more fervent within us. May He be our chief concern for ever and ever.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Kindness of Saint Joseph

Sermon of 1 March 2025, 5.30 pm – St Joseph

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, my beloved, today we have the opportunity, for the second time, to reflect on the kindness of Saint Joseph and to learn much from him – particularly in view of what we will need in the future. His example, his intercession and his teaching are of great significance to us. Even from the perspective of the holy angels, he, together with John the Baptist, will continue to play a major role in the future. For with the conclusion of his earthly life – he gave up his life even before Jesus began his public ministry – something began which we only came to understand later, in the course of time: just as the Holy Spirit introduces us to many truths, such as the truth about Mary, so too did he introduce us to the greatness of Saint Joseph.

When we assess a saint according to his holiness, this is always measured by the degree of his virtues. The virtuous life of Saint Joseph is also attested to by private revelations, including a reference to ten years relating to him. The virtuous life of Saint Joseph, in all his virtues, we may say, is heroic. If someone possesses a heroic degree of even a single virtue, that is generally sufficient for holiness. In the case of Saint Joseph, however, as with Mary, all virtues are present to a heroic degree. This means that if virtues are the crown of a person, we should actually depict Saint Joseph wearing a royal crown, for he is of the house of David. And if we were to regard his virtues as a trophy, he would have to stand beside Mary, whom we venerate as Queen; he himself is not a king, yet he is of royal descent, and his virtues, in other words, are of a royal magnitude – heroic degrees, one after the other.

That is why these virtues are so magnificent, whilst his life was so unassuming, so reserved, so humble, that in the Holy Scriptures, covering thirty years of his life, we find not a single word from him – much is said about him, but not a single word from him. Only now, gradually, and with the help of the holy angels, are we learning what is said about Saint Joseph, and it is simply fascinating, marvellous: how he had already been prepared, how his inner being was attuned – for God had chosen him for this purpose from time immemorial. Saint Joseph himself knew no more of this than the heavenly Mother Mary. Thus he distinguished himself because he possessed a pure heart – we venerate him, as the Italian puts it, as the ‘cuore castissimo’, the purest heart, the immaculate, purest heart of Saint Joseph. He had a completely pure, sensitive heart. What does that mean? That he was just, obedient, faithful, patient in all things, and compassionate. Yet the foundation of all this was precisely that pure heart.

And what does this pure heart mean? A pure heart, such as that possessed by Saint Joseph, is truly a masterpiece of God – yet at the same time an exercise in virtue of a heroic degree, a virtue that had to be practised. It was not simply bestowed upon him at birth, but was endured and acquired by him, in prayer, in stillness, in silence. You know that I have been working extensively with family trees for many years. So I know how the

influence of family trees and of the deceased shapes a person's world of thoughts and feelings. Many people are completely unaware that their temptations and tribulations may be significantly linked to the history of their family tree. I have come to believe this more and more over the years; not everything has been researched yet, but there is a connection.

So we have Saint Joseph, who is a descendant of David, from the house of David. David himself had a pure heart, repented of his sins, and the kings followed one after another down to Joseph; Mary, too, was of the house of David. She, however, is a special case as far as the family tree is concerned, because she is the Immaculate Conception – she is not included in the family tree in the same way. Saint Joseph, however, is of the line of David, and this family tree was, in part, deeply tainted: there were some utterly unfaithful kings; it was a deeply tainted family tree. Time and again there were saints among them, but also quite a few who were truly an abomination in the sight of God, who were cast aside, who, as kings, committed the worst possible deeds – veritable candidates for hell. Saint Joseph carried this in his blood. And when he began – wherever he began – he withdrew into silence; the Holy Spirit urged him on, just as He had urged John the Baptist into the desert. He spent much time in solitude, praying, purifying his heart from within.

According to my own interpretation – and if it is incorrect, please correct me – in this way he purified himself of all the negative influences that came to him through his hereditary burden: in matters of sexuality, infidelity, unbelief and idolatry. Time and again, the kings of his lineage had abandoned the true faith, their God, and served foreign gods; apostasy towards foreign gods ran in the blood. Saint Joseph inherited this in his blood, as part of his heritage, and has now purified his heart of it. That is to say, through his life, through his sacrifice and his prayer, he has also purified the entire family tree. What Saint Joseph purified for the house of David through his prayer and his life is marvellous. This also means that whoever has a pure heart—the purest of hearts—can not only distinguish between what is sin and what is not sin—something we are often no longer able to do today—but also has, as they say, all his thoughts under control. A pure heart means this: he was able to address immediately every thought that entered his soul; he knew straight away, 'Hold on, stop – shall I allow this thought or not?' That was an extraordinary ability, a purity enabling him to discern the spirits.

I do not wish to think ill of us, but I do wonder how many thoughts truly accompany us when we pray the Rosary. How many thoughts wander off without us noticing or observing them? During a single 'Our Father', a hundred thousand thoughts can pass through our minds. We put this to the test: some of those taking part were asked to pray the Lord's Prayer very devoutly, really focusing on the words – and then to report which other thoughts had come to mind whilst doing so. It's astonishing what goes through one's mind during a single Lord's Prayer or whilst praying the Rosary. I myself observed myself a little more closely today because I wanted to talk about this – a hundred thousand thoughts, the whole world, all sorts of things came to mind. That is why it is important to discern between thoughts: those I am allowed to accept, which are willed by God, and those that

simply overwhelm me, without my being able to resist them. If the family tree has not been cleansed, it is precisely during such trials – for instance, in the realm of sexuality or blasphemy – that such thoughts come to the fore particularly strongly, especially in prayer, in the holiest of moments. They are not yet a sin, but if I allow them, they become a sin.

Thus, Saint Joseph, with his most pure heart, had a complete overview of his thoughts. He knew what was going on in his soul, which thoughts were arising – hence the silence, without which this is not possible. A person who talks constantly takes in all manner of thoughts; the sheer volume of what settles in the soul, what sinks into the unconscious—in images, in words—is immense today. This is not yet sin, yet it can burst forth from without or from within, from the subconscious. With children, for example, the tactic today is to burden their subconscious to such an extent that it controls them; modern techniques allow the enemies to do precisely that. The child cannot distinguish between things, has not been brought up to do so; it is dominated by everything it absorbs when it comes home from school. Such children may behave like little devils through no fault of their own, for they are being controlled. They do not have the heart of Saint Joseph, which was able to govern his thoughts rather than be overwhelmed by them. Until a child regains their composure after coming home from school, I liken it to a spiritualist séance – so much comes crashing down on a child when they return home. How is a child supposed to cope with that? If they do not pray about it, it is a disaster.

Saint Joseph, however, with his pure heart, could foresee all these thoughts, could halt them, could discern them – and this includes the discernment of spirits: that one should focus on what is good and reject the rest. Thus he became the terror of evil spirits. All this took place deep within, in his heart, in silence; outwardly, no one knew of it. His thoughts were so pure, so entirely focused on God, on Jesus, on his responsibility, that he became a heroic master in this. Just once, in my imagination – I haven't read this anywhere, but am exploring it myself –: Saint Joseph realises that Mary is pregnant. Rumours are circulating in Nazareth: she is pregnant. Whose child is it? They are, after all, such a devout couple – so where did the child come from? Saint Joseph grapples with this, naturally tormented. And what is going on deep within him, in his heart, is that he allows no evil thought, no thought that is not entirely pure, none that would permit sin. Normally, he would have had to think: 'Something is not right with Mary – either she is mistaken, or how am I to explain this?' So he grapples with it, seeking a solution; for if it becomes public, she faces stoning, as the law prescribed for such a case. So he prays, gathering his thoughts: 'How can I protect her? How can I do her justice? He assumes that she is entirely pure – but how can this be explained; what solution is there? He searches for a solution, certainly already guided by the Holy Spirit, but terribly tormented. He must have had sleepless nights. Even when he met Mary – at meals together, whilst working – she said nothing, and he could have asked: 'Mary, what is the matter with you?' Yet neither she nor he spoke of it. The fact that he did not allow a single impure thought to enter his mind is a masterpiece.

So he wrestles with this, and because he has a pure heart that can discern immediately, the angel finds it easy in a dream to penetrate this soul, this subconscious – precisely because Saint Joseph possessed this pure heart. Thus the angel is able to give him the instruction: ‘Joseph, son of David’ – this, too, speaks to him through his family tree, as the son of David –

, do not worry, take her home; what you see in Mary is from the Holy Spirit. He had not read this in any book, he did not know it from the prophets, he was not prepared for it; had he studied the Scriptures, he might have said that it had already been foretold there – yet it was not. It was truly a deliverance, the triumph over the trial. He passed the test with flying colours – the test of faith, perhaps the hardest test in history up to that point. Great was the test of Abraham, the test of the widow of Zarephath, the test of Daniel in the lions’ den, that of the young men in the fiery furnace – all these were severe tests of faith. But the hardest test in history up to that point was that of Saint Joseph.

After that came deliverance – for Saint Joseph, even if it is not recorded, this must have been like singing the Magnificat a hundred times over, praising and glorifying God for it. Yet that was only the beginning of the trial; what followed were, without exception, the most severe trials. Yet through it all he preserved the purest of hearts, and that is why he is also the terror of evil spirits, for the evil spirit cannot bear such purity of heart. Normally, when the devil assails a soul, he almost always finds a door through which to enter. Not with Saint Joseph. That was truly the most severe trial. And so, throughout all these trials, he remained true to his responsibility and his sense of duty, so sensitive that, with the flight into Egypt and all that followed, many further burdens and trials ensued. It was truly a martyrdom, a heavy cross that he had to bear. Therefore: even though, historically speaking, he did not stand beneath the cross of Jesus, he nevertheless prepared that cross with Jesus, bore it alongside him, and, in his sensitivity, anticipated it – and has thus already been exalted beforehand into glory, to the highest place beside Jesus.

I am convinced – and today, for the first time, I have become so deeply aware of this personally – that Saint Joseph, too, is in heaven, body and soul. Even if this is not a dogma: his soul, his heart, was so pure that he was not given over to death. Otherwise, his body would surely have been found somewhere, intact. Yet no one knows where his body is. There are no relics of Saint Joseph; nothing remains of his workshop. In Loreto, we have not a single piece of wood from his workshop, but a tiny particle, set somewhere as a piece of gold, for which one has received a blessing. Yet this is truly the life of Saint Joseph, and that is why he is such a great helper to us, particularly in the purification of the heart, in the grace that we may truly keep God holy even in our thoughts. Saint Joseph’s grace in his relationship with Jesus was more of an external nature; although he was entirely focused on him inwardly, the grace worked externally. Saint Joseph never received the Holy Eucharist, never received Holy Communion. He had Jesus before him, adored him and recognised him – yet the grace of Jesus’ indwelling, as we experience it today, would have required an even purer heart and set even higher standards. That is why, even today, when we invoke him, Saint Joseph still suffers at the way Jesus is treated in the Eucharist – at the sacrilegious acts, the blasphemies, the indifference. This is certainly just as painful for

St Joseph is certainly just as painful as it is for the Heavenly Mother, for St Joseph continues to bear responsibility for Jesus, even now within the Church, for the way in which Jesus is treated, especially in the Holy Eucharist. What that means for him!

That is why he is truly a great intercessor for us, a great helper. Anyone who gets to know Saint Joseph cannot help but be fascinated – he is a fascinating saint, overwhelming in his greatness, his holiness, his humility. God kept him hidden for so long; he hardly ever appears. Yet, in my view, we ought to invoke him much more often, including in the Prayer of Trust and in the various parts of the Holy Mass; thank God he has been included in the Canon. But the other aspect – that is truly St Joseph, just one part of him; we will have further opportunities to reflect on him as the year goes on.

Well, I've now been talking about this for far too long. But let us pray that this grace of Saint Joseph may blossom ever more within us, that we may grow, particularly in the struggle for purity of heart, for control of our thoughts and for the discernment of spirits – and not fall prey to the temptation we face today: a lack of discernment of spirits. I spoke to someone today – I can't even remember who – about how everyone thinks they're on the right track; the Bergoglians think so too, the others think so too, everyone considers what they think to be right. They cannot discern, they cannot discern. That is why: we lack discernment of spirits. And when such grave errors, such serious misconduct, violations of the law against Holy Scripture and against canon law, no longer set the soul ablaze – not even in the case of a priest or a bishop – then discernment of spirits is lacking; then he cannot have a pure heart, nor can he possess discernment of spirits. And if he lacks discernment of spirits, then he regards what comes from his innermost being, what lies within the current of his emotions, as true and right. And this goes as far as the sin against the Holy Spirit, which cannot be forgiven. It goes so far that they recognise the truth and yet reject it – like the Pharisees, who committed one of the sins against the Holy Spirit: They had recognised that Jesus was truly a prophet, that he was pure, yet they needed a justification for the fact that he could cast out evil spirits, and said that he cast out the devils through the prince of devils, through Beelzebul. In this way, they justified their refusal to repent. That was a sin against the Holy Spirit, for deep down they knew full well that it was not true; they had to concoct an excuse so that they would not have to repent. Many find themselves in precisely this situation today – and this is a sin against the Holy Spirit that will never be forgiven; they are candidates for hell if I do not confront the real truth, but instead regard it as correct.

And let us also speak of the Heavenly Mother: she, the Immaculate Conception, was spared many of these struggles, though not the trials. And Saint Joseph, too, recognised her mystery as no one else did; he, too, defended, protected and preserved the mystery of the Infant Jesus and the mystery of Mary as the Immaculate Conception in a unique way, so that the enemy had no access to this innermost being. This, too, is a masterpiece of his sense of responsibility. And in his responsibility,

in which he was found to be faithful and just, he is unique in history – truly unique. That is why we venerate Saint Joseph wherever we can.

Praised be Jesus Christ. For ever and ever, Amen.

I'm not sure if I've said that correctly; I could also say it in Italian, but perhaps that would be too long. The Festa di San Giuseppe has been celebrated for almost a century; even in the current situation, this has its significance. He is the Divine One, the Divine One, and that is this Saint Joseph. We know a great deal about him historically. There is also a book – an American wrote it, and it has been translated into German.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On the Nature of Sin

Sermon of 10 April 2025, 5.30 pm – Weekday Mass: Passion Sunday

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

This evening, one week before Holy Week, we are invited to give at least a moment's thought – particularly in light of this Gospel reading about the woman caught in adultery – to the very nature of sin: what sin actually is. First of all, we know that sin always has to do with human free will, as distinct from inherited weakness. We are not to blame for original sin; it is not subject to our free will. We are subject to it, yet we are freed from it through Baptism. Whilst the inclination to sin remains, we have always made a choice regarding the sins for which we are responsible. Behind every sin lies a decision: either I have let myself go and consciously consented, or I have been persuaded, drawn in, seduced, pressured or threatened – yet in the end, on every occasion, I have given my consent. And this consent to sin is not merely a separation from God that cuts us off from Him; rather, sin always makes us partakers of the enemy. We have reflected on this time and again over the past few weeks: that the enemies who beset us, so to speak, steal – that what is actually God's property in the soul is stolen by them. Thus, the greater the sin, the greater the share it gives to the enemy.

One example of this is Mary Magdalene – we can clearly see this connection in her case: she was possessed by seven demons, having thus given space to seven demons, particularly the demons of sexuality. She was one of the most notorious public sinners; this sphere of sin – sexuality, prostitution, seduction – was under the power of at least seven demons. I do not wish to dwell on this further, but various accounts state that she was actually able to win over any man she wanted and draw him into sin. She was an instrument through which the enemy reaped a great harvest – that is a

fact, and at the same time it was her responsibility, for she also led others into sin, just as one is said to lead others into sin. She was a public sinner, which means she lived in open sin. Even today, we do not wish to pass judgement on this, yet we know that when someone objectively commits a serious offence, there are a whole host of such signs, but it is the conscience that indicates most clearly that we then have our share in the enemy's work.

So how can we break free from it? I am currently working on a project in which I am examining how other religions – including nature-based religions, Buddhism and others – deal with situations where people are living in sin and want to break free from it: What measures they take to ensure that sin is forgotten, that it is dealt with, that peace returns from it, so that, as it were, one can put a lid on it and find peace. Yet it would be so simple, for we know: there is only one person who can truly forgive sins, and that is God himself. The Pharisees knew this very well – that there is only One, the Son, God, who became human as the second divine Person and is the only One who can forgive sins. Whilst signs of forgiveness can be conveyed, the actual forgiveness of sins – liberation from sin – is possible only through God. Let us just think of the angels, of their roles in creation, of the administration of all the wonders that unfold so orderly in nature – how precisely nature works, when we merely consider how the swallows return, how exactly they know everything, how the birds build their nests, every bird, every animal according to its own laws, wonderfully guided by the angels. But only God can forgive sins; only Jesus can. Why? Because, although we too are to forgive one another's sins when one has something to forgive the other for, this stems from the fact that we ourselves receive forgiveness from God. If, for example, we forgive one another serious sins – if someone has wronged us with a curse or a grave invocation, and we ask for forgiveness – then we take it back. Sin always has an effect, not only on a horizontal level, but also within the soul itself. The soul actually belongs to God; that is to say, it must be set free by God, and only then can grace flow once more.

The forgiveness of sins is actually the most marvellous event in all of creation, if we understand it properly. For after Jesus defeated sin on the cross, he not only forgave, but also defeated all power, all dominion, and all demons that take possession of a soul through sin; he triumphed over them all. Now, when someone comes and receives the forgiveness of sins, the devil must immediately retreat, must immediately release the soul once more; he can hold on to nothing any longer. It is as if he had to say: 'To get this sin back, you'll need a million euros' – if it were a business transaction. For him, of course, it is worth far more than that. That is to say, he must give everything back at once, must admit defeat, must acknowledge that he has been vanquished. And what else would the soul have to pay for it? If it remained in grave sin, it would remain forever in his power, in eternal damnation, in separation from God. But when a person follows God's call, Jesus suffered out of such great love for this, such great love that he took everything upon himself so that the sinner might have a way opened up – and this path to the forgiveness of sins has become a true path of God's triumph, a path of victory that could not be more beautifully sung of and praised

. That is truly the most beautiful thing: the sinners' journey home, on which the devil must surrender all his claims. When the sinner returns home to God, that is the greatest thing there is to celebrate. That is why Jesus also says that there is such a celebration in heaven when a sinner returns and the devil must surrender everything.

And yet people do not recognise this, nor do they experience it. The vast majority of humanity lives in grave sin – we can say that of ourselves. If I assess this objectively – and I say 'objectively' deliberately, for one cannot peer into the innermost depths of the soul – then in most of the souls around us, the devil holds the overwhelming share. The incomprehensible thing about this is that a person cannot be happy in sin. One can live out one's sexuality like Mary Magdalene in her sin – the sin of lust, which is so highly praised – yet even Mary Magdalene was not happy in her sin, although she was perhaps the most desired woman in the world at that time. That did not make her happy; sin, fundamentally, makes one unhappy. But why is it so difficult for people to understand that the forgiveness of sin, the path of mercy, means that God wishes to show mercy to people in their sin, to grant them what they should actually have had to pay for? Why does humanity not understand this, so that it prefers to remain in sin?

And when, as described in the Book of Revelation, an angel pours out his bowl, all who live in sin will fall under judgement; they will experience the punishment, the purification. This is simply an intervention of God's justice: the worst sufferings, the worst disasters, the worst diseases, the greatest destruction and deaths caused by sin are no accidents. This is the consequence: the sinner goes where he wants to go. Go where you want to go! If that is what you want, then the separation is coming now. And humanity does not understand this. If we were to realise how God is waiting, how Jesus is waiting, how we stand today in this sin, what mercy He has prepared, what bliss He has prepared – and if we were to see, alongside this, the current situation, where no one is setting out, no one is coming – then we would have to say: This is simply a cry to heaven, it is enough to make one scream, it is enough to make one scream, it is no longer bearable. If only we had the kind of access that the penitential preachers of the Middle Ages had – like John the Baptist, who, when he appeared, still struck people right at the heart. But we no longer have that access today; we no longer reach people in such a way that they set out on the journey and truly recognise the truth.

That is why the Day of Judgement must come, so that, before the worst happens, people still have a few moments in which to call upon mercy. Perhaps they will still call out then, and be saved. That is the last chance. Yet that is what is on the agenda – that is the course of world history that awaits us. And that is no child's play. It is truly a matter of life and death, a matter of life and death. Were all this not placed in the hands of the Heavenly Mother, it would be even more terrible. As it is, however, we may hope that even these judgements – everything that lies in the hands of the Heavenly Mother – and also the angels who will carry out these acts, under her guidance, will still show the highest degree of mercy towards mankind.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Sword in Mary's Heart

Sermon of 11 April 2025, 5.00 pm – Commemoration of the Seven Sorrows of Mary

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, as we contemplate today the Sorrows of Mary—the Seven Sorrows of Mary—or, as we have already considered in the Passion service today, the twelve swords that pierce the Heart of Mary, we begin with the prophecy of the aged Simeon: ‘A sword will pierce your own soul too.’ A sword will pierce your soul too. This sword holds great significance throughout the history of salvation, for Jesus himself says that whoever takes up the sword will perish by the sword, as is evident, for example, on the night of the Agony in the Garden. But what is this actually about? Perhaps we must recognise from the outset that pain arose in human beings as a result of the Fall, whilst at the same time the capacity to feel pain – the ability to feel it in the very depths of the soul – was disrupted and restricted. The pain that Mary received and embraced from God is something we can perceive and absorb in our own souls and bodies only to a very limited extent. Speaking of pain is therefore difficult, for if one cannot empathise with it, how can one speak of the Cross, of pain, of suffering? Only those who have truly experienced it, who have endured it, can speak meaningfully on this subject. If we recall the moments when we may have experienced the greatest pain, both physically and emotionally, the question arises as to its cause and nature. If such pain truly forms part of God’s plan – if it is, for instance, pain over sin or a pain of sharing in Jesus’ suffering, so that compassion for his suffering becomes a real pain – then this is more than mere compassion. Of course, pain is also a feeling, but when it becomes such pain, it is truly described as a grace – a grace for which we cannot thank God enough. It can, for example, accompany a person’s entire prayer, so that just as we can experience joy or bliss in prayer, we also experience it in pain. This is, for instance, the ‘prayer of tears’, a form of prayer that was particularly widespread amongst Eastern monks: they prayed through the night in tears, so that their prayer was always associated with pain. Let us also think of the saints, such as Saint Ignatius or Saint Francis, who went blind from weeping so much because, whilst praying and meditating on the Sorrowful Mysteries of Christ, he suffered such pain – he was able to immerse himself so deeply that pain immediately set in.

This is perhaps our first theme when we contemplate the sorrows of Mary, even now daily in the Glorious and Sorrowful Mysteries: that everything within us which serves to deepen our experience of sorrow and our devotion, everything which evokes a wholesome and holy sorrow in our innermost being, is precious. We may ask for this grace – not merely to endure the pains that befall us, be they physical pains or mental anguish, for these are not in themselves necessarily holy pains. If I experience a disappointment, am betrayed, suffer an accident or anything else that causes mental pain, then this

pain is not in itself holy. We must first learn to deal with it properly so that it becomes a holy pain, through Jesus granting it a share in his suffering and in his death. Even the pain of an illness, such as when I break my foot or cut myself, is not in itself a holy pain. It can only become holy if I offer it up to God in worship, so that it becomes precious, blessed and fruitful, and none of it is lost. When pain is transformed in this way and offered up entirely, it always holds a high place in God's plan and then becomes a source of blessing and grace for us. What really matters to me, however, is that in our group, in our Piccolo Resto, when we contemplate, celebrate and venerate the Sorrowful Mysteries, the mysteries of Mary's sorrows, our souls may be so opened, so empowered and set free from within that we can truly empathise with the pain. This sharing in Mary's sorrows, this compassion, is meant to give strength to our souls and to our prayer, for this compassion is worth more than a thousand superficial prayers. This sharing is precisely the mystery of contemplation: that I linger with this pain, even if it does not affect me personally, and that I share in her suffering and feel with her. It is precisely the hours of Jesus, the hours on the cross, that accompany us every week, not just today, on Good Friday. On this day, the Gospel sums up all of Mary's sorrows in those three hours spent standing at the foot of the cross, during which all the other sorrows we otherwise contemplate—though certainly valuable—reach their true culmination.

It was not a pain accompanied by loud cries. No one outside was aware of it. We are familiar with depictions of the Mother of Sorrows' facial expression: beneath the cross, there is no overt expression, but simply the expression of the pain itself – a pain that remained entirely hidden from the outside world, without a cry of despair. I once conducted a funeral for a man who had died suddenly. His wife, who was rather sceptical and had already suffered many blows of fate, wept at the grave, in front of a large crowd, so pitifully and heart-rendingly that it cut to the very core and shook everyone to the very core. But that was a pain of despair, a pain of abandonment that pierced the soul – a pain which, as long as it is not offered to God, springs from distress, from genuine despair. Yet when such pain is transformed, when it is offered to God, it becomes precious, and at the same time the outward appearance of despair is removed from it. Thus it becomes a quiet, tearful, grace-filled pain, in which every tear is worth its weight in gold. It is precisely the tears that Mary wept at the foot of the Cross that are described in the hymns of the holy angels as containing gold, so that neither heaven nor earth can equal their value. Such is the value of Mary's tears: of compassion, of sharing in suffering, of truly participating in the suffering of Christ. Thus she is the Mother of Sorrows, the Queen of Sorrows. Every sorrow of Mary is a sorrow full of grace, a sorrow that nothing can equal – blessed are we if God allows us to share in it, for no one can grant this to themselves of their own accord. Among the saints, Gabriele Possenti, for example, was a great devotee of the Sorrows of Mary, and as soon as he began to venerate them, it stirred a deep emotion within him. The Order of the Seven Servites, which was founded specifically for this purpose, also had the special grace to venerate the Sorrows of Mary and to share in her suffering. Herein also lies our

deepening, our path: the holy Guardian Angel who accompanies us longs for us, at his side, to empathise with and experience the suffering of Jesus, the pain of Jesus and the pain of Mary in the depths of our being – yet this is only possible if we open ourselves to this pain. Thus, the sorrows of Mary are also tangibly present in the sacraments: if we think, for example, of the desecrations of the Holy Eucharist, it is this sorrow of Mary that the holy angel, too, wishes to experience most deeply, so that we may take it in inwardly.

Let us imagine Mary's pain, that boundless, whole realm of suffering. I do not wish to cite statistics, but according to the laws of probability – may God forbid it – there are souls every day at the Last Judgement who are lost for ever. Let us imagine the pain of a mother who loses her own child – if she is a believing, biological mother – and how much greater, then, must Mary's pain be when she has to witness daily how her children, who close themselves off from this plan of salvation, are lost forever, and she must accept this. From this pain springs the innumerable multitude of sorrows that pierce Mary's heart. Someone in our circle recently asked how one is to understand this: surely Mary is infinitely blessed in heaven; she is no longer on earth – so how can she still suffer so much pain? That is indeed a good question. Her bliss in Heaven is certainly not diminished by this, yet in her mission as Mother she actively shares in all the sorrows that currently exist within the Mystical Body – just as she shares in the individual sorrows that each of us bears, such as the loss of a child. Let us consider the judgement that Padre Pio witnessed, according to which, of the 33,000 or 35,000 souls he observed at the Last Judgement, a great many ended up in hell. They, too, are her children, even if not all of them were baptised, and we can scarcely imagine such pain. These are profound mysteries of the faith, which we can at best try to empathise with. That is why the Blessed Mother, as a mother, implores us to pray that no one may be lost – so many are lost because no one prays for them. She must endure this pain, and all that she has already suffered at the foot of the Cross is not enough unless her children – we – also contribute our share of prayer, compassion and sympathy.

In this way, we enter a world of pain, into Mary's pain, which opens up entirely new dimensions for us – a world of our own, in which we may truly gain ever firmer a foothold. We must not shy away from this, for this compassion is truly a grace. Blessed are those who mourn – that is to say, blessed too are those who feel this pain, for they will be comforted, and the pain itself will be transformed. Praised be Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Requiem for an Apostle of Health

Sermon of 2 May 2025 – Requiem for Maria Singlmayr

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear lady, families, relatives, brothers and sisters, it is truly a unique occasion that has brought us together today, at the beginning of May, to lay our Maria to rest. Yet this occasion has its own special qualities; it holds its own mysteries. Perhaps we might begin by noting that Maria lived such a healthy life that she was truly an apostle of health: She knew Saint Hildegard in all her facets, lived according to her teachings and spread her message, so that many found help through her. She helped many people, cooked and baked for them, gave them recipes, and sought out information everywhere on how to live healthily – and, following Saint Hildegard’s principle, how to die healthily too. But then something struck her deeply: completely unexpectedly, unprepared and without warning, she was struck down by a cancer that simply could no longer be stopped. We certainly did everything possible, with the doctors using all kinds of natural healing methods, and this battle lasted for over half a year, almost a whole year. We had enlisted many good intercessors who had already witnessed many a miracle, including internationally – as we have close ties with the Italians – via daily livestreams; we called upon the best intercessors we knew, and they really threw themselves into it, even praying entire nights for Maria. The prayers offered for her by these dedicated intercessors were extraordinary and exceptional, and every day we waited for the miracle to happen and for her to recover. Maria herself still had so much ahead of her that she wanted to do; she was unstoppable in her ideas and her visions of all that she still had to achieve, and she could not believe that the Lord would call her from this world so soon. The sixty years she had barely reached were not at all apparent in her vigour – I believe she had plans for a hundred years ahead of her.

So we hoped every day: when will she finally recover? Yet despite all the prayers, despite all the attempts, despite everyone who had done their utmost, her condition kept getting worse. I asked myself: How is this possible? Could it be that the Lord has other plans? We held out hope right up until the very last day – some of us perhaps thought of the Gospel story of Lazarus, that she, like him, would return from the grave on the fourth day. Yet all this went unanswered. It was only after she had passed away that certain things became clear to me. I’ve known her for – I don’t know – over twenty, twenty-five years – how long have we actually known each other? Almost thirty years, perhaps forty – in fact, almost forty years. I still remember how she and Josef, newly married, came to see us and asked whether we could do more together in our faith – I can still clearly recall that conversation we had back then in Munich. I knew her from the very beginning, and through her many sincere confessions I came to know her soul truly, as I have known hardly anyone else’s.

And so the struggle within her continued, consumed by suffering and pain, where heavy medication – morphine – might perhaps have spared her some of the pain. But she did not want that, because she knew that

morphine robs one of one's wits; she wanted to bear the pain consciously, to remain in her right mind, to keep a clear head, so that she could experience everything fully. So she truly, I would say, endured a martyrdom of pain – Josef knows this, they all know this. It was almost unbearable. And just when one thought it was over, that the pain could not possibly get any worse, it would start all over again the very next day. And so it went on, week after week, month after month, getting worse and worse, more brutal, humanly speaking. Maria herself kept asking: 'What have I done wrong? Have we done something wrong?' What she always held dear was that she had offered herself to God – she had been among the first when we offered ourselves for the salvation of the world, for the sanctification and salvation of priests. She had not hesitated; she was always the first. 'Nothing is too much for me,' she said, 'nothing is too much for my faith.' And when I then said to her, to comfort her – I think I must have repeated it twenty times – 'Maria, in your suffering you are an instrument of Jesus himself; Jesus lives within you; you have done everything to live in God's grace, to grow in it, to remain constantly in it', she took that very seriously. What always sustained and strengthened her was the thought that she was Jesus' representative, that he lived within her, that she was his instrument, and that in this way everything she had promised for the salvation of her family – which was a matter of great concern to her: her children, all her relatives, the priests, the young people – would come to pass. She had offered herself for all of this, truly generously, without a second thought, without setting any limits on her offering.

Thus, even after her death, it became clear that the real miracle was not that she had been healed, but that God had accepted her sacrifice. For over forty years, every single day, I have been working and praying for the deceased, for the poor souls, devoting myself wholeheartedly to them. We receive family trees from all over the world, which I compile, noting where we have conferred our priestly blessings, and on the basis of this daily work I also feel confident in passing judgement on the state of those who have passed away. I know of only two or three people whom I have accompanied, in whose cases I had the impression immediately after their death that God had accepted their lives as a sacrifice and had received them unhindered into glory. As my own experience and that of others close to me who possess such inner sensitivity confirm, it is extraordinary for a person to be received into heaven immediately after death, without hindrance. The real miracle, then, was that Maria, as I believe, did not even have to pass through Purgatory. Added to this is the fact that she died during the Week of Mercy – she had gone to confession just the day before, and according to the promises of confession during this week, those who confess sincerely are spared Purgatory; the penalties for sin that we would otherwise have to atone for there are also remitted. Maria is a living example of this, a testimony to God's mercy. She is also an example of how she consistently followed the path she had chosen – a path which was not understood even by her relatives or by many others – in accordance with her conscience. Evidently, it is possible for a person to enter into perfection so quickly after death, amidst immense joy and jubilation. I must say: she is truly to be envied. Everything she went through has not been lost, but has been richly rewarded with a glory – no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and it has not entered the human heart what God

has prepared for those who love him. We see this in Mary; in her, it has become evident.

This didn't happen overnight; she had come a long way. As far as I can tell, she possessed a willingness in her faith that is rarely found: a willingness to accept, in faith, everything that came her way and could be put into practice. She always took it on board straight away, and I reckon she must have heard about a thousand of my sermons – emotionally speaking, at least, it felt like about a thousand – and I cannot recall a single occasion when she ever fell asleep during one. Josef next door would often go from one nap to the next, but Maria was always attentive: As soon as she had gained an insight, she would write it down, look at it again and again, and put it into practice – and she did so with a radicalism that we only recognised as such after her death. She did this with such meticulousness and perfection – she was a perfectionist, wanted to do everything perfectly; you knew her – and always with joy. You all know how warmly she welcomed everyone who came to her home, even the most difficult people. Whether they were priests or others, she had a warmth for everyone, knew how to show what unites us, her motherly side, and her cheerfulness, so that everyone who came felt accepted. That is also how she endured her trials and struggles, including her decision on the whole question of faith, when all those discussions came into play. I can only bear witness before God that Maria remained true to the insight, to the light she had received, without looking to the left or right, that she gave her 'yes' to it, even at the risk of losing everything in the process. And I believe she lost a great deal, yet gained everything – more than any human being can ever gain in a lifetime. Even when her suffering became severe, she did not renounce any of it. I myself considered whether, in view of the severity of her suffering, we should allow her to renounce some of the vows and consecrations she had made. But no, she did not want that under any circumstances. And so she carried it through to the very end. I believe that this miracle we are now witnessing is a unique miracle of saying 'yes', a miracle of faithfulness, of faith, of devotion. In her love for Mary, in her devotion to Mary, which she loved so dearly, nothing was too much for her: Whatever she could possibly do to honour the Mother of God, she did, not only in her songs and her singing, but in her whole manner of expression, in her very being – she was simply ready for anything, to the point of exhaustion. Perhaps nobody realises that she worked through entire nights, to the point of exhaustion, yet you would never have known it from looking at her. Whenever you met her, at any gathering of our community, she seemed like the most rested person imaginable. You know, she wasn't by nature a sturdy farmer's wife, as one might imagine a farmer's wife to be – she was rather delicate, yet possessed of immense mental, spiritual and physical strength.

Maria put it aptly herself: she did five things at once, always keeping everything under control, always. She would certainly have been a brilliant manager, because she organised everything and kept track of it all, and if anything wasn't perfect, she looked into it immediately. She was also extremely thrifty and meticulous in her dealings with the companies she worked with – if something wasn't right, they could expect a stern letter. Yet her devotion knew no bounds: as frugal and prudent as she was on the one hand, so boundless was her devotion on the other. One expression of this – by no means coincidental – is that she wanted to offer her earthly home, the house in which she

grew up, to God as a gift – and she did so, shortly before her death. This was a matter close to her heart; it was the greatest thing, essentially the whole attitude of her heart: to give everything she possibly could to God, to place it at his disposal. But whatever lies in God's hands, He responds to with the greatest desire – we cannot imagine what happens when we place something in God's hands, offering it to Him as a gift; God's generosity is unsurpassed. So she also gave this house, her entire estate, as a gift to God, as the desire of her heart. This was no mere whim, no rash folly, but her heart, the very essence of how she herself lived – and the gift was ultimately merely the outward confirmation of what she already was inwardly.

Much more could be said about her, but the final point I would like to add is this: as soon as Mary recognised a fault or a sin, she would confess it without hesitation and work on it just as meticulously as she did on everything else. She took this so seriously that it was truly unprecedented, and whenever she discovered something new about herself, she would immediately begin to work on it. Even when a realisation was humbling, she never resisted it, but always accepted it. And today we see that God has truly accepted it. I believe that God's reward is now no longer just for her alone, but for the whole family, for all of us, for everyone with whom she lived – for me, this is a tremendous affirmation of the path she took, a tremendous affirmation that she will be a source of blessing for her children and her children's children, for all time. We can truly entrust even the most difficult things to her; she now has power with God, a heavenly mother whose work we will surely only come to experience in the future, when we witness her intercession and the miracles she can bring about for us with God. Despite all the pain and all the grief at her passing, I can only thank God. It is a pain, certainly, but the tears of joy must outweigh it; if we feel the pain of parting, the tears of suffering, then the joy – the tears of joy – must be present to an incomparably greater degree than the pain we feel today. We can only thank God, congratulate her, and also all of you who have accompanied Maria, bound yourselves to her in love, and now remain faithful to her even beyond death – this will surely be a source of blessing. We rejoice in this, and we offer up this sacrifice so that everything that was still unfinished, everything she still lacked, may be fulfilled in this sacrifice, just as God planned it and just as she accepted and embraced it deep in her heart.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Silence of the Mother at the Foot of the Cross

Sermon of 8 May 2025, 5.30 pm – MARY, Mediatrix of All Graces, Madonna di Pompei!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today, on this Thursday evening, we have the text on Mary, the Mediatrix of Grace, and within it the Gospel passage about the Mother at the foot of the Cross. At precisely 6.10 pm, it was announced that white smoke had risen, meaning that a new Pope has been elected, even though he will not yet present himself as such for a while. But what does this have to do with silence, with the Mother at the foot of the Cross? We are all familiar with the invitation to silence that is extended to us every day, particularly after Holy Communion, during the prayer to the Guardian Angels. During the retreat, we were advised to meditate daily, if possible, on the passage we heard in today's Gospel: how Jesus, on the cross, looks upon his Mother and his beloved disciple; how he looks first at his Mother, then at John; and how, in these words, 'Woman, behold your son' and in that gaze of Jesus – first upon his Mother, then upon John – he places him in her heart as her son. In this we see that we are all, as children of God, in John, placed by Jesus himself into the heart of Mary. John was the beloved disciple, a pure soul, one of the great saints, one of the great apostles; even though, whilst standing at the foot of the cross – and this, too, is part of this mystery – just a few hours earlier, at the Last Supper with the apostles, he had taken Jesus into his heart and received his first Holy Communion. Shortly before that, one might say, he had been ordained a bishop, an apostle, and had received great promises; like no other, he had accompanied Jesus and had been placed in the Mother's heart – and yet he lost his faith. For a time, faith in the risen Jesus was extinguished within him. Yet he was the first, together with Peter, to run to the tomb on Easter morning; he let Peter, who was probably older and slower, go in first, because he recognised him as Peter. As for John, however, it is said that he was the first to arrive, saw the empty tomb and believed – so the spark of faith was rekindled within him; he was the first to rediscover his faith. Thus he became one of the great, most credible witnesses: he is not only the evangelist among the Apostles, but, when we think of the Book of Revelation, also its great visionary. We can say: he is an apostle, he is the Beloved Disciple, he is a visionary. Yesterday we also celebrated his martyrdom, even though he did not die – he is therefore not venerated as a martyr – yet he nevertheless suffered a martyrdom when he was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, in which normally anyone would burn to death immediately. Although he endured this, the oil turned to water, so that he was saved. This John thus stands as a representative of all those who, later on – just as we do in our consecration to Mary – are placed as children within her heart.

Especially now, at this hour of the papal election, we naturally wish to entrust everything to Mary's heart. It is interesting to note that, when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion, we must be in a state of grace. As we all know, anyone in a state of grave sin may not receive Jesus in Holy Communion, for if He were to enter our innermost being whilst sin reigns there, this would give the devil the

right to assert the hold he has over us through sin – he can then take possession of our innermost being. We speak of grave sin where the sin is so serious that it gives the devil the predominant share in the soul; even a single sin may be enough to confer such power upon him. If we then receive Jesus into the depths of our being, he is not received there in a pure, adorned house, in a state of grace, but is, as it were, received by the devil, who then naturally mistreats him in the soul – for Jesus, in his powerlessness, puts up with this too. This is how those sacrilegious Communion arise, those grave sins that pile up. And that is actually terrifying when we consider how things usually go: on Sunday one goes to church, the normal Sunday service; one goes to Holy Communion to receive grace, as one ought to – I speak here from twenty years' experience as a parish priest. Yet those who are not in a state of grace – and I believe the majority are not – those who may be in a state of mortal sin, sometimes even quite obviously so, such as a divorced person in a new relationship, or through other grave sins – even a single outburst of anger, hatred or a curse is enough. And how many curses are uttered – I need only think of the football pitch – without anyone realising just how serious this is. When we then go to Holy Communion, in reality it is the devil who receives Jesus in our innermost being. So if we go to church on Sunday in this state, we think we are going home blessed, but in truth we go home burdened with grave sins, even though we came to receive grace. Every unworthy Communion, however beautifully we may pray, generally leads – viewed quite soberly – to a person leaving church in a more sinful state than when they entered. People leave, perhaps still in the mood created by the beautiful hymns, perhaps the vicar has also preached well, yet no one pays attention to how sin gains new power in the hearts of those who are unprepared, who are not in a state of grace. If this is repeated Sunday after Sunday, year after year, and most people do not go to confession, they will eventually stand before God's judgement, and we then expect them to be beatified straight away. But the priest will not beatify them straight away – one should, after all, speak only well of the dead, as the proverb admonishes, but this state of deceit and fraud is, when one considers it, actually a terrible state.

In the current situation, this is significant: we must not receive Holy Communion whilst in a state of mortal sin. Consecration to Mary, on the other hand, does not require that one be in a state of grace. Even a grave sinner, a serious criminal, or even someone who is possessed can consecrate themselves – this is no obstacle, although it is, of course, a different state from that of grace. Mary's heart is ready to accept even the gravest of sinners. Let us consider, for instance, what tradition tells us about Mary Magdalene: even whilst she was still in a state of sin, before she was converted, Jesus entrusted her to his Mother's care. Mary had therefore already accepted the sinner; when she became the Mother of all mankind at the foot of the Cross, she thus accepted us too as sinners. I think of our own first consecration to Mary, which we carried out in Marienfried, back then whilst still in that state of modernism, with all that entailed. I am convinced that, together with the others, we consecrated ourselves to the Mother of God at that time without all of us being in a state of grace – and from that moment on, the Mother of God enabled us to recognise our sin. I remember a fellow seminarian who later

became a priest: we met him whilst he was a student and struck up a conversation; he took an interest, became a priest and is now a good priest. He told me that it was only after he had consecrated himself to the Mother of God – that was back in Salzburg – that he recognised his sins. Before that, he had not recognised them at all. Through his consecration to the Mother of God, he thus recognised his sins, walked the path of repentance, the path of confession, and became a priest. Such is our hope now too, as we all—especially the new Pope, who is to be consecrated—entrust him to the Mother of God at this hour, placing him in her heart: we pray that she may simply open his eyes to the truth. The light is in her heart; she will not allow any deception. She accepts everyone, yet may she open his eyes to the truth, to the game that is being played out here.

That is our hope now too, and we ask for this grace at this hour of preparation, on Thursday evening, the hour when the Apostles were ordained as priests and bishops; and that is why this hour of election is also present now. It is the hour when Judas went out into the darkness, yet it is also the hour of the Last Supper, the hour of love, that hour in which we are about to begin the Passion at nine o'clock and are invited to accompany Jesus into the darkness. We may now reflect on this in the light of today's Gospel and recognise just how relevant what we are currently experiencing truly is. Let us pray that, in this light of love and devotion, we may grow in God's grace through this Holy Communion, and that we may contribute ever more to ensuring that Mary, as Mediatrix of Graces, finds her mediation of grace through us not hindered or blocked, but ever strengthened; that each of us may be an instrument for Mary, with her, so that this grace, in its many and varied forms, is not blocked but flows on to where it wishes to remain.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The One Talent of Baptismal Grace

Sermon of 10 May 2025, 4.00 am – St Antoninus, Confessor! Saints Gordian and Epimachus

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear friends, today we are once again reflecting on the Parable of the Talents. Such parables always possess great depth, for there is so much contained in these figurative truths of the Gospel that we can scarcely fathom it all. Therefore, today let us focus on one talent which we have certainly all received, right from our baptism. What matters here is not the number of talents, nor the various possibilities that may set some people apart, but that one talent which we have all received – or, shall we say, three talents,

when we think of the graces poured into us at Baptism. These are faith, trust, hope and love – the ‘infused virtues’, as we call them. Every person carries this disposition within them; everyone is capable of believing, and every person does in fact believe in something. Even those who claim they believe in nothing are mistaken in this, for there is no one who truly believes in nothing. Many believe in things that are downright fantastical, yet find it difficult to break free from them. It is precisely the non-believers, who do not accept the truth of the Gospel, who often believe in absurdities that can be indescribably nonsensical. They believe in all sorts of things, even though they claim to believe only in what they see – we are all only too familiar with these stories.

But now to the gift of faith that has been poured into us: we face so many unresolved situations, both globally and in our personal lives. There is so much within us that needs to be resolved, redeemed, settled, and brought to completion – much has been begun but not yet brought to completion. As the baptised, we all carry this gift of faith within us, and we may activate it daily through acts of faith. After Holy Communion, we always pray: ‘My God, I believe in you, I trust in you, I hope in you, I love you.’ This, too, is an act of activation – indeed, a vicarious activation of faith, in that we also use this gift on behalf of others. We call this ‘expiatory faith’. But what opportunities, what resources are available to us day by day to grow in faith? How should and could this faith be more strongly activated within us? What hinders us, what weakens our faith, what slows it down, what restricts it, what causes us to be blocked or hindered in our faith? And conversely, what possibilities, what expectations might we harbour in our faith?

The saints are always our role models in this, because each of them shows how they lived their faith. Today, on Saturday, we venerate our heavenly Mother in a special way as the Queen of Faith as well. In Mary, this faith was always perfect in every aspect, through every trial and in every darkness. In everything, always, she trusted God in faith, entrusted everything to him, placed everything in his hands, and always awaited his intervention, his working, and the fulfilment of his plans in faith. In this lies the simple formula for us, once we have grasped inwardly what really matters – and it really does matter more and more every day. For God also makes himself dependent on us in this; he trusts us to cooperate, just as we pray in the Lord’s Prayer: ‘Thy will be done’. May your will be done in all things. What faith do I have that God’s will is done in all things, that this will is recognised, acknowledged and sought after, that it is grasped as such within people? That alone is what matters – how long does it take for a person to realise that their life will only be happy, and that everything in the world will only make sense, if it is aligned with God’s will? If someone seeks this will, takes it as their guide, desires it and offers their strength and talents to it so that God’s will may be done – if this is alive within a person – then we may truly expect miracles every day. How many miracles did Jesus perform during his earthly life because the grace of faith was at work in people? And where this faith was lacking, he was hindered: in his own homeland, his hometown, Jesus was unable to perform many miracles because people there had no faith.

So, in the light of all the examples before us, may this faith be reawakened within us: I believe and trust that your will will be at work again today – whether it concerns the whole question of papal history, world politics, personal concerns, illness, suffering, the trials of everyday life, or those things that seem impossible to us. In all this, our faith must persevere faithfully, seeking and desiring nothing else, and waiting patiently until what God has planned, what God intends, is fulfilled. Faith often demands precisely this perseverance, this faithfulness, this waiting from us – just as we experience anew every year when we see nature growing. We must admit that nature grows even without our faith, for it has its own laws of nature; whether the grass grows or not does not depend on our faith. But it very much does depend on our faith that God's plans in nature are recognised by humankind, that we play our part in them, and that we look upon God's plan with faith. For when what God has planned for creation is also taken up by humankind, then even the simplest aspects of nature take on a completely different meaning, and entirely different powers are awakened and brought to life within the human being, within their soul. The great concerns of faith are, day by day, truly God's plan: the salvation of the world, the salvation of souls, the restoration of creation, the miracles of transformation. This faith extends into our mornings, for instance when we pray for the departed early in the morning, when we believe in the miracles of help for the departed, in the miracles of God's intervention for the salvation of souls, for the redemption of souls, for conversion. Thus, we should put our faith in the Gospel we proclaim today into practice in all things – including when we say our prayers on the Rosary and recite the Hail Mary. We begin with ourselves early in the morning with the first Hail Mary: increase our faith so that it works miracles today, so that your will is truly carried out. There are countless events, problems and hardships in which God's will awaits not only to be recognised and acknowledged, but also to be truly put into action, so that He may call upon angels and human beings and so that faith may bear its fruits and work its miracles even today.

This requires of us perseverance, faithfulness, the ability to wait, but also the inner certainty that, provided I desire nothing else, God will not leave any person who seeks His will without an answer. May this be strengthened within us today – guided by Mary, by the holy angels, and by the saints whom we celebrate today.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Fatima and the Annunciation – the Kingdom without end

Sermon of 13 May 2025, 5.30 pm – Our Lady of Fatima! St Robert Bellarmine

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, how does the message of Fatima fit in with today's Gospel reading on the Annunciation? There is certainly much that links the two, yet let us not forget: Mary herself was promised that her Son would inherit the kingdom of his father David and that his kingdom would have no end, for it was to be the Kingdom of God itself. Later, during his life on earth, Jesus confirmed this message from the angel by saying that his kingdom was not of this world – yet all who are of the truth listen to his voice. This kingdom is not yet complete; rather, it is constantly being built up, constantly growing, neither yet perfected on earth nor fully unfolded in heaven. That is why the whole event of Fatima also forms part of this building up, of this growth of the Kingdom of God.

This message of Fatima is regarded, as they say, as a private revelation: those who do not wish to accept it are under no obligation to do so, just as they are not obliged to accept the Gospel. Nevertheless, these apparitions at Fatima have been recognised by the Church – I say this deliberately: in part. Had they been entirely false, the Church would hardly have made any effort to put them into practice. And so the process of putting it into practice got under way, because the content of the message, which begins on 13 May, lies in the children's willingness: in Our Lady's request that they accept all the sacrifices God would send them, for the conversion of sinners and for reparation for all the offences against the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The children were ready for this and were thus drawn into God's plan to continue building his Kingdom.

What particularly moves me today in this context – even though I have read it many times before – is the fact that on this very day, thirty-three years later – from 1917 to 1950, it is exactly thirty-three years – God placed an angel within this event, thus making this day the day of all guardian angels. Today, this angel stands among the highest choir, which is above the guardian angels, as their guardian, through whom all guardian angels receive their mission. He himself was one of the first, for he was – and this, too, is part of the private revelation – the guardian angel of Mother Gabriele Bitterlich's first spiritual guide, that cherub. And so today he stands as the representative of all the holy angels. When we consider the millions upon millions of them who serve humanity as guardian angels, how many have already completed their mission, and how many are currently active, then we see: As we have heard in the catechesis, we are divided into seven groups, and all of them stand under the guidance of their Queen in their special mission, in their service, to implement God's plans for humanity even more powerfully and effectively.

Thus, in His plan for the fulfilment of the Message of Fatima, God has ordained that on their own feast day, the holy guardian angels possess a power seven times greater

. At any rate, this is how I interpret it: with the help of the holy guardian angels, this Message of Fatima is to be recognised even more clearly by people, put into practice even more effectively, and realised even more deeply, because it contains so much greatness. The mission behind this is truly the same as that which Jesus, as the Saviour, had from the very beginning: to play a greater part in the conversion of sinners, in the conversion of humanity, in atonement and in making amends for the offences against the Sacred Heart of Jesus and against the Blessed Sacrament. The holy guardian angels are specially equipped for this plan of atonement – indeed, they are trained for it – for there is a genuine spirit of battle involved. The salvation of souls and the atonement through which reparation is made is a matter of struggle; it is not a subject for the nursery, nor is it a game. Every single decision matters, for so many souls are at stake every day. And because so many souls are being lost – precisely because too little is prayed for them – the intervention of the holy angels must be intensified many, many times over, so that this plan of salvation for humanity, including within the Church, may be brought into even sharper focus and put into action to a far greater extent through this message.

The more we surrender ourselves to the Holy Angel, the more we ally ourselves with him and the more we open ourselves to his protection, the more we are urged to gain a greater understanding of God, a greater understanding of God's plan for the whole of humanity. And it urges people, above all, to break free from lukewarmness, from this force field of lukewarmness. For this lukewarmness of run-of-the-mill Christianity offers no ground on which the struggle for the salvation of souls, atonement and reparation can take root, no ground on which that fire which this necessity demands can take effect. Thus we see: in everyday Christianity, the subject of the salvation of souls is no longer an issue at all. It is swept under the carpet, remaining entirely on the surface – only for a few steadfast souls does it become a burning issue. That is why this message, wherever it comes to life, is a fiery call: a fiery call to the salvation of souls, to reparation and to seeking the closeness of the holy angels. God wants the holy angels to prepare people for this, and we see this precisely in all those who are preparing to consecrate themselves to their guardian angel: this consecration to the holy angel clearly means, first and foremost, breaking free from lukewarmness. Anyone who takes it seriously can no longer go along with a life of lukewarmness, indifference and superficiality; otherwise, they will inevitably come into conflict with it.

That is why I believe that, on this holy day in particular, we should pray during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that the power of the holy angels may be strengthened sevenfold, many times over, so that God's plans may truly be realised even under the circumstances in which we now find ourselves, and that no soul may be lost. This is the first aim of the guardian angels every day: that no soul may be lost. The other aim is the path of sanctification, the building up of the Kingdom of God, so that this Kingdom may take shape, so that it may come to life amongst us, so that God may bring His Kingdom into effect amongst us according to His laws – the laws of justice, truth, peace and love, a Kingdom of peace, a Kingdom without end. This is what we pray for. This theme is so highly topical today, particularly in connection with the Message of Fatima, that we can scarcely fully grasp its relevance; we scarcely realise what hour the clock has truly struck, even as we celebrate Fatima today. Just how much

does the Heavenly Mother mean to us, carved here as the statue of Our Lady of Fatima – created for the jubilee year by a true master artist, a jubilee Madonna, also in her beauty and her expression. We must remember that this is truly a matter of the utmost urgency even today.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

St Joseph and the Saints of the Day

Sermon of 14 May 2025, 5.30 pm – Votive Mass for St Joseph

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, today, during the Easter season, we have the opportunity to celebrate Saint Joseph – not as a feast day, for that was on 1 May, but as a votive Mass, as a day of remembrance. Today we also encounter Saint Boniface – not the well-known Boniface, the Apostle to the Germans, but a Boniface from the early centuries who initially led a secular life, then witnessed the martyrdom of various Christians, subsequently converted, and finally became a martyr himself. Thus the saints accompany us every day; we always mention only a few of them, yet every day has its own saints who spiritually shape it, imparting their aura, their grace. And let us not forget: when we celebrate the saints on their feast days, on that day – as is also said of the holy angels – they possess a sevenfold, indeed many times greater power; that is to say, the grace of the saints, through which they became holy, flows much more powerfully into the Church and into the world on that day, and we too may receive it to a greater extent.

Today, then, we celebrate Saint Joseph during this Easter season, and it is worth considering the context. Saint Joseph, we must not forget, had already died before the Passion of Jesus. By the time Jesus began his public ministry, he was probably already dead, even though Holy Scripture does not specify exactly when he died. We do, however, have the testimonies of the saints – from Mary of Agreda and other mystical, credible witnesses – that he passed away earlier; that is to say, he did not experience either the Passion or the Resurrection of Jesus on earth.

What connects us to this is a true mystery, to which certain passages in the life of Jesus also allude, without explicitly naming it. For before Jesus' death, before his passing, no one had entered heaven; heaven was closed. The saints of the Old Covenant, such as Abraham, Moses or Isaac, went, as we call it, to 'pre-heaven' – that was already a stage of bliss, even if one or the other had been taken up, like Enoch, or like Elijah, who was lifted up to heaven in a chariot of fire; even that was not, strictly speaking, the full

heaven. So Jesus himself says in the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus: Lazarus died, and it does not say that he went to heaven, but that he went to the bosom of Abraham. The bosom of Abraham, we say, is a level of heaven, above an abyss that could not be crossed – but it is not yet an expression of the full heaven. Heaven therefore already existed, yet it was only opened with the coming of Jesus; the gate was closed, as we see throughout all earlier times, until the Saviour came. It was only when Jesus, after Easter, after his Resurrection, before his Ascension, descended into the realm of death, that he took with him all those who were in the ‘pre-heaven’ or still in the depths, and opened heaven.

And where was Saint Joseph at that time? I have not read this in an authoritative source, but viewed purely logically – not based on an intuition, but simply by logical reasoning – Saint Joseph was certainly one of the first to enter heaven. And Jesus was surely delighted to be able to lead Saint Joseph, to whom he was so closely bound on earth, into glory. This is linked to yet another mystery, which we may perhaps understand better today. You know that the mother of the sons of Zebedee – her two sons were great saints, great apostles – asked Jesus to grant her sons the highest possible positions: she asked that one might sit at his right hand and the other at his left in his kingdom. This concerned the cup they were to drink. ‘Can you drink this cup?’ Jesus asked. ‘Yes, we can drink it,’ they replied. And Jesus said that they would indeed drink it, but that the place at his right hand and at his left was not for him to grant, but for the Father in heaven. But who, then, will occupy these places on his right and on his left? On his right, as we know, Mary surely holds the highest place; the Apostles have their own positions in heaven. Yet Mary is surely closest to God, and Saint Joseph cannot be far behind. Who knows whether Mary might not actually be on the right and Saint Joseph on the left, since he is, after all, one of the greatest saints. As far as these places are concerned, these are charismatic, mystical statements, not dogma – but in any case, Saint Joseph occupies a sublime position in heaven.

What St Joseph has to say to us today, looking down from heaven: he has fulfilled his mission on earth, has returned home, and has led such a meritorious life that God has granted him this place. Saint Joseph is a patron of the Church; alongside the Blessed Virgin Mary, he is one of the most important and all-encompassing patrons of the entire Church, and in his patronage, in his work from Heaven, his entire earthly life – his soul, which he lived so virtuously – plays a part in the efficacy of his power. What particularly distinguished him in this regard? Little has been handed down about Saint Joseph – not a single word spoken by him has survived. Yet it is said of him that he possessed an extraordinarily profound understanding of the mystery of humanity, that he was prepared for this in silence and had insights which he certainly took with him to the grave – insights of incomparable depth, in which he surely not only foresaw the suffering of Jesus, but also recognised the glory that awaits him and all those who walk the way of the Cross and follow Jesus.

Thus, in his greatness, in his insight, and in his light, he is a source of support for us. We are familiar with depictions in which Saint Joseph is portrayed in the Stations of the Cross, even though he did not walk the Way of the Cross himself; in these, we ask for his grace, that

that we may truly appreciate every cross on earth, even the smallest, and know how to deal with it properly. Saint Joseph is one of the greatest figures who seeks to teach us to recognise even the smallest crosses as a treasure of grace – to deal with all crosses properly, the small as well as the heavy, the incomprehensible, the most repulsive, the most uncomfortable, the most unexpected, the most dramatic, those that can push us to the very edge of our existence, to the very brink of despair; those seemingly unsolvable questions for which we may find no answer in God, for which we pray and yet receive no answer. If we view all this in the light of the Cross, just as Saint Joseph teaches us, we gain a different perspective on it. He teaches us to regard every cross as a gift from God, to offer it up to him, to thank him for it, to show him our love, and to demonstrate our gratitude and honour to our God with zeal through the cross. In this way, every little cross, through our understanding of it and how we deal with it, becomes something particularly precious. We learn to cherish those crosses that weigh so heavily upon us, that push us to the margins, that rob us of our inner joy.

How many tears did Saint Joseph himself shed, in his concern for the Holy Family and for everything else? Yet it is precisely this realisation of the greatness and glory that await us—the glory that the crosses bring us—that is a light unique to Saint Joseph: an extraordinary Easter grace that he wishes to impart to us. We can examine how we have dealt with our crosses so far – those that weigh us down so heavily, that make us so sad, that sometimes even push us to the margins of our faith and lead us into the temptation of doubt – so that we may learn from him how to deal with them properly. If we allow ourselves to be guided by him and his holy angels in this, the world looks different. In the trials we are now facing, including in light of the current situation, we will encounter ever heavier crosses – heavier in the sense that some things become increasingly incomprehensible, that some things push us ever further to the brink. But if, like Saint Joseph, we are practised in dealing with this, then it is an unspeakable treasure for us. No theory helps here; we must demonstrate this in practice, and we must learn it anew time and again in practice.

This is the great gift from Saint Joseph today, which we may ask of him and also expect. And we may reflect in hindsight on how we have struggled with our crosses, how we have failed to accept them properly, to make them fruitful, or to value them – for in this there always lies a certain rebellion against God's providence, against his plan. Yes, let us rejoice and give thanks for this grace. Let us take it as further armour, as our armour of God, and pack it into our rucksacks as we continue on into the future.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces

Sermon of 17 May 2025, 5.30 pm – MARY, Mediatrix of All Graces! St Paschalis Baylon

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear friends, we honour Mary as the Mediatrix of All Graces. We are aware that this is actually still to be proclaimed as one of the final dogmas: that Mary is truly the Mediatrix of All Graces. Whether or not it is declared a dogma does not alter the fact itself; but if it is declared a dogma, then it is an absolute truth that Mary is the Mediatrix of All Graces. Mediatrix of all graces: even the angel greets her with the words 'Hail, full of grace', so that she is full of grace right from the start of her mission. And this abundance of grace in Mary continued to grow steadily until the end of her life, so that it became ever greater right up to the very end; the capacity, the very capacity to receive grace, continued to expand ever further in her heart.

Let us imagine that God has bestowed all his graces, everything that Jesus has earned, everything we can call grace – for what else is grace? What can we say that is not grace? Grace is always a gift, as they say in Italy: 'Grazie'. And the interesting thing about this is: Mary wants to give away grace, to give away an infinite amount, indeed, essentially everything she has. Yet everything she has, she first received from God, and everything she receives, she treasures. There is no grace that has not passed through her heart somewhere, matured there and borne fruit – for grace is always also a fruit. And everything she has thus treasured in her heart becomes the grace she wishes to bestow: not just a little, but wholly and completely.

She wishes to keep nothing for herself – not even that grace for which we might perhaps envy her: that, having been conceived without sin, she had the privilege of never being subjected to the devil's accusations. How often have I heard in conversations that people who are severely harassed by the devil have to endure the worst possible torments; someone once told me how terrible that was – yet Mary did not have to go through that, because the devil never found any opening to attack her. In this way, she was not tormented. But she also wishes to give away this grace of the Immaculate Conception, this privilege, in its entirety. She does not wish to hold anything back, but rather to let everything within her flow freely. And the great thing about this is: the more she gives away, the less her graces do not diminish – on the contrary, they never diminish. Mary can give away whatever she wishes; it will never diminish. Someone once gave me a little example of this: on the contrary, grace itself enriches us more and more; the more one gives, the more grace enriches a person, because the goal is always to be united with God completely and for ever.

This applies right through to social life. I once spoke to a retired, very devout businessman who had been very successful – it was at some sort of celebration, an anniversary, and he was asked what the secret of his success had been, that everything with his company had gone so wonderfully

and had grown so wonderfully. He replied that the secret had been that he had given away more and more; the more he had given away, the richer it had come back to him. He had made a great effort to do good deeds and to be warm-hearted, and the more he had given away, the more it had come back to him. That may sound like completely flawed logic for a businessman, yet that was precisely his secret: he had always first given everything he had earned to God – he had also given all his successes to God and the Mother of God, entrusting them to Saint Joseph so that they might dispose of them as they saw fit. So he did not, for example, give all his wealth to Caritas, but offered it to God as a gift, and his secret was that he always wanted to give away everything he had, and yet he became ever richer. This is truly a secret that always applies to grace: the more we receive from God within ourselves, the richer we become.

This is the attitude that Mary wishes to instil in us: the grace of humility, the grace of poverty, the desire to be nothing, so that we may also wish to give away completely everything we receive from God – that we may always first give it back to God, so that he may freely dispose of it: every minute, every moment, all our talents, all our gifts, all material and spiritual things, everything. If we have this inner attitude, it always means, first and foremost, a dying away that an egoist will not be able to achieve; it will bring about within us a purification from our own ‘I’, an inner transformation, for our own ‘I’ always wants to keep things for itself, whilst the person in whom grace is at work always wants only to give – and in such a way that, in giving, they can never be sated, can never give enough. This is the mystery of Mary: that she receives everything from God and always wishes to pass on the greatest thing she receives. And the greatest thing she can give us is, of course, her own Son. Let us not forget: when we receive Jesus, including in the Holy Eucharist, this is a gift from the Father, the gift of himself, who gives himself entirely to us, and it is always, at the same time, the gift of his Mother – not just anything else, but precisely grace, the gift of grace. Thus it is the greatest gift, and on top of that she gives herself as well; she gives not only her Son, but herself, with all that she has and is capable of.

There is no title of Mary’s that we honour which does not ultimately boil down to this: Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth. This, too, is a gift of God’s grace, which forms part of her role as Mediatrix of Grace. She wishes to let all her children share in her kingship, in all the riches she possesses, and she does so with great love. But what is the real problem here? That most people, including her own children, do not want this at all. That they close themselves off from grace, do not understand it, are not receptive to it, go their own way and want to seek their own happiness on their own terms. And that they find it so difficult to grasp that God has everything in store for them, that He provides everything for the whole course of a person’s life, from the cradle to the grave. This is precisely what Mary always desires: to pour out her full abundance of grace upon this path – though, of course, these graces are designed so that we walk the path within the framework in which they can take effect. And this framework is that, in all things, we desire nothing other than God’s will; that we affirm his plan and his will in all things. This affirmation of God’s will – however incomprehensible and difficult it may be, just as it often was for Mary

incomprehensible and difficult, to the point where, from a human perspective, one would scarcely consider it possible – is what makes it possible for grace to flow and for God to bestow everything. But only on this path. As soon as a person makes their own decision, imposes their own will, they become devoid of grace. If, for example, we choose sin, this not only renders us devoid of grace, a nothing, a zero, but also gives the devil a share in us; he seeks to take root precisely where a person could actually be living in God's grace.

We are familiar with the story of Saint Paul, who complained that he felt a thorn in his flesh that hindered him, and who asked God to remove this obstacle to his mission; yet Jesus said to him: 'Do not worry; my grace is sufficient for you.' My grace is sufficient for you in all things. It is important that we truly realise this, that we take it to heart: for everything God asks of us, however difficult and incomprehensible it may be, he provides not just enough grace to see us through, but always a little more. It may be that, from a human perspective and relying on our own strength, we feel as though it was only just enough – but grace is always greater. In every situation, in every trial, in everything that lies ahead of us, we may count on God having grace ready for us in Mary; and that is why he has bestowed grace upon us all through Mary, so that it may not overwhelm us. For every grace has something Marian, something maternal, within it, and that is why it will not overwhelm us, but will always lead us towards the goal of all graces: that we may truly be one with God in eternal bliss, in eternal glory.

May this evening, which is always also a Mass of atonement, give us the opportunity to make atonement for all those who reject grace, who do not wish to accept Mary as the Mediatrix of Grace, who do not accept this plan of God. God Himself has ordained it thus; and yet, even within the Catholic Church, it has long since ceased to be a topic of discussion – not to mention Protestant Christians and other religions, who do not recognise it in the first place. People do not wish to acknowledge it, yet it is not an expression of the Mother of God's imagination or ambition, but God's own plan; God wills it to be so. In Marienfried, we remember that Mary said the Holy Trinity wishes her role as Mediatrix of Graces to be more widely recognised, that people should recognise her more fully as the Mediatrix of all graces. 'I am the Mediatrix of all graces' – these are the words that the Mother of God gives us in our time. In that apparition, where she spreads out her hands and graces flow from them, some of the rays are dark; and when one asks what sort of graces these are, they are the graces we do not accept – the graces that are being withheld, which she wishes to bestow and which we do not receive.

So we truly ask for these graces that are bestowed upon us; the holy angels, too, draw from them and await them. How eagerly God waits, what a wealth of blessings He has in store for us, what a wealth of gifts He longs to bestow upon us – and all of it truly as grace, as a pure gift. A pure gift that cannot be earned, although in a certain sense it is nevertheless meritorious that I open myself to it, declare myself ready, and simply say 'yes' to it. This saying 'yes' to God's plan even increases one's merits, and grace thereby continues to grow constantly. If a person cooperates with God's grace from the very beginning of their life, then what applies to human nature

: human nature has a certain limit, a zenith, after which natural powers begin to wane. Think of top-level athletes: a footballer aged thirty-five is almost like Ötzi, practically past his prime, having long since passed his zenith. In other professions where high performance is required, the situation may be similar – but not with grace. Grace within a person is capable of increasing right up to the very last moment; it is always growing; the human soul is endowed, right up to the end of life, in such a way that grace can continue to increase. This is a principle inherent in the very law of grace itself, upon which God has built his entire Incarnation.

It is important that we reflect on this, become aware of it, cooperate with it, do not miss out on any graces and do not lose them, but that we ourselves, following Mary's example, mediate graces by increasingly adopting this attitude of Mary's, until it becomes a longing within us: a longing to give everything away – ourselves, and to give back to God everything we receive. We have so much to give away. Take, for example, Saint Paschalis Baylon, who was such a great devotee of the Eucharist and lived this out wonderfully, supported by Divine Assistance and the holy angels, more and more – so that we truly do everything we can to be able to give away as much as possible. In everything we do, we can pour ourselves into it wholeheartedly, and pour all the grace we receive into everything. It is said of this saint, a simple lay brother, that when he washed the plates, he did so as if they were a golden bowl, as if they were a chalice; he always did so with such care that he imbued even the humblest of services for his brothers with such value. That was his Eucharistic love, which he had received from the grace of veneration of the Holy Eucharist; it inspired him so deeply in his daily life, in his works of mercy, that he carried the grace of the Holy Eucharist with him wherever he went.

Let us open ourselves to this, let us give thanks for it, let us grow in it – and at the same time let us repent where we have time and again hindered this urge of grace, this desire to give, where we ourselves have been an obstacle to God's grace continuing to work.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Mystery of the Holy Trinity

Sermon of 15 June 2025, 3.30 pm – Feast of the Most Holy Trinity

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, as we celebrate the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity today, on the Sunday after Pentecost, we hardly know where to begin when speaking of it, for we are dealing with a whole world full of mysteries.

It is truly the greatest of all mysteries, a mystery of faith of ineffable depth, which we encounter everywhere. From a theological perspective, too, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is among the most beautiful and sublime subjects one can study, and it is not merely theory, but the deepest truth of faith, revelation. Yet I must confess: if a person does not experience it, if they do not encounter the Holy Trinity somewhere deep within themselves, then it all seems to be a marvellous figment of the imagination – lovely to hear about, but distant. That it is so real and so close can only be attested to by a faith lived out; if we do not live out our faith, we can certainly take it in and study it theoretically, just like any other subject, but it depends very much on the inner experience. It begins with us first contemplating all this inwardly: faith begins with the inner self, with holding as true what has been revealed to me, and then with contemplating it spiritually.

So what do I see when I contemplate the Most Holy Trinity in faith, in the content of faith, just as it is? When I contemplate the Father, as Jesus revealed him to us, I see in him the Source from all eternity, in whom everything that exists is contained – all glory, all being, everything that exists is in the Father, the Source, from all eternity; in him is all bliss, everything is contained. From this Father, the Son has proceeded from all eternity, in infinite glory and bliss, and the bond between the two is the Holy Spirit, a distinct divine Person – three divine Persons, three Persons in one God. To contemplate this simply transcends everything; it is quite simply incomprehensible. And this God, who from all eternity is in himself infinite bliss, infinite glory, infinite in all things, has, as it were, a primordial being which becomes a contrast in the second divine Person: The Son is the principle of that dynamic of opposition, as we know it, for example, in depth and height, breadth and length, or as it is revealed in his absolute, holy, royal infinity. This opposition consists in the fact that this God makes himself so small and insignificant that one could trample him underfoot without even realising it. There is simply no greater contrast than this contrast of God within the Most Holy Trinity, in the Son, Jesus Christ – especially since, as we know today, He is present in the smallest atom, in the smallest particles: He, the infinite, glorious God, for whom all things were created.

The smallest thing, the smallest ‘cell’ of creation, so to speak, we call an atom – the smallest existential being that exists. And now we see: the enemy has managed to exploit even this atom – which is something divine, created by God – to his own ends, drawing upon a little of this marvellous mystery; for within this atom, if one were to ‘open’ it, so to speak, forces can be unleashed, and the enemy triggers this – thus the atomic bomb comes into being. This exploitation, and others associated with it, are bringing us to the brink of war today; and whoever possesses such a bomb does not possess a large, gigantic structure, but something very small, minuscule in terms of size and concentration – it need not be large. But within this small thing, energies are released, radiation is released, which in a short space of time could transform, indeed destroy, the whole world. That is the power as it lies in nature within the atom. Yet the true atom is not this atomic one, but the Divine that God has placed within us. This Divine is within us, is within His creation, is present in humankind – the infinite God in His

infinity, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, with infinite love, infinite bliss, infinite glory, infinite vitality, infinite abundance of life, infinite holiness. All this is contained within this tiny atom of the Holy Eucharist, within Jesus.

If this atom were to burst forth as light, to explode as light, then immediately, from the heat of this light – and this light is love – the world would instantly melt away; even this atom of love contained within it is completely veiled, for no creature could endure it. You know the story; I have told it before, but it is fitting here: A sceptic regarding the Holy Eucharist, a scientist who had spoken about it, wanted to see for himself what it was really all about. He placed a tiny particle of the Holy Host under the microscope, and the moment he looked through it, he was instantly struck by a beam of light that burnt his eyes, and he fell down dead. Subsequent investigations sought to determine the nature of this light, but the scientists were unable to measure the intensity of the light that had emanated from it – an incomprehensible intensity of light whose brilliance proved instantly fatal. Thus, we have the Most Holy Trinity in this light-force; or, if we wish to regard this atom as a life-force, there is a life bound within it that is full of infinite vitality and abundance of life. In the Holy Eucharist, this life is bound in such a way that it does not overwhelm human beings. And were we to conceive of it further as a force of love, as self-sacrifice, it would simply be unbearable for us – and yet everything is contained within this single atom: mercy, justice, all the virtues, which are, after all, the very life of God Himself; all bound there and yet present.

That which the heavens cannot contain is, in essence, just as narrow or vast for God's dwelling as the human heart, as the Tabernacle: where God dwells, there is heaven – and this applies just as much in the Tabernacle as in the human heart. Heaven itself, in its glory, is revealed only a little, veiled only a little; what we regard as heaven is a veiling of that which is revealed a thousand times more in the Holy Eucharist or when Jesus enters a human heart. It is the same heaven, only there everything is held back from the full glory. But once this is revealed and we behold that glory, then, as it were, the very atoms within us are also laid bare, so that we become capable of experiencing the glory of God and the bliss of God to a great degree – otherwise we would be utterly incapable of doing so now. Let us imagine that this infinite, holy, Triune God, who is always giving of Himself and surrendering Himself, gives Himself into us: This is not something lifeless. Already through Baptism, the Holy Trinity dwells close within us, yet this is most perfectly elevated in the unity of the Holy Eucharist, where it comes to life within us to the fullest extent. And this is not a lifeless element, not a lifeless existence, but a constant interplay of the three divine Persons within us. When we live in the grace of Baptism, this grace does indeed rest within us, yet at the same time it is active grace, the grace of being: if God is within us—and all the more so in the Holy Eucharist—then the Father is present with the Son; the Father does not simply sit there doing nothing, but is, as we might imagine it, constantly in conversation with the Son, whilst the Holy Spirit is constantly in motion. And when, for example, we pray: 'Mary, introduce us to your Son, show us your Son' – then all this takes place in the very depths of the human being; that is where it unfolds. If we are in God's grace, if within our innermost being – in the whole composition of the soul – everything is free, if we are purified and sanctified by

the blood of Christ, and do we offer the Most Holy Trinity a place to dwell, unhindered, even for a single moment, without preventing it through sin or spiritual darkness, then even a few moments of this grace are enough for it to become a source of light, a source of holiness, for the whole world.

As a theologian, Saint Thomas explains it as follows: when God became man, it was only the Son who took on human form, yet the Incarnation itself is a joint work of the Holy Trinity; when Jesus became man, he never came without the Father, being one with him in the Holy Spirit. St Thomas says that such a humbling, such a self-emptying on the part of God, is so great that it would have been enough if Jesus had been present in Mary for even a fraction of a second during his Incarnation – in fact, he grew within her for nine months – for, had Mary preserved this grace within herself for but a moment and offered it as a sacrifice, it would have been enough to redeem the whole world a hundredfold, to free it from sin, because such a self-emptying, such a humbling of self, offered as a sacrifice, would have sufficed. But God so loved the world that he did not leave it at a single moment, but took everything upon himself. How are we to comprehend that this Triune God, whom the heavens cannot contain, dwells within us as soon as we are in a state of grace – and indeed undividedly, not merely in part, but fully present? Of course, it depends on the extent to which we give him space to truly pour himself out within us. If a person has a heart that is entirely pure, entirely pure for God, then the Holy Trinity can take up residence everywhere within them. There is a saint, Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity – you can look her up on the internet – who wrote some very beautiful treatises on what this indwelling of the Holy Trinity in a person means in terms of a relationship. Let us remember: a tiny baby, whether just born or still in the womb, is already given a place for the Holy Trinity at baptism, and the Holy Trinity then lives within that little baby. The exchange of love, the mutual relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is an unspeakable, incomprehensible mystery of humanity.

That is why I say: all this remains theory as long as a person cannot gain access to it. This access consists simply in accepting it in faith. And in people who have experienced this vividly in faith, it has become clear where this leads and what effect it has: they have truly been absorbed in bliss, have fallen into ecstasy, have been lifted off the earth, so that they themselves could not comprehend it. Mother Bitterlich, for example, describes how what she experienced there defies all description – it is simply incomprehensible bliss. And the effect of this is that it unleashes powers within a person, so that they become capable of unspeakable suffering, capable of unspeakable bliss, capable of unspeakable self-sacrifice, so that they can lay down their lives. And when God bestows such grace, it is made available in a few people for the salvation of the whole world – think of Padre Pio or certain other saints; we do not know how many hidden saints live in this way in God's grace, in this bliss, which will be of great significance for the salvation of the world, including for the future. It does not require the masses, but it does require those in whom this truly lives and is alive. I know I can speak of it as much and as powerfully as I like, yet we must experience it; and that begins precisely through faith, but faith comes from hearing. That is why we must be aware of what this is, so that it may become a longing within us and come to life.

If our eyes are then opened to this – unlike what the Devil promised in Paradise: ‘Your eyes will be opened’ – then we do not see, as Adam and Eve did, what we have done, but rather we are shaken, perhaps moved to tears, stirred within, because we stand time and again, dumbfounded before this glory. Inconceivable bliss. Inconceivable glory. Inconceivable love. Inconceivable love. Inconceivable. And wherever this takes effect, it always has an impact on a person’s behaviour, both towards themselves and towards their surroundings; that is then the testimony. It is what we always profess as ‘Holy, holy, holy’ – Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus. This is the superlative in Hebrew usage: three times holy means infinite, infinitely holy – infinitely holy, glorious, infinitely blissful, infinitely marvellous, infinite life, infinite, infinite, infinite love.

I still remember a story; this is the last thing I would like to say: a holy hermit had a disciple who asked him about the Holy Spirit: ‘Father, I do not understand this business of the Holy Spirit.’ The hermit replied: ‘May the Holy Spirit open your eyes.’ So they walked on together; it was winter, and whilst they were talking, all the snow melted before them – metre-high blankets of snow melted away and cleared the path, as if everything were filled with joy. The master said he could not explain it, but that was precisely what love was: the triune life, the bliss of love within us. ‘Oh, I see,’ said the disciple, and they walked on. Suddenly he caught a scent; as they spoke, a scent of bliss hung in the air. The disciple asked the Master what sort of scent it was, and the Master replied: ‘That is exactly what it is – the scent of holiness, of bliss, which one breathes in as one turns towards God. It is simply beyond grasping, this scent of bliss, this glory.’ And as they walked on, simply by talking about it, they felt such inner bliss – a little like the hearts of the disciples on the road to Emmaus burning as Jesus walked with them, only much more intensely; they could scarcely bear this bliss, so deeply did this atmosphere permeate their inner being and spirit that it was almost beyond comprehension. Then the Master said: ‘That is exactly it; you have tasted a little of what holiness, what bliss, is.’

One could go on like this, and in reflecting on this I myself repeatedly reach the limits of my comprehension. We can only bear witness to the fact that we experience this, that it continues to shine in secret and also has an effect in our dealings with others: that we then become capable of forgiving the other in love, of bearing with them, of helping to carry their cross. In all this, it becomes effective afterwards – that is the love which overcomes all things. We do indeed pray: ‘Only your love can overcome all things.’ That is the power to overcome all things, to turn everything around, to turn everything around, to turn everything around. That is the life of the Triune God within us, within his creation, within humanity. May we become more aware of this when we later make the sign of the cross in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – for often we do not even realise what we are actually doing. This is the sign of God of which Jesus says: ‘Baptise them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.’ If we were truly to fill the sign of the cross with all that it encompasses, it would quite overwhelm us in its glory. Simply making the sign of the cross has such an effect: an old, famous exorcist used to say at the start of his exorcisms: ‘In the sign of the Holy Cross, may all evil depart from us’, whilst making the sign of the cross – and we can do that too. It held such power within him that the devils fled. Yet

the sign of the cross is no grand exorcism; we can all do it: that in this sign all evil may depart from us. The work of the Triune God is contained within the sign of the cross.

We cannot, therefore, make the sign of the cross as a sign of blessing often enough; the more deeply we recognise it as a mystery of the Trinity, the more effective it becomes. Nowadays we hear of studies in which researchers attempt to measure such emanations and conduct experiments with various words; if one were to try this with the sign of the cross, I could imagine that, the more we are steeped in grace, the more it would cause any measuring instrument to go off the scale. Or let us simply take the Gloria Patri: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. The 'Glory be to the Father' is a wonderful prayer in which we honour the Holy Trinity; perhaps we should pray it much more often and with greater awareness. Simply: 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end' – everything is already contained within it.

Early this morning I asked myself how the Holy Trinity, so to speak, came into being, in the act of creation, in the very first act of creation. That is why I am asking the question, so that we do not forget: With what does Holy Scripture begin? – Pardon? Ah, he has already heard it – Josef has already heard it today. For everyone usually says: 'In the beginning was the Word.' In the beginning – but that's not quite right. It says: 'In the beginning was the Word.' That means the beginning itself is God, is Jesus. Everything was already there in the beginning, and through the Word everything came into being – everything is already contained within it. And so this is made effective in the sign of the cross, in the simple prayer: 'Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.'

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Light of the World, Salt of the Earth

Sermon of 18 June 2025, 5.30 pm – St Ephrem the Syrian, deacon, Doctor of the Church! Saints Mark and Marcellian!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's saint is once again linked to this Gospel, for Jesus says: 'You are the light, you are the salt of the earth.' He says this to his disciples, yet when he says it to them, he says it just as much to us: 'You who are here, you are the light of the world, you are the salt of the earth.' Do we believe that? Do we believe that we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and can we truly claim that for ourselves? What evidence is there that we are not? And how can we become so –

do we even want to be so? For my part, I want to be so. But if we want to be so, what is the prerequisite for this? The prerequisite is that Jesus himself is truly the light of the world. There is no other light of the world. 'I am the light of the world', 'I am the good shepherd' – he is. This means: if he, the light of the world, cannot be the light within us, if he cannot be everything within us – and we are, after all, on the eve of the Feast of the Most Holy Body of Christ – then we can do, say and preach whatever we like: it remains nothing but lies and deceit. However, it is a prerequisite that God is truly within us, and this grace of God is, as it were, implanted in us right from the root at baptism. As we emphasise time and again: it flows into the stream of our lives, for baptism is not merely a spiritual act; it enters our very blood and seeks to bring the life of God to fulfilment within us.

If this is nurtured within us, then everything falls into place from there; if, for example, we see it as the tree of life, as that cross which this tree is: if this tree can grow within us, everything naturally aligns itself with this form; everything is oriented towards it. Then our consciousness is constantly inhabited, influenced and shaped by it. And this leads us to recognise God—not because it is a commandment, but because it comes from within, because we love him, because love springs forth within us. If this does not happen, we will never become true witnesses; there will never be a testimony within us—then it is simply lies and deceit. And unfortunately, the fact is that, let us say, even today there are only a few who truly are that: In some ways they are believers, but Jesus does not live within them in such a way that he can truly be light, truly salt, truly everything. They are not filled with him. Let us just consider what is already filling the consciousness of children today, what fills everything. We speak of the subconscious – what does not find its way in there? And consciousness itself – what does a person not take in? If we take these things in without them being permeated by the true light, then they get out of hand, then they get out of hand, then they dominate us – whether that be a person, a passion, or whatever. Anyone who plays football is gripped by that passion, and all their feelings are filled with it; anyone who is a star singer is filled by that. But not by God.

But when someone truly uses their talents for God's sake, no matter what they do, when God can dwell within them, then something else happens – just as it did with Saint Ephrem. Saint Ephrem had been a teacher; he was ordained a deacon, became a deacon, and then went into solitude; there he was truly filled with God and began to compose poetry and sing; indeed, he founded a school of poetry and song. This had such a magnetic appeal that the whole city and everyone far and wide flocked to him – people were captivated by him just as they are by a superstar today. And yet these were purely religious songs, religious poetry about the truths of the faith, about the goodness of God. This kindled a fire of love that captivated people. If God grants us this gift and it takes no form within us, then we might as well forget it: it will then have neither radiance nor appeal nor luminosity. This applies to everyone in their own sphere of talent, be it in our studies, at work, or in everything we do: if Jesus places the light within us, if he lives within us, if we love him, then this permeates everything and becomes a power that radiates from us. Whether I am a housewife, a farmer, a professor, a footballer or an actor – whatever I may be:

if I am in the service of God, if I live in God, then all of that is completely permeated by it.

I am thinking, for example, of an actress, Mrs Inge Thürkauf – perhaps someone knows her – the wife of Professor Thürkauf, who was involved in the hydrogen bomb project in France, held a senior position there, and wanted to save the world through nuclear energy. After the bomb had exploded, he realised that things could not go on like that, and he and his wife were converted, simply because they had found a magazine in a church, **Praying Hands** by Petrus Paulitschek, which stated: ‘Only praying hands can save the world.’ This converted him so profoundly that from then on he used his knowledge of physics to convert people in droves, whilst his wife, who had been an actress in the theatre, used her talent to establish a religious theatre; she is now elderly and still acts and writes for this theatre, and what she writes is entirely imbued with the Spirit of God and captivates people.

I also remember a footballer who was a true believer and who was with us amongst the children, the young footballers. The others flocked round him and asked: ‘What’s your secret to being such a good footballer?’ Then he took out his rosary and prayed it. Then they all wanted to pray the rosary; they all wanted the rosary. Of course, it wasn’t something that lasted – had he built on it further, there really would have been an opportunity there. I have also often recounted that in America there was a professor who taught only Latin and Greek and never spoke about faith. Yet he was inwardly full of light, and his subject – Latin and Greek – was imbued with this light of God, which shone through him in his time. In this way, he converted many people and filled an entire monastery in France with priests and monks. I myself know someone who wanted to go there and who, through this path, came to join our community. He was originally Protestant, had been married, Protestant, an unbeliever; yet in this professor’s lectures on Latin and Greek, he caught fire and was converted. The professor never said a word about faith, but something quite different had taken place within him; his heart had been directed towards a different goal: ‘You began to read the Bible,’ he said later, ‘you began to take an interest in the faith, you began to reflect on your life, you had the desire to put your life in order.’ The professor never actually said that one should go to confession; it was simply his aura, it was the light he radiated, it was the salt that he was, that awakened this expectation **(4)**. And so it is for us today: we must not allow ourselves to be deceived or discouraged by this – God wants to give us this light; he wants to be this light within us.

He wants to be reflected in us; he wants to become human in us; he wants to continue his life in us. You are no doubt familiar with that sixteenth-century cross, which is missing hands and feet, and beneath which is written: ‘I have no hands but your hands, no feet but your feet.’ That is how deeply Jesus truly wishes to live within human beings. And not because it is a commandment, because it is a duty, but because it is love – because he kindled this love at baptism, and in baptism a person stands in their first love for God. If this light is nurtured, a person grows in it. We see this above all in times of martyrdom, in times of persecution: there, this

light has grown in Christians in greater numbers. But where people have not stood the test, have not been challenged, much has become lukewarm – among us, I suppose, ninety-nine per cent is lukewarm. Lukewarmness is of no use; it is neither one thing nor the other; it does not truly belong to the world. Lukewarmness is salt that has lost its flavour, and this applies to priests just as much as to everyone else; it is the case almost everywhere.

But right now, in this time of trial, in this time of tribulation, when so much is bearing down upon us, God wishes to grant us this; he asks: ‘Are you ready?’ You have said that you are ready. This means: if we truly desire it, he will not rest. If we accept the programme that leads us to transformation, then it will come to pass – there will be no lack of grace; he will ensure nothing is lacking. But it requires our presence, our active participation, our training, our transformation, until the fire is truly kindled, until we can truly bear witness to it. Such is his longing even today: the longing of his heart is that we may be imprinted upon his heart, that his fire may burn, that his love may shine, that he may truly let his light shine within people – and that people’s attention is not diverted to the ego of the bearer in the process. There are those with many gifts and talents, yet the people they attract ultimately remain focused on the person’s own ego rather than being led to God; that would be precisely the same deception. Rather, it should be: ‘Let them see your light and glorify your Father in heaven.’ This is once again a fascinating topic today, particularly in light of this saint.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Unadulterated Teaching of the Apostles

Sermon of 3 July 2025, 4.00 am – St Irenaeus

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear friends, Today we once again turn our attention to a saint from the early centuries: a disciple of the Apostles who knew what teaching the Apostles had instilled in their disciples and how they had implored them to hold fast to it, to change nothing, to let nothing be added to it, and to be ever vigilant to ensure that nothing was introduced into this teaching that would subsequently have caused nothing but chaos and confusion within the Church. As we have already said: on the one hand, there were the attacks from outside, which persecuted the Church and led many to martyrdom in the early centuries. But even worse for the Church was the creeping in of false teachings. Thus, for example, the teaching arose that it could not be that Christ was both God and man; that he had merely had an apparent body; that it could not be that he had suffered in that way; or that he was not truly God. Such were Arianism and other heresies, which called into question one truth or another, which fabricated tales of two gods—one who created good, and

one who had created evil, and all manner of other things. They confused the Christians and caused a great deal of chaos. Against this, the apologists rose up, such as Saint Irenaeus. He was a highly learned man and wrote five books in defence of the faith. Saint Augustine, several centuries later, composed many works in defence of the true doctrine of Christ. And so we too find ourselves today once again in this situation, where the doctrine of Christ is being undermined and overshadowed in every respect.

When we receive a sacrament, however, one thing remains certain: the Gospel, the Word of God, is not itself a sacrament, but the foundation of everything. But when we receive the Sacrament of Penance under the proper conditions, it is always the Blood of Christ that cleanses us. If someone is unprepared, confesses insincerely, or knowingly fails to confess all their sins, the Sacrament of Penance is not effective; indeed, it is invalid. Any deception in the Sacrament of Penance renders it ineffective; it demands absolute honesty and sincerity. But if this condition is met, the Blood of Christ is always effective – there is no doubt about that. The situation is similar with the Holy Eucharist: the question for many today is whether the miracle of transubstantiation takes place at all. But once it has taken place, it is always the pure Body of Christ, no matter how deeply the minister, the priest, may himself still be marked by sin. Once he has brought about the miracle of transubstantiation, it is always the purest Body of Christ, without defect, without flaw, in complete purity, holiness and wholeness. How we subsequently treat it, of course, is another matter entirely.

The situation is different with the Word of God, for this is not a sacrament. We can alter the Word of God; we can distort it, we can twist it, we can misinterpret it. That is why holding fast to the Word of God is so crucial – to the Word that has been handed down to us and whose interpretation remains uniquely circumscribed within the Catholic Church. If an interpretation oversteps these boundaries, it can no longer be classified as the Word of God. As a doctrine, we are obliged to orient ourselves entirely towards the Gospel; indeed, every interpretation must, in every respect, be guided by the Word of God itself. The Church has established this as doctrine; it is the foundation of everything. But if the Word of God is distorted within the Church's doctrine, it is as though one were to take a jug containing the finest, purest water – for the Gospel is precisely that: the purest, finest water, the water of grace that flows from the heart of God. Blood has been shed for this Word, for its truth. If I were now to secretly pour poison into this jug and drink from it, the moment it is in the jug, the whole of the water is mixed with it. The Word of God is nourishment; in the Gospel it has, as it were, become liquid; if poison is mixed into it there, then every other word I drink from it also contains this poison, and I can, in essence, no longer drink it. So if today the Word of God is distorted in the documents – for example, if the Lord's Prayer is altered, or if it is taught that all religions are equal, that all religions are paths willed by God – if the Word of God is interpreted in this way and becomes the teaching of the Church, then I can no longer drink it. The same applies to morality, for example when, following **Amoris Laetitia**, it is taught that the sinner has the right to receive Holy Communion – that is a complete distortion of the Word of God. If such things find their way into doctrine, it is poisoned, and I can no longer accept it; it is then no longer truly the Word of God. And this is precisely what we are experiencing today: so much of what is proclaimed as the Church's doctrine, as truth, can be interpreted at will, so that

we can hardly believe the proclamation of the Word any more. Furthermore: the Pope's teaching is, in the broadest sense, always subject to the dogma of infallibility; in the strictest sense, it is infallible when the Pope solemnly proclaims a doctrine as dogma. But it is also part of the dogma of infallibility that the Pope cannot, in essence, proclaim heresy, because this is laid down. If a Pope nevertheless proclaims heresies, as has happened, then either he is not the Pope, or the dogma would be rendered null and void – and the latter is not the case. Therein lies the great deception, the great fraud. That is why it is clear to us: if we wish to be faithful, we must receive the Word of God in a pure, clear and truthful manner.

But when it comes to confession – where does our confession lie? “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.” Where does our lack of confession begin? Not merely when I am too cowardly to profess myself a Christian before others – when, in other words, there is something conspicuously missing on the outside. Rather, our unfaithfulness to our confession begins with every deliberate sin. Every deliberate sin is a failure to confess the truth; it is always a betrayal of God's commandments, of God Himself, and of His love. Our weaknesses are one thing – but when it comes to a deliberate sin, I know exactly what I am doing: when I swear, when I am angry, when I break my marriage vows, when I make a false oath, when I lie, when I cheat, when I steal, and do so deliberately, I am fully aware of it. It is not the case that I could simply be caught off guard by a sin, as Peter was caught off guard when he committed his gravest sin, yet recognised it immediately and, having barely committed it, turned back and repented. But if Peter had tried to justify himself – ‘under these circumstances, you can't help it; in that moment, you don't know what you're doing; it just slipped out’ – as many say it simply happened to them in a moment of surprise, that would not have been true. For although we are tested in every way, Peter knew what he was doing: He had only just been standing face to face with Jesus, had only just met his gaze, and knew exactly where he was. That is why it was a grave betrayal, one of the gravest of all. But Peter repented, and so – as it is said – through repentance comes forgiveness; this grace is further strengthened and takes root even more deeply within us.

So we must be aware: if we are accustomed to sins, to those grave sins that, as it were, become ingrained in our very blood – and this evening we have a Way of the Cross that centres precisely on such sins – and if we do not fight against them, then that is always a betrayal of the teaching of the Gospel, a betrayal of God. If, for example, we make excuses for the selfishness within us: a selfish person always acts from a self-centred perspective, justifies themselves and relates everything to themselves – this is always a betrayal of the Gospel, for the Gospel is built on childlikeness, on self-emptying, on humility. There are many such ‘-isms’ that run in our blood and are constantly at work unless we distance ourselves from them entirely. The very fact that I am plagued by such a weakness and cannot free myself from it at will is in itself a call to battle. But if I allow it, affirm it or make excuses for it, then I am lost – then it is truly a betrayal across the board. This means: as soon as I recognise something – a truth, or even a sin – and do not fight against it, I am lost – even though God grants me the grace to do so. But if I do not take up the challenge, I lose the tug-of-war; if I do not make my confession, I am pulled over to the wrong side. Thus

there is a great deal at stake in our daily confession. But once it is firmly established within us, our confession of God becomes so precious and holy that we simply lose our fear of people. A truly God-fearing person, who is faithful to the Gospel, does not fear people; he has nothing to fear; he can stand before people and bear witness to everything without any problem. But if the fear of man takes hold of us, then something is amiss – though that does not mean I have to go around shouting from the rooftops that I am a Christian, how often I go to confession and how often I pray. Yet everyone I meet must be allowed to know who I am, however much I may try to hide it. Even the Mother of God did not shout it out loud; in the Magnificat she praised God for having done great things for her. She praised God: ‘The Lord has done great things for me, and his name is holy’ – not I, but God has done great things for me. We, too, must always profess this when we recognise something as the work of God, as Saint Paul says: ‘I am a misfit, yet God’s grace towards me has not been in vain.’ This grace has given me so many opportunities to bear witness to it, to profess it. This is a call for us to take this truly seriously, to truly profess this teaching. I do not see the danger for us so much in our denying the Gospel. I see the danger above all in our excusing the sin, the wrong attitudes, the flawed patterns of life that we recognise and uncover in ourselves – in our saying:

‘I can’t help it, that’s just the way I am’, so that we do not tackle these issues, do not , but simply carry on with our familiar way of life and tell ourselves: ‘I’ll just have to wait for the Day of Judgement like this; let’s see what the good Lord decides.’

Especially in these times, when so much depends on how much hold the enemy still has over us, God wants to prepare us for the struggle in which, as Jesus says, the devil has no hold over us. Some saints, too, knew this: they surrendered themselves so completely to God that the devil no longer had any hold over them. This is our struggle, our commitment: to truly commit ourselves wholeheartedly to this, to have the courage – even though we cannot convert ourselves by our own strength, for that is the work of God’s grace alone. Let us have the courage to do this and surrender ourselves entirely to the Holy One. Our angel, who stands by us, remains faithful to us to the point of heroism and helps us to be truly ready for God to the very end, to dare to fight to the very end. Whoever truly strives will not lack support; the Mother of God stands by us with all her angels. But this commitment must be whole and undivided in every respect – as one might express it in percentage terms: one hundred per cent.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the footsteps of Saint Paul

Sermon of 5 July 2025, 4.00 am – St Anthony Mary Zaccaria, Confessor! (Saturday of the Expiation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, today we are considering a lesser-known saint who died whilst still very young – at the age of 36, I believe – and who came from a distinguished family. He made a name for himself above all through his love for Saint Paul, whose ideal he followed: like Paul, he too wished to know nothing other than Christ, the Crucified One, inspired by him entirely through his own experience of conversion. With all his fervour, with all his passion, he embraced the Gospel and proclaimed it; he sought to become like Christ precisely through suffering, and was a saint who also received special graces through his love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Above all, he sought to lift the clergy of his time out of the mundane and lead them forward; he wished to instil in them the passion of Saint Paul, so that they might grow ever more zealous, consume themselves with devotion, become ever more like God, and draw ever closer to him.

This is indeed a spirit that must inspire us daily: that we give thanks to God for everything he bestows upon us, for what he entrusts to us, for what he gives us each day – this gratitude for everything, even the smallest things, even if I do not always express it. For, fundamentally, the following applies to us: ‘What do you have that you did not receive? What do you have that you did not receive from God?’ When we acknowledge this, it evokes in our souls the attitude of a child, the attitude of humility: that I am a gift from God and, of my own accord, am nothing and can do nothing, but only what God’s grace makes of me. Our journey towards God is also linked to this. God has had wonderful plans for every creature since eternity. Yet this does not happen of its own accord: God does not force these plans upon us, but always desires our full cooperation, our wholehearted participation. This requires of us that, anew each day, we be completely free, freeing ourselves from everything for this path today, for the cross today, for what God has in store for us today. Given the brief span of our trial here on earth, every day is so crucial that I must not allow anything to prevent me, especially today, from being truly and wholly at the service of God’s will. Yet we are so quick to commit ourselves to certain things, to have our own plans and our own ideas, and then we are no longer entirely free for God.

We begin each day with the Angelus, with adoration, in the spirit of Mary, to strengthen ourselves anew. God speaks his Word into every day, speaks himself into every day; he is fully present for each of us, fully present in all things. And so he waits within us, too, for us to always give him the response, in the spirit of Mary: ‘Let it be done to me according to your word’ – today and now. And so it often comes to this: God wants to lead a person forward and realise his plans with them, but the person, with their own ideas, keeps blocking themselves time and again. So we are already preparing ourselves for Holy Communion by asking ourselves daily: Am I completely free, am I completely poor, that is, detached? Does the desire to become like him burn within me, the longing to become wholly one with him, to unite myself more and more with him, to

merge with him? Does the desire to truly follow him burn within me; has the life-giving force been awakened in me to strive for what he has placed within me? So often the obstacle is that, whilst people believe in God – many do – they lack that dynamism which also characterised Saint Paul, who was consumed by zeal and strove with all his might towards this goal, the goal of eternity.

Thus God places trials within every day, in which we are repeatedly held back and constrained, and in which it is revealed how much we believe in Him, how much we trust Him, and how much we love Him. Every day is a fresh trial, and it is through this that it is determined how far God can bring a person towards His goal. I am also thinking here of the plan that God, when I look back today, had for the first members of the Work of the Holy Angels: God would often have wished to realise these plans much more quickly – not out of impatience, but in view of the grace, the calling and the mission He has entrusted to us, He wanted to move forward with us more swiftly. And yet we have often fallen far short of what He actually had in mind. God does indeed have unspeakable patience with us, yet with all the zeal of his love he wishes to help people progress, to draw them to himself, and – through many graces of inner transformation and renewal – to guide them time and again towards the eternal goal. He wishes to bestow everything upon them, to give them everything. May this also serve as an examination of conscience for us today: Am I keeping pace, am I walking the path, so that God can guide me day by day as He has ordained in His plan – or am I placing so many obstacles in His way that there is no further transformation in my soul for years on end, because I have committed myself to a particular lifestyle, becoming, as it were, rooted in the earthly, which prevents me from truly walking the path of discipleship towards the goal? ‘I keep my eyes fixed on the goal; I press on towards it’ – Saint Paul is the example of this, and today’s saint is entirely in his spirit. I keep my eyes fixed on the goal; I pursue it, and for this I am prepared to fight daily with all my passion, so that I may come as close to this goal as God has placed within me, as He has intended.

May this zeal inspire us; may nothing, as the saying goes, clip our wings; may nothing block us, hinder us or divert us from our goal through all manner of forces, currents and temptations. It is always, too, the Lord’s open heart: He Himself says that He wishes to draw us to Himself every day. ‘When I am lifted up on the cross’ – and He is being lifted up on the cross by us once again right now – ‘I will draw all people to myself’: ourselves, but also all those who are united with us. May this also move us today on the Saturday of Atonement to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, on which we wish to respond precisely to this desire: to make atonement for all the sins committed daily, even today, against the Immaculate Heart of Mary, sins which pervade humanity day after day. It is a harrowing experience to see how, despite all her love, Mary is still rejected, unknown and despised in our midst; how this plan of God for his Mother – and for us – falls far short, day after day, of what God wishes to bestow upon us – of how he wishes to include his Mother in his plan of salvation, recognised by humankind as well. May this Spirit of love, this Spirit of striving, this Spirit of ever-renewed liberation and of being wholly present for God, truly inspire us and enable us to press on unwaveringly towards our goal.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What Saint Anne teaches us

Sermon for 2 July 2025, 4.00 am – St Anne

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My brothers and sisters, we do not wish to overrun our time today, so let us turn briefly to Saint Anne. Once again, let us ask the question we ask of every great saint: what can we learn from her? What does she offer us, and what does she mean to us? As members of the mystical body, the saints are our brothers and sisters. Saint Anne lived a long time ago, two thousand years back, yet on her feast day in particular – when grace is seven times more powerful – she is most certainly close to us. Without going into all the details, let us bear one thing in mind: Saint Anne was not preceded by any apparition; no angel came to prepare her for the birth of her child. Although the Protoevangelium of James recounts a dramatic, moving preparation, even without her being aware of it herself, God had long since placed within her soul what He intended for her – that she was destined from all eternity to become the mother of the mother of Jesus. Even though this was not apparent to her, He had nevertheless instilled in her a longing for it and prepared her soul inwardly through this grace. She was married to Joachim and had no children; this pain, coupled with the shame of being childless – which in those days was interpreted as a punishment – did not turn her away from God, but prepared her for the great grace: for the joy she was then able to experience when, together with her holy Joachim, she conceived Mary, even if she was perhaps not fully aware of the magnitude of this gift. In the new liturgy, both Joachim and Anna are celebrated together. This inner preparation for their mission, in God's grace, was already inherent in her, and the joy she then experienced was certainly indescribable.

The second thing we may learn from Saint Anne: we once read of a study which explored the principle 'Nomen est omen' and examined many women bearing the name Anne. It was a fairly reputable study, and it demonstrated that these women – though not to the same degree in every case – possessed an above-average maternal instinct. The maternal quality is thus inherent in the name itself. Of course, the maternal quality in nature always requires nurturing and grace in order to grow. Thus, Saint Anne, too, possessed this maternal quality by nature; whilst Mary, as the Mother of all mothers, surpasses all maternal qualities, everything in Saint Anne – as it were, in her very being – was already oriented towards what we call motherhood. This is a gift that the world needs today. Every woman carries within her something of this motherliness, both in the legacy of Mary and in that of Saint Anne. All the more, it is our hope that this motherliness does not die out in women, for there is a danger in today's society that this gift is not given its due appreciation. What value does it hold in the world? A child who is denied the experience of motherliness carries with them one of the most severe emotional wounds and psychological blocks; the world itself needs this motherliness. We even see it in nature: what is a mother animal capable of when

comes to saving her child, to saving her offspring? Throughout the animal kingdom, motherhood often transcends the limits of nature when it comes to protecting, nourishing and giving of oneself. Thus, within motherhood, self-sacrifice—indeed, sacrifice itself—is laid down and foreshadowed from the very beginning. So it is when we celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus: his spirit of sacrifice, his capacity for sacrifice, is rooted in the very motherhood from which he himself emerged.

And it is interesting to note that, from God and from the holy angels, this feast of Saint Anne is associated with an angel who wipes away tears – who shows us the way, who opens up to us the grace of tears. And so, in connection with this feast of Saint Anne, a hierarchy of tears can be revealed, one we do not otherwise recognise: the tears of longing that we shed for God hold the highest inner value. Then come the tears of repentance, of which we speak time and again; then there is also the value of tears of loss, when we experience something painful, the loss of a good person, the death of a person – these too are tears that carry weight before God. Finally, there are all the other tears: those of despair, of distress, of disappointment, and whatever other tears there may be. Only the tears of defiance, of inner rebellion, are not tears that carry weight before God. Yet all these tears are embedded in this space of motherhood. May this, then, be a call to us all today, a grace that God wishes to bestow upon us: that we may give motherhood its rightful place, stand up for it, so that this motherhood may unfold in all women just as God has placed it within them. In Saint Anne, as well as in all those who bear her name, this special gift is evident; God values this gift greatly, just as he instilled it in Mary, in whom the maternal is unique, in her empathy, in her entire power of influence. Today, we may also honour this motherhood to a high degree in Saint Anne.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Word of God as Fire in St Dominic

Sermon of 4 August 2025, 5.00 am – St Dominic

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we celebrate the feast of a saint, Saint Dominic. This is not intended to be a catechesis on his biography, for he was above all a man of the Word of God – a man of God in whom this Word truly bore rich fruit. His words in preaching were like fire, a truly matured word that had permeated him entirely, because it had long been prepared within him: through a life of sacrifice, through fasting and through prayer, before it became fire in his preaching. Thus he used the words of God to refute the heretics of his time, the Cathars and the Albigensians, who

had caused much harm at that time; and his writings not only served to defend the faith, but also truly led many who belonged to these sects to conversion.

Thus, today is an invitation to reflect on the Word of God – on its meaning, its value, its mission and the responsibility it places upon us today. Let us bear in mind that the New Testament contains a total of around 140,000 words, of which some 36,000 are the words of Jesus in the Gospels alone, with the individual evangelists, each in their own way, recounting the same events. If I recall correctly, it was Saint Luke who recorded the most words of the Gospel. We must give an account for every word we speak – but equally for every word we do not speak. The word that we leave unspoken, the word of God which, like a seed, lies waiting to sprout and bear rich fruit, challenges us precisely where we have remained silent: these unspoken words lie fallow and become our responsibility if we do not make use of them, even though they are waiting, in all their potency, to bear fruit today.

Let us also think of the many useless words we utter. I often think of my maternal grandmother, who used to tell us a story over and over again as children, the older she got – a sign of just how much it had shaped her. Once, on a Sunday, she had arrived late at church, just as the sermon was beginning, and the vicar said from the pulpit: ‘For every useless word you utter, you will one day have to answer.’ This had affected her so deeply that she never forgot it, and from then on she was acutely aware of the responsibility we bear in our dealings with the Word of God. So this is also an invitation for us today to contemplate the Word of God, to revere it, to take it in and to put it into practice, whilst detaching ourselves from everything that is useless, from everything that is not necessary, so that the Word of God may unfold its power and truly bear fruit. ‘I have come to cast fire upon the earth’ – these words are fire because they come from the heart of God and have already passed through the heart of Mary. I therefore recommend that, whenever we go to confession, we remember to ask forgiveness for all useless, superficial and thoughtless words – not only for the unloving ones, but especially for these, for we must give an account of them just as well; this is not insignificant, as we also know from a Station of the Cross which expresses precisely this.

The Saint invites us today to explore the depth and meaning of the Word of God, in which God’s entire plan for the future is already contained, all for the building up of the Body of Christ, including for the times to come. This Word, when written down in black and white, is as if sealed and locked away, and it must first be revealed to us – above all through adoration, contemplation, sacrifice, fasting, reflection and understanding in the right context – so that it may truly blossom, break forth and unfold its full power – not only the Word of the preacher and the priest, but also the Word of God in our everyday lives. Let us look to Mary: we cannot imagine that a word she spoke had not first passed through her innermost being, through her prayer and through her heart – it was therefore always a mature, a good word.

Likewise, we cannot possibly imagine an angel uttering a single word that was not entirely filled with God.

Thus, for us today, these are invitations, reminders and graces, but also a responsibility of which we must become aware: that, together with the saints of the Order of Preachers, we should above all make use of the weapon of prayer in all its depth and thereby ourselves become light from God, so that this Word of God may become light and be light that shines upon people even today. May this day be filled with this grace, in the hands of the Holy Spirit's providence.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Founder of the Piarists and the Orphaned Children

Sermon of 27 August 2025, 4.00 am – St Joseph Calasanz

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, today, with Saint Joseph of Calasanza, we celebrate the founder of the Piarists, that priest who took in orphaned children. One must imagine what it was like back then: during the time of the plague, children's parents were dying, and the children were left without parents, without an education, without anything at all – who would have taken them in? Thus the saint was moved by God's call, and he immediately set about opening a school in the sacristy, which soon had a thousand children. It is unimaginable how quickly word spread back then: that there was a priest there who took in the children, brought them up in the Christian faith and taught them thoroughly. Although he did receive some help, he had to endure extraordinary opposition, even from within the Church; he was beaten and tormented, so much so that he was truly called a second Job, given all that he had to endure.

Amidst all this, today's Gospel once again speaks of this childlikeness. It sounds so simple when Jesus says: 'Unless you become like children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven' – and to those who wish to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, he once again holds up the child as an example. Yet as simple as it sounds, to become like a child, I would say, requires the full omnipotence of God. For this childlikeness of which Jesus speaks is not merely something childish, but an inner state of being, an attitude of faithfulness and steadfastness which, in the face of all trials, all attacks, all hostile intentions, all the fury of hell, and all opposition, nevertheless remains childlike at heart. To be honest, we hardly find this anymore today, because it is simply a process of human decline – one might almost say that people today are no longer born as children at all. This innocent childlikeness hardly exists any more, whether because it is already so burdened by genetic predispositions, or because, as soon as it is still entirely innocent,

this childlike nature is taken away and eradicated from all sides through their upbringing. In our society, childhood has no chance unless it is vigorously defended; from the very beginning, it is exposed to such struggles that it requires extraordinary protection, extraordinary help and extraordinary grace.

We can already see this in nature, for even there one can scarcely find anything in its original state of growth. Everything is so over-engineered, so hybridised, so altered that, if one looks for a fruit, a vegetable or a seed anywhere today, one can hardly find an original any more – everything is so distorted, disfigured, processed and artificialised that one can no longer find the essence of it, as God intended it. This is just a small example of how things really are. But God does not wish to abandon the child; one might almost think that the good Lord must realise that it is no longer possible today to remain a child. Yet quite the opposite: the whole process of education by the holy angels is aimed at enabling us truly to become children, to recognise the greatness of being a child. Most people no longer realise what a struggle it is to be a child, to remain a child, to become a child, and to pass through life in all childlike innocence. And let us not forget: the victory of the Lamb, the victory of Jesus, is indeed a victory of the Cross, but above all a victory of innocence. We find this innocence, in other words, in Mary, the Immaculata – an image of complete innocence, complete vulnerability and, viewed from an outwardly human perspective, complete defencelessness. Innocence is, in fact, the most vulnerable, the most easily destroyed, because there is no resistance there; yet this is not a weakness, but a strength, a light which, from within, from the very depths of the human being, overcomes all that in which God reveals his omnipotence.

In this childlikeness, in this light, God reveals his omnipotence, and this extends into every thought, every feeling. Where this innocence is hidden in purity, there is always praise, there is joy, humility, self-effacement, security, wholeness, and receptivity. The child is always able to receive, is always turned towards God, is always transparent in its innocence, always available to God; God is present in this child; in this child, God can simply bring about anything, can build his kingdom, can bestow all his grace in abundance. It is not for nothing that the holy angels possess an unimaginable power for us, even to penetrate and dispel darkness. But Jesus also says: 'Whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better for them to have a millstone hung round their neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.' For as long as the holy angels can look upon God through the souls of children, all is pure; but when an angel can no longer look upon God through the soul – and the angel has far greater vision, far greater power to penetrate the darkness than we do – then that is cause for alarm. The angel does indeed remain at the person's side, but he can no longer see God through them, for every sin that arises robs him of this vision: for us humans, with our weak sight, this would be almost imperceptible, but for the angel, with his unspeakably keen vision, it is a cause for alarm when he can no longer see God through the child, through the soul.

This is an issue today where we truly wish to recognise the situation and ask for every grace; it is a call to arms that we direct towards ensuring that the child, as such, is once again recognised, preserved and protected in our

society – and that we ourselves may become like children, although for someone who has grown up in today's society, it probably takes, emotionally speaking, at least a hundred cycles of transformation, one transformation after another. This truth reminds me of a personal experience: I had begun learning Italian in South Tyrol at the time, where people speak both languages, Italian and German. There was a small child there, a little boy, the seventh child in a family. His mother had not realised she was pregnant, and as a result the child suffered from brittle bones – his bones kept breaking, certainly a hundred times. The child was very intelligent, but could not attend school; he had to learn everything at home and studied diligently; as his parents, especially his mother, were very devout, he observed all the religious practices at home and preserved his innocence. I met this boy when he was about twelve or thirteen years old, and whenever you met him, you felt as though you were meeting the Baby Jesus himself, so innocent was he in every way. I would often take him out into the countryside in his wheelchair, and this child could take such joy in every flower, every bird, in everything, that you were simply left speechless in his company. I was always struck by just how much joy this child could feel – more than an ordinary child feels – at everything he was given. Conversely, if something was not right, deep pain would set in immediately, tears would well up straight away; if there was a quarrel amongst his brothers, the child would instantly become sad, come close to tears, and burst into tears as if it were his own fault. Throughout, I witnessed this childlike nature in him. The child eventually died because he was unable to survive, but he preserved his soul – I would say he truly died as a child. Anyone who has not experienced this themselves will find it hard to comprehend.

That, I believe, is the direction in which God wishes to transform us. I remember how, back then – I was probably in the prime of manhood, about twenty-six or twenty-seven years old, before my studies in Rome – I used to wish: when Jesus speaks of this, how I would love to be a child myself? You cannot force it; you can wish for it, you can experience it, but it requires an inner transformation; your whole inner being must truly be transformed. And when we encounter Jesus – the Eucharistic Jesus, the crucified Jesus, the Jesus proclaimed in the Gospel, the Jesus who works miracles, the suffering Jesus – he is always that child in our hearts. That is why his suffering, his condemnation, his Passion, is all the more painful, because Jesus preserved his childlike nature, his innocence; the innocence of the Lamb has triumphed. And he sends out his own as lambs, as the innocent – his messengers are children at heart, if they truly identify with him.

This is a theme we cannot simply set aside today, because it is emphasised time and again by the holy angels, including in education and formation. Let us ask the Heavenly Mother for this, for in her we find it once more: the Immaculate Conception embodies, in every way, this childlike nature, this innocence.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The principle of all struggles since the Creation

Sermon of 2 September 2025, 5.30 pm – St Michael the Archangel

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, this evening, on the feast of St Michael the Archangel, I would like to introduce you to the simplest principle by which all the struggles that have been unleashed from the very beginning, since the story of Creation, can be explained. The first to trigger and decide the greatest of these struggles was none other than the Archangel Michael, whom we celebrate today. How can we explain all this in simple terms, and how can we experience his help – he who helps us to live this faith, to be faithful, to defend what is good and to affirm it, and who helps us to always triumph in these struggles?

The simplest principle that explains it all is that every sin, every act of rebellion against God, is essentially always a ‘no’ to God – a ‘no’ that, whether consciously or unconsciously, manifests itself millions of times against God and his plan. Opposed to this is the ‘yes’ to God, the affirmation of his plan from the very beginning. Had every creature chosen to say ‘yes’ to God and His plans, the history of the world would look very different. As it is, however, a struggle arose that will never cease until the end of time, because the first creature – not at the very first moment, but as the first to be created, the greatest spiritual creature – did not say ‘yes’. This first created being was not Mary, nor was it Adam or Eve; the first created being was none other than Lucifer. This Lucifer was a being of immense stature, a reflection of the very greatness of God: as the first created being, he saw how great God is, what great things God has created, and what God is capable of. And God set a test for only two creatures: the entire angelic realm and, subsequently, humankind, the crown of creation. This test was not a temptation – only the Devil can lead into temptation – but a genuine test.

To understand what this test consisted of, let us imagine the following: if we were to see God in His greatness and glory, in His infinite majesty, His infinite beauty, His infinite splendour, and He were then to ask us whether we were prepared to serve Him – no one could say ‘no’ to that. In such glory, no one can oppose Him, no one can resist Him. How wonderful it would be if we were allowed to see this glory! But God has veiled it so thoroughly that today we see only a reflection of his presence and glory, namely Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. In it, the presence of the Triune God is present in all his glory, in all his majesty, in all his infinity – yet in such a way that no human being can comprehend it, so that we see nothing, hear nothing, but only this small piece of bread. The believer then says: ‘Yes, it is you; I worship you; I serve you.’ But for those who refuse to accept it, no argument will help, for if a child were to grow up without anyone telling them that Jesus is present there, they could never perceive it of their own accord. This is a matter of faith that has been passed on to us – perhaps by our parish priest, perhaps by our mother, our parents or our teacher, for example whilst preparing for First Communion, who told us: ‘This is God,

this is God present. And when a heart then says: 'Yes, I believe that, I believe it fully, I believe it completely, without a shadow of a doubt – and even if others do not believe it, I believe it all the same' – and when this faith becomes so firm that nothing can shake it, only then can one go into battle with this truth.

Thus, from the very beginning, we find ourselves in this test of faith. We did not see God at our creation; none of us saw God at our conception; and even at baptism, unless by special grace, no one saw God. The angels, on the other hand, saw God after their creation; they all saw him, in all his glory; they did not have to believe that God existed; they saw that he is infinite and infinitely great; they saw all of this. But then God veiled himself, as if he were no longer there, and set them a test question concerning his plan to become human: This infinite God wished to become human, wished to serve Himself, and He wished for the angels to serve this human being who had not yet even been created, who would be so small—so small before God—of an almost fearful smallness. Then God withdrew, veiled Himself, and the question was: How would they respond? No one could rely on the others; each was put to this test entirely on their own.

Then one came along and said 'No'. The first one looked only at himself and said: 'I will not serve.' 'I will not serve' – that was all he said, nothing but that 'No'. And millions followed him. It was not the case that first everyone said 'No' and then the others said 'Yes', in an orderly succession; at the beginning it was all jumbled up; the faithful and the unfaithful stood side by side at the same time, everything was intermingled. But then help came for all the angels: one, like him, spoke: 'Who is like God? I am ready to serve, I am ready to serve.' And upon that, the other angels also spoke out; some said, like Michael, 'Yes', whilst others said, quite openly, 'No, 'I won't go along with that; I won't serve.' And yet every angel's decision is a wholehearted one, for ever, for all eternity – no angel can ever correct a decision afterwards; it is decisive for ever. Thus the angels were separated: those who had said 'Yes' were received into bliss; the others – almost half the angels – who had said 'No' did not do so indifferently, as if to say, 'Let's just go; we're not interested; we don't enjoy serving' – no, it was a struggle. They wanted to assert themselves, wanted to stay, actually wanted to take God's place, wanted to oust God, wanted to possess for themselves the throne on which God sits. Then the Archangel Michael appeared and made them vanish, acting in the power of God—not because he himself was so great, but because, as we said this morning, God Himself had thrown them into this battle. Thus this battle continues until the end of time.

When man was then created, he too was subjected to a test, albeit a different one from that of the angels: he did not see God. Even in Paradise, the angels probably did not see man, yet they had a living connection with him, and man, too, stood in darkness during his test. At the time when humankind was created, there were already billions of fallen angels, billions of devils, and one of them, the first, disguised himself as a serpent. God allowed this because He also wished to test humankind: humankind was permitted to eat from all the trees, except this one.

And the serpent asked: 'Why? Who is God that he can dictate this to you? Who wants to dictate to you what you must do? You are, after all, independent.' Yet in truth, God merely wished to prevent what he had already prevented in himself, namely that humankind should take his place; for that reason, and for no other, had he forbidden it. And so humankind allowed themselves to be tempted, first Eve, who then gave the fruit to Adam, and both ate of it and died. Yet the seed remained, and ever since, that seed has always carried the 'No' within it. Let us imagine humanity as a tree, with perhaps fifty or a hundred billion people who have ever lived on earth – regardless of the exact number – within every single one of these people, this 'No' was already present. But not entirely, for a fragment of 'Yes' was still there too, and ever since, this 'Yes' and this 'No' have been locked in conflict within every human being, more severe in some, less so in others.

Then God created a being who could say a whole 'Yes' to his plan: Mary. Through the Immaculate Conception, Mary initiated a new 'Yes' to God's plan – into which this breach had occurred – so that this 'Yes' might once again be brought to full completion. But the poison of this 'No' must be removed from every human being, for there is no person in whom it is not present, in some to a greater extent, in others to a lesser extent. The Evil One, of course, wants this poison to grow within us; God wants the 'yes' to grow, and right up until the end of a person's life, he always leaves the choice to them: will you choose the poison or the 'yes'? Those who recognise this will say 'yes' to God more and more as their life progresses; but those who fall prey to the Evil One will have him tell them all sorts of things, such as how foolish it is to say 'yes', 'you are not a slave to God, are you?', 'you are not so foolish as to say "yes" to everything' – this is how he talks people into it, as if they were someone who lets themselves be used for anything.

But this is how the struggle has been from the very beginning: the holy Archangel Michael stands by the person who wishes to give and uphold their 'yes' – he stands by them with all the angels, so that they may believe, so that they may speak their 'yes' ever more perfectly, say 'yes' to God more and more, and hold fast to this 'yes' through all trials and temptations, just as they are also able to say 'no' – 'No, I won't do that, I'm not interested in that, I won't get involved in that in the first place' – in order to give his 'yes' to God's plan instead. This is how the struggles are, this is how the wars arose, this is how the bitterest, the hardest struggles in human history arose, and they all ultimately hinge on this one question; if we were to examine each one individually, we would come back to it time and again: fundamentally, this 'no' lies behind it all. Let us think of the schism in the Church, of Luther, who broke away from the Catholic Church at that time and said: 'No, I will not serve, I will not serve, I will not go along with that' – exactly the same words as Lucifer, exactly the same words. And that has not been retracted to this day; the Lutherans have not retracted it, and since then a thousand other churches have sprung up, all ultimately rooted in this 'No' to God, in which this 'No' has remained alive in some form.

That is what we are all struggling with today. Today we have the holy angels, each of whom is a whole 'yes' to God, and God wants us to join forces with these angels in this battle, which has gained so much ground, which wields so much power everywhere, which brings with it so much deception and seduction – all of this stems from this one 'no': all delusion, all seduction, all power, all oppression stem from

this 'no'. This can be explained quite simply once we recognise this decision. And that is why a child who still says 'yes' with complete purity is so transparent, and whoever tempts such a child to say 'no' would be better off being sunk into the depths of the sea with a millstone around their neck. If we were to examine this in our own lives, how many millions of times have we said 'no', how many millions of times have we said 'yes', how often do we say 'yes', how often 'no', until we find ourselves where we are now? In the case of human beings, of course, unlike with angels, this 'No' is not always so unambiguous and clear: it may be that a person clings to their 'Yes' for a long time, saying, 'I don't want to, I won't go along with that' – yet the devil says, 'We'll see,' and then gives them no peace, tormenting them until they can no longer bear it, until they no longer want to. It may also be that a person resists temptation for years, but then has a single moment of weakness, and in that moment the devil seizes them. Some have made life-changing decisions and known full well: 'I must not marry this man or this woman' – and the devil keeps trying for a long time until he finds that one moment when the man and woman do say 'yes'; and if he can bind them in this way – whether in marriage or a relationship, in the priesthood or in leaving it – then he has them. The devil works in this way, cunningly, truly cunningly.

For example, there are many priests consecrated to God who have said 'yes' for decades, until one day, through some circumstance or other, the Devil succeeds in making them suddenly say: 'I've had enough now.' I remember a very distinguished priest, highly qualified, highly gifted, with great responsibility – I have two examples of this straight away –: At the age of eighty, a woman came to him and asked if he would marry her, and he actually did marry her. One has to put it this way, even though I could find even harsher words for it: how can anyone do such a thing? And he lost everything, truly lost everything. The same thing happened to another who had possessed the highest grace: A woman of that sort came to him too, promised him everything, and he abandoned his priesthood. From this we see: no one is as vulnerable as the priest, and not only because of women – priests are tempted not only by women, but equally, and far more gravely, by disobedience: disobedience to the Commandment, disobedience to the teaching of the Church. Temptation by women, or – in the case of those consecrated to God – by men, is one form of temptation; but the far, far more dangerous one is unfaithfulness to doctrine, to revelation, for this too demands perfect humility – that I do not invent anything of my own, but adhere strictly to what has been given. Creativity may have its place in this, yet I must hold fast to what the Word of God says.

This explains the whole struggle waged by Saint Michael the Archangel, and it also explains how much we need him and the entire angelic realm, because the holy angels help us to ensure that our 'yes' to God becomes ever more Marian, ever more perfect. And where we have said 'no', we can still find our way back to 'yes', for thank God, our God Himself has taken everything upon Himself for this: He went to the Cross, shed His blood, so that we might now be able to give Him our whole 'yes'. We experience this all the more the more we give God this 'yes', precisely because in these times it will become increasingly contested – this 'yes' is today the most dangerous thing that can happen to a person. For whoever remains with the devil by saying 'no' faces hardly any struggles; they succeed at almost everything; the devil gives them what they want, and they can do with him as

he wants. But whoever gives their 'yes' to God faces the worst struggles, and they will only get worse. So if someone says they live entirely at peace with God, have no struggles, and everything is going wonderfully well for them, then that is suspicious; something is not right – for this 'yes' always involves struggle, always struggle, perhaps even a struggle for existence, and it is more likely to get worse than easier. That is why we must nevertheless make a decision: am I prepared for this struggle, to preserve my 'yes', to give it? Or is it too much for me? God grants us freedom right up to the very last moment; I can commit myself to him, take vows, enter into a commitment, yet freedom remains until the very end.

If we see it this way, I believe everyone knows exactly what to do, everyone quickly realises where they stand, and everyone can swiftly examine their own life, taking stock: where have I said 'no', where have I said 'yes'? Where have I said 'no' to God, where 'yes'? Where have I allowed myself to be led astray by evil, where have I gone along with it, and where have I stood on God's side? We could have known this all along: if God is with us, who can be against us? Who stands with God? Perhaps we were too thoughtless to realise this in time, and in doing so deprived ourselves of many things. But today, on this day, let us stand by His side. I'll mention the parties that many of you here are attending.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Readiness for the soul as well as for the body

Sermon of 0c October 2025, 5.30 pm – St Bruno (Carthusians)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear friends, the hospital is located close by, and the Red Cross is also very nearby. I'm not exactly sure how far away the fire brigade is – I suspect it's towards Burghausen, perhaps a kilometre away. There is always an on-call service there, and even at the hospital there is a helicopter on standby that can land immediately to attend to seriously injured patients and fly them to receive first aid. We have long since become accustomed to seeing such vehicles driving through the streets with sirens blaring and blue lights flashing, but as soon as someone's life is in danger anywhere, a response team is on hand to intervene immediately – usually in pairs or threes, not just a single person – and they provide invaluable assistance. Yet this concerns only a physical threat to life: as soon as a seriously ill person is in danger, all other cars must stop and ensure that the emergency services are not obstructed. That is certainly a good thing. But I find myself thinking: if there were a similar alarm system that went off as soon as someone fell into a grave sin, a mortal sin – for this danger to the soul is far greater than any physical danger of death – then we would have reason to be on the utmost alert.

In fact, we do have such a warning system: the Holy Guardian Angel. This is precisely what today's Gospel speaks of when it refers to vigilance and readiness. The Guardian Angel has many helpers; little by little, we come to know the Holy Helpers, the many holy angels who are ready to act the moment it is needed – and the angels do not even need a blue light; their help is always guaranteed.

The trouble, however, is that all this is more or less swept under the carpet: that falling into grave sin, in particular, is no longer an issue. In the past, it was customary for the parish priest to preach on the last things at least a few times a year and to stir people's hearts regarding what awaits them. Today, hell is hardly ever mentioned. I have two examples of this in mind. The first: a fellow priest whom I know well told me himself that, during a religious education lesson, he once spoke about the Prayer of Fátima, which says: 'Deliver us from the fires of hell; lead all souls to heaven, especially those who are most in need of your mercy.' That was all – he hadn't spoken at length about hell, but had merely explained this prayer. Nevertheless, the parents lodged a complaint with the local education authority; he was summoned, and was accused of constantly talking about hell and thereby making the children depressed. The result: he was dismissed from the teaching profession, and as he was also a parish priest, he told himself that he could no longer be a priest either, and handed back the parish. The accusation did not come from the state, but from the Church itself, and the accusers were proved right there: a priest who subjects children to such things is intolerable. If one were to judge by that standard, the Blessed Virgin Mary herself would have to be far more intolerable, for she showed the children of Fátima hell when they were seven years old, causing them to endure mortal fear and, for a whole week, to be barely able to function, their limbs paralysed by sheer terror. The second example is Saint Padre Pio, one of the holiest priests we know: for years he suffered mortal fear, believing he was going to hell, and could not be consoled. His confessor and spiritual director tried to dissuade him, but failed. Padre Pio said to him: 'Father, you misunderstand me; you do not know what is really going on in my soul; you do not know what answer I have to expect from God.' No one could take away this pain, this fear of death; he was not imagining it, he truly felt it. One could tell him about God's mercy as much as one liked – it did not get through to him. 'That applies to others,' he said, 'to others, yes – but for myself, for myself, it does not sink in.' And it was precisely in the midst of this fear of death and distress that he heard confessions, absolved souls, and did everything in his power to ensure that they would not end up in hell.

Anyone who has never experienced this terror, this fear of eternal death, has – we may say with certainty – no true fear of God; they do not know what reverence means, what a sin really means, and what it means when some saints said they would rather die than commit a mortal sin or consent to a sin. Think of Saint Maria Goretti: when Alexander tried to rape her, when he tried to force himself upon her, she cried out: 'No, it is not God's will!' She screamed, she fought back, she cried out again and again: 'It is not God's will!' She pointed out the danger to her soul and suffered martyrdom as a result. It is a triumph for the enemy that the gravity of guilt, the gravity of sin – from childhood onwards – is simply no longer an issue today, that one is no longer allowed to speak to children about it. Yet for children, it is not a minor sin but a grave one when

they disobey their parents and rebel against them: this concerns an important commandment, and at the same time the sacrament of marriage, for the order of this sacrament is founded on the order of the Fourth Commandment. If children no longer obey their parents, the whole sacrament is called into question in some way, and its entire efficacy is diminished. This continues when we simply go through life day by day: naturally, we no longer have any religious experiences during prayer; naturally, we feel nothing; naturally, prayer gives us nothing; it becomes boring; naturally, Holy Mass also becomes boring for us – because the devil has taken over every position and no one and nothing can get in anymore.

In this situation, we must and can seek a way out. A few days ago, on 25 September, we celebrated the feast of Saint Brother Klaus – it was barely fourteen days ago. Saint Brother Klaus is often depicted as a boulder that falls upon the soul and shatters it, so that everything hidden within comes to light and the soul realises the state it is in – and this always leads to a profound shock. Such a shock need not be an external event; it can also stem from something entirely different. I remember one particular 9 February very clearly, when I was out and about: down at Petersberg there is a footpath where you can go for a walk whilst looking up at the castle, and there I was praying the Rosary. There I read a text that shook me so deeply that I really felt as though a boulder had fallen on me – concerning the fact that we must give an account of everything before the judgement seat, and how lightly we take this judgement, even though we bear responsibility for every word, every feeling, for everything. This shook me so much that I couldn't sleep for several nights, even though nothing had happened on the surface. I thought to myself that this must surely have been the guardian angel of Brother Klaus, whom I venerated there, and who had, as it were, thrown his boulder at me so that I might be broken open. I realised then that we must not accept anything without careful consideration.

To summarise briefly, I advise us all – even if we do not want to admit it – that we should go to confession at least every fortnight, having genuinely examined our consciences. Even if we may not be able to change some things straight away, it should pain us that we have not yet changed them, and we should be prepared to want to do so. Confession need not take long: with Padre Pio, the women had about two minutes, the men three – and yet he heard countless confessions and spoke freely. In an hour, one can hear thirty confessions if one is prepared and confesses quickly; it is not a question of time. No one needs to be considerate of me and think that I have too much to do. Sometimes, when necessary, I do of course set aside two hours for a single confession, but that is not possible every week – I do not know many people who can spare two hours for this every fortnight. It is about realising what the Sacrament of Penance means: it prepares us anew time and again; it is the grace of preparation for the encounter with the Lord in prayer. I am not saying this to strangers, but also to those listening to us via the livestream – I think they know what this is about, yet it is not yet sufficiently put into practice in our lives. We are still going through life far too much on autopilot, and we must put this into practice; even if we think it isn't that bad – it is bad if we do not do it, for we fall asleep in the process.

I used to go to confession every day, and I can testify that anyone who takes it seriously will find something to confess every single day. The longer I waited, the more I realised how much had built up that I should not have relied on. Once, my parish asked me, 'How often do you go to confession?' I said, 'Every week.' To which they replied: 'Well, of course you have to go to confession that often, given everything you tell us – just think how many lies that must be! Naturally you have to go to confession every week.' I answered: 'I do not confess what I tell you, but what I do not tell you. And what I do not say, I must confess all the more.' For this subject is too important; it is an existential matter. St Bruno himself urges us to do so: he witnessed how a highly respected man, who was held in high esteem by the public, testified at his own grave after his death: 'By God's just judgement, I am damned.' Such is the state of our times, and the danger is by no means insignificant for many.

We cannot force anyone to take this seriously, but we can only move forward with those who truly take it seriously and put it into practice. It is a process of formation in which we are participating; those who take part are free to do so, but those who do not also bear responsibility for this, for they are well aware of what is at stake. I, too, must first put into practice what I preach and what I say, just like each one of us – it is no use brushing it aside and saying: 'Let's see what happens.' It is not a matter of 'let's see', but of being ready now. Thus we are invited to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass also as an act of atonement – for those priests who do not admonish enough, who do not live up to it themselves, who allow souls to simply drift along in mortal sin without anyone calling on the spiritual fire brigade, the spiritual Red Cross, for help. May our Heavenly Mother, with her tears and her motherly heart, break open our hearts, so that we may truly prepare ourselves for the encounter with the Lord. He Himself says that He will come at an hour when we least expect it. Then none of us will be able to say: 'I did not know.' I do not wish to instil fear, but the situation is what it is – this is not scaremongering, but simply the reality of our current situation. Let us pray for this: God does not ask for the impossible; he grants the grace to do so, but he wants our cooperation.

Holy Spirit in heaven.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Mission of Jesus and the Apostles Simon and Judas

Sermon of 28 October 2025, 5.30 pm – Saints Simon and Jude Thaddeus

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, is it not fascinating to reflect time and again on how Jesus, when he began his public ministry and thereby fulfilled his mission, had come to bring the fallen world – above all, first and foremost, the fallen people of Israel – back to the Father? The Father had given him a task for this purpose, indeed even a strategy for how he should go about it, and Jesus knew exactly what his mission was from the very beginning; he did not discover it only as his life unfolded. At first he led a hidden life, growing up in Nazareth in obscurity, yet from the very beginning he already carried this mission within him. When the time had come, he called – interestingly enough – four close relatives from his own family, who had grown up with him, to be his closest followers, even though he himself had said that a prophet is not honoured in his own town, in his own homeland. And yet it was James and John, along with his other relatives Simon and Judas Thaddeus, who were from there. Others, however, such as Zacchaeus and Matthew the tax collector – a public sinner – he simply took away from their workplaces, from their professions. Outwardly, they were all unformed vessels that first had to be moulded. Alongside the miracles that Jesus performed – certainly according to God's plan – it was precisely this moulding of the Apostles during the three years he spent with them, their growing together into a community, that was, from a human perspective, also a masterstroke on Jesus' part: the way he dealt with them, the way he shaped them, the way he turned them into a team. We recall that he not only set them an example and taught them, but also commanded them to love one another as he had loved them; they were to be one with one another by loving one another as he had loved them.

When he had then returned to the Father, the work was not yet complete. That is why he had promised to send them the Holy Spirit, the third divine Person, so that, once they had taken his teaching to heart, the Holy Spirit might remind them of all truth and grant them the strength and love to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth. So the Holy Spirit descended upon them at Pentecost, and they went out into the world, each to their own place, to proclaim the Gospel. This 'wild bunch', once so unsteady, was now formed and ready for action; each had grasped the Gospel, each in their own way, in their own unique manner – no two were alike, but each had taken it to heart in their own way.

When I consider this in the light of the holy angels, it reminds me of the Book of Exodus, where it is said of the angel: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you; pay attention to his voice, listen to him, for my name is in him. Whoever disregards him disregards my name; he will not forgive your transgressions, but he will lead you to the place I have prepared for you.' Exactly the same could be said of every apostle: 'Listen to his voice; listen to the voice of the apostles, for my name is in him.' They had grasped this; his name was in them. They are his witnesses; for those who do not listen to them or heed them, there will be consequences. Even though they were not yet saints,

their witness remained unadulterated: none of them preached heresy, none passed on the Gospel in a distorted form. Each gave a magnificent testimony in his own way, and the confirmation that this testimony was true was, for all of them, their martyrdom. It was the greatest confirmation – despite all the opposition they faced, and even though they had already experienced great miracles beforehand. Their martyrdom bore witness to the fact that God had accepted their life's work.

This becomes clear when we ask ourselves what the work of these two in particular—Simon and Judas Thaddeus—was, even though they were active in different places. Today, some two thousand years later, through the revelation of the holy angels, we are also able to come to know their holy guardian angels – the guardian angels of the Apostles – and through this we see their collaboration much more clearly: how they listened to their angel, how the angel further shaped them and revealed the words of Jesus to them in their own individual ways, and how they bore witness to this. Thus, through this revelation, the characteristics of the Apostles stand out much more clearly today than historical tradition alone is able to convey.

Simon is one who has truly grasped the cross, who has learnt to bear the cross, who carried Jesus—the Crucified One—alive within himself. At the heart of his mission lay the proclamation of the cross, together with the burdens associated with it – a testimony to how one should rightly deal with the cross. This is what set him apart, and that is why even his name is revealing: we are, of course, also familiar with Simon of Cyrene, who helped Jesus carry the cross – yet this is not the same Simon. Our Simon did not carry the cross together with Jesus, but grasped the cross as such; of him one might say, as Saint Paul put it: no longer does he live, but Christ, the Crucified One, lives in him. Thus he stands at the gate of the bearers of the burden, and this burden is always Jesus, is always the cross.

Judas Thaddeus, on the other hand, stands at the eleventh gate, the most difficult of them all – the gate at which God demands the most of souls. With his disposition, his intuition, his grace and his Marian devotion, he became an intercessor for all who turned to him in their greatest distress, repeatedly imploring God's miracles even in the most hopeless of cases. Thus, to this day, he remains the patron of the hopeless and the desperate, and throughout the centuries many have experienced his miracles. God gives nothing to those who follow in his footsteps – everything is demanded of them, not to torment them, but to prepare them. Into these most difficult situations, against the fiercest adversaries, Judas Thaddeus casts the grace of Jesus, just as the Holy Archangel Michael casts God's grace everywhere, so that it may always find a way back through everything.

Thus we honour these two Apostles and rejoice to have them as witnesses. Yet this also defines our mission: the New Jerusalem is now to be made present within each of us. The Apostles are not merely our role models – their grace, too, is to be built up within us and amongst us, under the protection of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, who has become their Mother and ours as well. She stood by each of them in their mission, even when she was not always close at hand, and helped them to fulfil their task, so that the Gospel might be proclaimed credibly. We rejoice that we are able to get to know these apostles and experience their grace so closely. And because

there are so many among us who are hopeless cases, who bear heavy burdens they would rather not bear, it is all the more important that we have someone at all these gates to help us deal with the cross in the right way, so that it may lead to victory everywhere.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest

Sermon of 30 October 2025, 5.30 pm – Votive Mass of the HIGH PRIEST JESUS CHRIST!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, when we are not celebrating a particular saint's feast day, we can instead delve deeper into the mystery of the day within the liturgy and grow in our understanding of it. Today, on Thursday evening, it is the Holy Eucharist – which we have already celebrated this morning – and this evening we celebrate Jesus as the eternal High Priest. What I have to say on this subject is but a small part of this mystery centred on the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ – a very challenging topic. So feel free to doze off; it's being recorded anyway, so it doesn't matter; in any case, it is a vast, indeed an ineffable mystery connected with the priesthood, which seems so self-evident to us.

Let us first consider how things were in the Old Testament, and how they are practised in other religions, the nature religions, such as the cult of Pachamama: in every religion there are priests who offer sacrifices. In the Old Testament, too, when the priest offered a sacrifice – for example, the Passover sacrifice – it was always animals, such as lambs; for the sins of the priests themselves, a bull was offered as a sacrifice of atonement. This was a very elaborate sacrifice, and sometimes hundreds of bulls or lambs were offered. In nature-based religions, on the other hand, the ultimate sacrifice is made when human sacrifices are offered – to Pachamama, for example, people are even sacrificed. Thus, in the Old Testament, there is no sacrificial act without a sacrificed animal, which symbolises praise, thanksgiving, atonement or a return to God.

Take Abraham, for example: together with his son Isaac, he offered a sacrifice several times a year, or perhaps just once a year. One day, Abraham invites his son: 'Son, let's go together; we have something to discuss. We'll go up Mount Moriah and offer a sacrifice to God there.' His son accompanied him; they took the wood up the mountain with them. As they were walking alongside his father, Isaac suddenly realised: 'Father, we don't have a sacrificial animal – where is it?' What did Abraham reply? Do you know what answer he gave his son? Did he say, 'Be patient'? Did he say, 'You

are the sacrifice”? No, he didn’t say that. He said: “God will provide.” Isaac was satisfied with this answer, even though he must have been very puzzled inside as to how that was to happen, since they had no animal. They arrive, Abraham builds the altar, places the wood upon it and prepares his son for sacrifice. Then he says: “You are the sacrifice.” The son, ever obedient to his father, was prepared to be sacrificed – Isaac was truly ready for this, even though there is no record of the father having explained it to him beforehand. Let us imagine how infinitely difficult this must have been for both of them. The sacrifice had already been carried out; the father raised his sword to kill his son – when the angel appeared and said: ‘Stop!’ Thus neither father nor son had to carry out the sacrifice, yet God had seen that Abraham would have been prepared to do so and that Isaac, too, would have been prepared; for both of them, it was already an immense sacrifice. That is why we speak of the Sacrifice of Abraham, in which God ultimately does not carry out the sacrifice. On Golgotha it was different: there, the Father did not withdraw the sword; there, he truly allowed his Son to be sacrificed.

The Israelites, too, subsequently celebrated the Passover every year with a spotless lamb, the Passover lamb, in remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt – they could not have offered it any other way. Yet even in Abraham’s day, whilst everywhere else, in all other religions, large numbers of animals or human beings were being offered as sacrifices to idols, a mysterious figure appeared who did not sacrifice animals: Melchizedek. He offers bread and wine as a sacrifice. How on earth did he come up with the idea of offering bread and wine? How does one even arrive at such a thought? Abraham recognises him as a high priest and gives him a tithe. According to the customs of the time, anyone you did not know had to produce their family tree; one would ask: ‘From which tribe do you come?’ We read something similar in the Book of Tobit, which we read with great interest this morning: when the angel wanted to accompany Tobias, his father asked him about his tribe and name, and he replied that he was descended from the line of the great Hananiah – ‘Azariah’ roughly means ‘God is with us’ or ‘God is gracious’ in English; he could not yet reveal his true name. For Tobit’s father, Raguel, it was important to know where the companion came from – after all, he could not entrust his son to just anyone – and after apologising for having asked such detailed questions, he explained that this was his only son, and that if he were to lose him, he would have nothing left. The Archangel Raphael showed understanding and explained to him why he had to provide proof of a worthy lineage. But when asked about Melchizedek’s origins, there was no answer: he has no family tree; one cannot prove where he comes from; he is descended from neither side – he comes from nowhere. That is why it is assumed that Melchizedek was simply an angel, sent by God to point to something in an exemplary manner: in the forms of bread and wine, he is recognised as a priest and offers his sacrifice through these gifts. Yet this idea did not gain acceptance at first – it was not until the Last Supper that it was taken up again, and the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the order of Melchizedek: Jesus is a priest not according to the order of Aaron, but according to the order of Melchizedek. After the lamb had been offered that evening, as the Law still required, Jesus suddenly took bread and wine and said: ‘This is my body, this is my blood.’ No one at the time recognised the connection; no one knew what it meant – not even the

apostles themselves merely heard the words without grasping the significance. It was only the Epistle to the Hebrews, written by a true theologian, that explained this connection with the high priesthood of Jesus Christ.

That is how we discussed it, and now let us imagine: Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice. This time, the Father did not call off the sacrifice, as he did with Abraham, but demanded it in full, down to the very last drop of blood – not just any animal, but the Son himself, in his entirety. Yet we can only celebrate this sacrifice today because we have the order of Melchizedek, because we have bread and wine. Without bread and wine, there would be no sacrifice; no sacrifice could be celebrated. This is strikingly illustrated by the story of the Vietnamese bishop and later Cardinal Van Thuận, who served under John Paul II: whilst imprisoned by the communists, in his prison cell, he wanted to offer the sacrifice but had neither bread nor wine. He then gradually converted the guards who were watching over him – he was cruelly imprisoned there for nine, perhaps even thirteen years; I believe it was nine years. Even the harshest of the communist guards were eventually won over, even though the officials noticed this and repeatedly sent him new, uninvolved guards – yet he managed to win over one or two of them as well. Thus he finally managed to get a little flour, a little wine and some water into his cell. With these few gifts in his hands, Van Thuận offered the sacrifice in his cell under dramatic circumstances. Had he had neither wine nor bread, he would not have been able to celebrate the sacrifice. He was later released; John Paul II made him a cardinal and had him lead the Easter retreat for the clergy. He wrote a wonderful book, **Hope Does Not Put Us to Shame**, or something similar. He has since passed away, but in my view he is truly a saint – even if he may only have been beatified; I am not entirely sure. John Paul II publicised his story and thereby honoured him. It has thus become clear that bread and wine are essential to the act of sacrifice: if we had to slaughter an animal every time, or if Jesus were present amongst us in a bloody form, what an effort that would be – we could never celebrate the sacrifice. That is the first connection, the first mystery, and it is important that we realise how easy, how accessible, God has made this for us.

Now to the second mystery. As a priest, I recall a major challenge: at a priests' meeting, theologians gave lectures on the priesthood, which were subsequently published in the well-known Austrian theological journal **Die Furche**. There, theologians – including a certain Adam Kalraana – wrote at length and in theological terms about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I am no sophisticated theologian; I want to know what is Catholic, but the subtleties of theology with all their proofs are not my speciality – I am no scholar in that sense – I need a teacher to guide me. These theologians wrote that Jesus offered the sacrifice once and for all – that is true; it is also stated in the Letter to the Hebrews: once and for all. So there is no longer any need for a new sacrifice; the sacrifice has been definitively accomplished. They explained this in such detail that, ultimately, everything we still do today – celebrating Holy Mass – would actually no longer be necessary; we would do it only out of gratitude, as a remembrance, so that we do not forget, but whether we celebrated it or not would ultimately make no difference, for we are redeemed, the one sacrifice has been perfectly offered – is there anything still lacking in the sacrifice? That is how they explained it, and I

thought to myself: Theologically, that's correct, and yet something isn't quite right. My parish priest at the time, with whom I was serving my probationary period as a young priest, my superior at the time, also kept explaining something similar to me: Strictly speaking, one needn't celebrate the Sacrifice at all any more – so why do you celebrate it anyway? 'Simply to show my love for Jesus,' he said; whether one celebrates it alone or in concelebration with a hundred or a thousand others, it is always just the one Sacrifice. Theologically, I could not contradict this – the one Sacrifice has been offered; what we celebrate is merely a remembrance, albeit a present one. But personally, I needed a deeper answer, and I asked my guardian angel for it. Then Saint Padre Pio came to mind: when Padre Pio offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, for him it was always the actualisation of the Sacrifice of the Cross itself. It would not have been possible to concelebrate with Father Pio, not even with hundreds of thousands of people alongside him. This means that it must be about the actualisation of the sacrifice of the Cross, and therein lies the reason why we are all called to celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass, even if it is not merely an obligation.

And therein lies the true mystery, truly a mystery of faith: the one Sacrifice has been accomplished, and yet every Holy Mass is the unbloody renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross – unbloody, but only for us, not for Jesus. For him, it is bloody every time; for him, the blood flows every time; it is only for us that it remains, even in the forms of bread and wine, without our being confronted with visible blood, with anything unaesthetic or repulsive. Yet the sacrifice itself demands precisely that. In every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, therefore, he truly offers himself; it is present, the blood sacrifice is renewed in the present. For himself, it is indeed accomplished, and yet he experiences it anew each time – not as a copy, but he relives his entire martyrdom anew, the pains, the sufferings, the torments; he experiences it all anew in every Holy Mass, just as we were able to experience it mystically with Padre Pio. It is not the case that the Sacrifice of the Mass is anything other than what Padre Pio experienced – he mystically experienced what actually takes place in every Holy Mass. Thus, the Sacrifice of the Mass is unbloody for us, but for Jesus it is bloody every time: each time he goes through his entire Passion, from the very first moment of suffering right through to the Resurrection and our glorification – for him, this is necessary every single time. That is why Padre Pio and other saints say: the world could more easily exist without the sun than without the actualisation of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. That is also why concelebration as such – however difficult that may be to understand – is not the same as celebrating a Mass alone when it comes to the actual realisation of the Sacrifice; in fact, it constitutes a diminishment, a debasement of the priesthood, for the individual priest cannot then offer his Sacrifice personally in the same way, and Jesus cannot manifest Himself through him in the same way. He wishes to make his Sacrifice present precisely in the priest. This is a mystery of the faith, and that is why the Sacrifice of the Mass is so important to him: in it he offers up all his love in a bloody manner, his entire martyrdom, all made invisible to us, yet alive in faith. From this Sacrifice, from this blood, flows the entire stream of grace; the salvation of the world depends on it. And when we think of the Satanists tomorrow on Halloween: Satan, too, demands blood sacrifices; for him, everything revolves around the sacrifice, around the greatest offering he can obtain, around blood – and this is no joke; it is precisely this with which he drives people to madness, to offer blood sacrifices.

There is much more that could be said on this subject, but in conclusion I would like to emphasise this: the miracle of transubstantiation, which takes place at every Mass, is entrusted to the priest so that it may continue to work, so that this miracle – ‘This is my Body, this is my Blood’ – may continue in people’s hearts, so that this Blood may continue to be effective for renewal and transformation. But if the priest is not aware of what he is doing, if he does not engage with it, if he is not imbued by it and transformed by it, then the whole thing becomes a mere mockery. Where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not offered with sufficient dignity, it is always a mockery. Any superficiality robs the event of its substance; it has a devastating, destructive effect; it destroys faith; it destroys the very depth of the mystery. May the holy angels therefore lead us to grasp more deeply the greatness of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, especially for the priest. That is why the priest himself must always feel himself to be the most unworthy – no one is worthy to celebrate this, no one. That is why the Holy Curé of Ars also recognised this greatness, and why Saint Francis never became a priest – because to him it was something too holy, too great; he had the greatest reverence for it. Because of this responsibility borne by the priest, I also understand why priests who die without being aware of what they have done all find themselves on the brink of hell. If the Church is to be renewed, this can only ever happen through the priesthood: Therein lies the deepest desecration, the deepest denial, the deepest loss, the deepest apostasy, the deepest unfaithfulness, the deepest lukewarmness – but therein, too, is repeated that love which seeks to give itself up for its own, which loves to the point of merging with its own, which gives itself away, which is willing to give the very last drop of blood, which knows no bounds – which knows no bounds.

We cannot delve into this deeply enough, time and again anew; that is why the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is never a mere copy, and that is why it must never be boring for us – outwardly it may seem so, it may appear soporific, yet inwardly it always retains the same character. Whether worthy or unworthy, whether lukewarm or fervent, whether celebrated consciously or not: as soon as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is present, as soon as the Eucharist is alive and valid, the same event takes place on every altar, wherever it stands, and the whole surrounding ceremony, the hymns, should all lead towards it. That is why the holy angels desire a liturgical form that leads much more deeply to reverence, with far more beautiful ceremonies that constantly point to what we are celebrating. Even the so-called ‘Mass of All Time’, viewed from the perspective of the holy angels, still has much room for improvement – it could be far more dignified. Perhaps the liturgy of the Eastern Church comes closest to this, with all its solemnity and grandeur. And when we consider that the Mother of Jesus is also present at this sacrificial act, offering up her Son alongside the Father and aware of this priesthood: She herself is not a priestess, but she is the Mother of all priests, and she is present in every Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, even if the priest himself does not believe it – for she never allows her Son to offer this sacrifice alone. This has already become far too long for today, but Thursday evening is precisely the opportunity when we can and wish to delve deeper into the priesthood.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The vocation of Saint Stanislaus Kostka against all opposition

Sermon of 13 November 2025, 5.00 pm – St Stanislaus Kostka

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we commemorate Saint Stanislaus Kostka, that young Polish saint who came from a distinguished Polish noble family, whilst his brother chose a different path – the brothers were not alike in their piety. Even as a young man, he had heard of the Jesuits and of St Ignatius, and led a devout life from his youth. He was sent to Vienna, where he attended the Jesuit school; there it became clear to him that his path was one of discipleship, that Jesus was calling him. His father consequently made life extremely difficult for him and reproached him, saying he was bringing shame upon the family and asking what on earth he was thinking. So Stanislaus stripped himself of all his possessions, fled as a beggar and eventually did indeed reach the Jesuits, where he was admitted after a rigorous examination. Yet after only a short time, worn out by all this and also by his work during the plague, he died young. His testimony, however, remains an inspiration: he wrote a very clear letter to his father, in which he urged him to consider that he should actually be glad that his son had chosen this path. I am particularly moved by the fact that, having renounced his entire inheritance, he said: ‘The inheritance I leave you is the image of the Crucified One, the image of the Virgin Mary, the Rosary and the rules of the Order.’ He asked that these things be venerated, for they were something truly precious, something of great value – because their veneration was linked to an abundance of supernatural graces: the image of the Cross, the Rosary, all these sacred objects. Thus he left this legacy and set it down in writing, and his words were later confirmed by truly great miracles following his death. This saint remains an inspiring example to this day.

This ties in with today’s Gospel, in which a young man approaches Jesus after he has blessed the children – he cannot have been very young, yet he asks Jesus what he must do to please God and gain eternal life. Jesus gives him a specific answer and lists the commandments for him, to which the young man replies that he has already done all of these. ‘I have done all these things,’ he says – what young person today, aged 25 or 30, could claim the same if asked? Jesus does not rebuke him for this, but affirms him; it is, in fact, a form of praise. The young man then goes on to ask what he must do to be perfect, and Jesus replies: ‘Sell everything you have and follow me.’ This Gospel account does not mention that the young man then went away sad, as is stated elsewhere – the question posed here is not the same one.

I remember a youth retreat, I think in the mountains of Paznaun, where we spent a week hiking and going on mountain treks. There I told the young people that they should have the courage to ask Jesus, too, what they must do to gain eternal life, and to wait and see whether he gives them an answer

. This does not mean that the same applies to everyone as keeping the commandments – God has a unique path for every person. We, too, may and must ask ourselves this question: What must I do now in this situation, in this confusion? What must I do now to gain eternal life, to live in a way that pleases God? Must I return to the Bergolians? Must I return to the Minotelians? Where must I go? Must I follow Father Gebhardt? In the midst of this utter confusion – what must I do now, where must I go, to gain eternal life, to walk the right path? What answer will Jesus give us? We received the answer long ago, and it can only be: Follow me. Not just anyone, not Father Gebhardt, not Bergoglio, not Don Minotella, but me. And whoever shows you the way to me, whoever helps you to walk with me and towards me, listen to them and let them guide you. As for those who make a big deal of themselves, who push themselves into the limelight, who make themselves the goal, forget them.

The Holy Curé of Ars had very stern words to say about false prophets, about those who pretend to speak in the name of the Lord: ‘Do not listen to them; listen to the voice of God.’ Even the holy angels have their own sphere of activity, which consists precisely in listening to His voice. What matters is that we hear this voice and follow it, for Jesus himself says: ‘My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me.’ That is why our intimacy with Jesus, mediated through our holy Guardian Angel and through Mary, is the be-all and end-all – that we may discern this voice and listen to it. This voice may come through a child; it may even come through a donkey, as in the case of Balaam, whose donkey spoke. So we do not know in advance where the voice comes from, yet the soul recognises that it is the voice of God – and this voice may even come from the mouth of a person we despise, perhaps even from the mouth of an enemy. Think of the condemnation of Jesus, when the people cried out, ‘His blood be on us’, without realising what they were saying; or of Pilate’s words that it was better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to perish. At the time of his condemnation, that was a word of God of eternal significance, even though no one recognised it as such.

It is therefore essential that we hear this voice and follow it, for God does not wish to leave us in the dark. If we grow in prayer, keep our souls pure, and live by the Commandments and in grace, then we will discern this voice – and this applies even to the whole People of God as such, when they live in grace. This is the *sensus fidei*: when the People of God live in faith, they know where the truth lies; indeed, the whole People have known what is Catholic and what is not, and fundamentally still know it today, as long as they live in grace. It is not what the masses say that is decisive, but what the People of God are, namely those who live in grace. And this is demonstrated anew every day, for example when, on Thursday evenings, we ask what the Mother of God is telling us. We could quite literally look up what she tells us on a Thursday evening regarding that particular day. She speaks to us: ‘My children, there is no harmony more sweet to the heart of God than the “yes” spoken in generous, genuine love to my Mother’s heart.’ There is no greater joy for the Heart of God than the offering of these generous gifts, which pass through my hands. The Holy Spirit pours out through me upon the whole of humanity. My children, in my heart souls are born into new life, for they will be the new creation for a

new humanity. Thank you for your devotion. This message was given on 2 February 1995, and it confirms what God desires of us today. When we ask the Mother of God how we can please God, she replies: Give your 'yes', and offer your sacrifice generously – and unite this sacrifice with the one we also celebrate on Thursday evening.

Let us not forget that Saint Stanislaus left behind as his legacy the Rosary, the Cross, the image of Jesus and the Rule of the Order. That is his legacy. Jesus himself, however, said: 'Do this in remembrance of me' – and this sacrifice is his legacy to us. In the Upper Room, he said, 'I have longed with great desire to celebrate this meal with you'; he could not yet speak of a sacrifice there, for the Lord's Supper itself is not a sacrifice, but a meal into which the sacrifice is subsequently embedded. For when he says, 'This is my body', the entire sacrifice is already contained therein; the entire sacrifice has already borne fruit. The disciples were unable to grasp this at the time, yet Jesus says: 'Do this in remembrance of me; this is my legacy for you.' If we allow ourselves to receive this legacy, anew every day, then we see that he has summarised his entire legacy in this one sacrifice – a masterpiece of inheritance in which he sums up his life, so that in fifteen or twenty minutes we may receive the whole legacy time and again. The entire legacy is bestowed upon us through his self-sacrifice, and we receive it without really knowing what a gift it is, how great this legacy truly is – incomprehensibly great from every perspective. On Thursday evening, we become aware of this again and again in a special way.

May we truly become aware of this, and may each of us find the willingness to do so. I believe no one doubts that the words of the Mother of God are truly genuine, and that Jesus' sacrifice is indeed all of that. But why do we immediately shrink back from total sacrifice? Why do we shy away from truly letting go of everything, from becoming a total sacrifice? There is no greater folly than to withhold a sacrifice from the dear Lord – only fools can do that, for a sensible person withholds nothing from the dear Lord. And even if, despite everything, almost no one actually does this, I would still be quite prepared to renew myself every day, for that is the future of the Church; that is the new world order which God is building upon those who live in this way. May all this give us the courage not to focus on ourselves, but to know this: if we live this truth, we are on the right path – the path of fidelity, the path of the Church, the path of discipleship within the mystical Body of Christ, within the true Church.

Therein lies the true goal for our present time. The devil has succeeded in discrediting the very greatest memorial of his love to such an extent that it has, as it were, been robbed from us: this Sacrifice has been taken from us, save for a few places, so that we can now only truly celebrate it in very few places. This has never before happened in history – that this Sacrifice should be restricted to so few places worldwide. We must constantly remind ourselves how terrible this situation is, what a predicament we truly find ourselves in. May this fill us with joy and gratitude, but at the same time with a keen awareness not to take this grace for granted, but to make the most of this time of grace whilst it lasts – for if we

it, the time will pass us by. Let us not miss a single day in deepening and increasing our devotion, our total sacrifice. Let us accept every provision.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Fear not, Mary

Sermon of 17 December 2025, 5.30 pm – Quaternary Wednesday in Advent

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear friends, I have already told you that every time I read this Gospel during the liturgy, a new light dawns on me – this has now happened a hundred times, and each time I am curious to see what it will be today. I make no secret of the fact that it was the same again today, and I confess that a thought occurred to me for the very first time. For the first time today, whilst reflecting on this passage – even though I have known it for a long time – I noticed that, after greeting Mary, the angel said to her: ‘Do not be afraid, Mary.’ We have heard these words many times, but was Mary actually afraid at all? She was surprised by the greeting, but she was not afraid. It is interesting that when angels appear, they almost always say exactly that. In a few days’ time – no longer just ten, but already eight or seventeen days until Christmas Eve – the angels will appear to the shepherds, and there too they will say: ‘Do not be afraid.’ And they immediately give the reason: ‘I bring you good news of great joy.’ This suggests that the shepherds were evidently very afraid, and yet the message was so joyful. At the tomb, too, the angel says: ‘Do not be afraid.’ Almost always, when angels appear, these words come first, and each time the angel explains why there is no need to be afraid.

Mary was surprised as to what this greeting might mean, and the angel says: ‘Do not be afraid.’ My interpretation of this is: ‘Do not be afraid, for you will conceive the Son’ – this applies not only to this moment, but for all time. In saying this, the angel assures Mary of the Son’s companionship throughout her entire journey: ‘Do not be afraid when Bethlehem comes. Do not be afraid when you are mocked. Do not be afraid when everyone flees. Do not be afraid when they seek to kill you.’ Do not be afraid of the cross. Do not be afraid of anything, for you have found favour with God. It is always the same reassurance: ‘Do not be afraid.’ Today I spoke to a dear fellow brother who told me at length that the Italians here have an advantage because they know Valtorta’s books almost by heart – in the original Italian, it is even more beautiful and truly a treasure. Today, for the first time, I heard from him that the shepherds of Bethlehem, who had heard the angels back then, were later the ones who stood at the foot of the cross – even closer than the Apostles, for they remained faithful to Jesus right up to the cross. The angel had told them too not to be afraid,

and they did indeed lose all fear. These shepherds remained faithful right up to the foot of the cross; fear had been overcome. They possessed an extraordinary strength of faith in this Jesus. Even when Jesus called out to the Apostles on the lake, because they had taken him for a ghost, he said: 'Do not be afraid.' Yet there is even more to this word spoken to Mary: a prophecy, a power, a grace that is passed on. Mary was certainly full of grace, yet she truly feared nothing; through everything that came her way, through all her anxiety, she possessed the fear of God in its highest form, yet feared nothing else.

That is what we are to take away from this message: that we should fear nothing, for we have found grace with God. The same pattern is found in the end-time messages, too, if they are genuine – even in the Scriptures, in the apocalyptic events with their terrible prophecies, it is said time and again: 'Do not be afraid, you little flock, do not be afraid.' This must sink deep into our hearts, so that we do not fall into doubt. Do not be afraid if you are left alone. Do not be afraid when all manner of things befall you. Do not be afraid when you are cast out. Do not be afraid when you abide in the truth, for whoever accepts the message has found favour with God. Recognising this favour grants us, particularly this week, not only joy – rejoice – but also this 'Do not be afraid'. Rejoice, do not be afraid: we must engrave this deeply upon our hearts; it must become second nature to us, flowing through the very current of our lives, so that when temptation or trial comes, we do not fear. When Jesus suffered the agony of death, it was not fear in the true sense, but a different kind of suffering in the face of the cross – not a fear that would have driven him to flee. Those who are afraid flee, for fear always has the effect of making us cowardly and causing us to flee. That is why this path also requires faithfulness and a clear profession of faith, so that, without looking to the left or to the right, we may steadfastly follow our path. I am not saying this to bind you to anything, but because it is simply the Gospel, and this is the Gospel we truly wish to live.

The second thing we begin to reflect on today: today marks the end of the Rorate season; from now on there will be no more Rorate Masses, and in their place come the so-called O Antiphons – those profound cries of longing for the coming of the Saviour, which we also recognise from some hymns, such as 'O come, O come, Emmanuel' or 'O du fröhliche'. The 'O' is a cry of longing. Today's first cry speaks of wisdom: Come and set everything in order, bring everything into proper order; show us the way of prudence. Prudence is a cardinal virtue, and it means that I direct everything in the right way, in the right order, towards the goal; everything that deters me from this goal, distracts me or impedes me must be set aside. Our goal is salvation, union with God. Here is an example: the priests complained to Saint Charles Borromeo that, just as they were about to celebrate Holy Mass, they were plagued by all manner of distracting, even sexual, thoughts. The saint replied that this was no surprise, for they had not prepared themselves beforehand, having taken in all sorts of impressions, and that anyone who did not prepare for Holy Mass was acting unwisely. Wisdom says: 'I want to encounter Jesus now, so I will switch everything off and leave everything behind.' Part of this wisdom is inner poverty: making myself poor, awakening the cries of longing within me, and preparing myself inwardly. I cannot simply turn up at Mass from the outside and

then expect to be fully present – our spirit is too weak for that. For my part, I know that I am never quite ready, but I begin to prepare myself inwardly first thing in the morning, as soon as I wake up; if I celebrate Mass in the afternoon, I prepare myself throughout the whole day, not just at home. This inner preparation means asking myself what awaits me that evening, and setting aside everything that is unnecessary, everything that fills the mind to such an extent that, when Holy Mass begins, I cannot truly be present. I do not claim to succeed well at this, but I know that prudence demands precisely this – which is why it is a gift of grace: Grant us prudence, so that we may truly be present with all our hearts, so that the heart may be filled; for what the heart is full of, that flows from the mouth. But if the heart is not full of God, all other matters take precedence.

I remember Mario von Brindisi, that visionary who is sometimes met with scepticism. I was present at one of his apparitions in Germany, in the Allgäu, a few years ago; I can't quite recall whether I had travelled there with others from Adelting. Mario von Brindisi was still a young man at the time, in his late thirties. After Holy Mass, during which the apparition of the Mother of God had taken place, he went out amongst the people and immediately began to speak on this subject: he was so filled with the conviction that the Mother of God's message is so important, and that humanity's rejection of it will have dire consequences, that, although he spoke only Italian, he could talk of nothing else, no matter how many questions were put to him. He steered everything towards this one topic because his heart was so moved by it – because the Mother of God is so rejected and because so much is at stake, he had to speak about it. This does not mean that we should force the issue artificially; but if the presence of Jesus truly fills us, then others will ask about it of their own accord, and it will become the topic of conversation. So let us be mindful of what we make the focus of our conversation when we are together. Is it the places we have been, the things that have gone wrong for us, the events that preoccupy us – what, then, is our heart actually full of? We often do not even realise it. In some monasteries, such as that of St Dominic, the only topics of conversation are God and matters concerning God; anyone who is a guest speaks of God; everything else is of no interest. We cannot and should not force this artificially, but if we meet someone and the conversation does not turn to God within a few minutes, then we have, in a sense, failed – then the presence of God within us has no power. It must not be artificial, but must burn from within; then it will arise of its own accord. It is hard to imagine that, during an apparition of Our Lady, people would suddenly start talking about the weather or football – those are simply not the central issues. If it is genuine, the subject of God becomes the only fascinating topic; if it is not, the fault lies not with others but with us, with our inner transformation, our inner purification, our inner conversion.

This is precisely what we want to work on during this time – this transformation – so that we may be filled with God and ourselves become the very subject that draws others in or repels them, that causes some to walk away or even to throw stones at us. When Saint Stephen said, 'I see the heavens opened', it was not really anything terrible – and yet those words sparked such fury that he was stoned to death. We need not wait to be stoned, but whoever truly lives for God will also encounter resistance; 'Whoever is for me is against me,' says the Lord

in a certain sense here too. Let us truly ask for this, for these are the graces we need – if we do not receive them, we are too weak for the battle we are now fighting: the struggle for the salvation of the soul.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The cry of longing of the poor souls for the Saviour

Sermon of 23 December 2025, 5.30 pm – Mass for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My sisters, we now stand on the day before the eve of the most holy Feast of Christmas, for tomorrow's Midnight Mass will already take us into the 25th. Tomorrow is in fact the last day of Advent, the Vigil, and so these days are once again a time of looking back, of uniting ourselves with the cry of longing for the coming of Emmanuel: Come and redeem us. As this is the final hour to raise this cry, let us ask ourselves, and let us be mindful not to forget it: where is the cry of longing for the coming of the Saviour strongest right now? If we imagine that humanity is crying out for the coming of the Messiah, from where does the strongest cry of longing for the coming of the Saviour emanate? From the poor souls. It is precisely there, amongst the poor souls, that the deepest cry of longing for the coming Saviour is to be found—a genuine cry, a call, a weeping—if only we could hear it. Among the poor souls there are levels where this weeping is an unbearable sigh, a sigh for the coming of the Saviour, and at even deeper levels it is even an inability: Some are so bound, like animals, that they can no longer even cry out to God; bound, lying as if dead, according to the descriptions of the mystics and various witnesses who bear witness to Purgatory. There are, therefore, different stages, yet the further the purification has progressed, the louder the cry for the coming of the Messiah becomes.

Even today, in the face of the drama of our times, we must ask ourselves who is truly crying out for the coming of the Messiah, who bears this cry, and where this cry for salvation is most clearly heard. Most certainly it is among the little ones, the lowly, the despised, the outcasts – among all those who are truly in need and distress, wherever they may be in the world. Perhaps some of them do not even realise that this cry for salvation truly reaches up to heaven. All the more reason, then, for us to do our bit, wherever we can, to ensure that the cry for salvation grows ever stronger. Help comes to us at this time from the holy angels, who ally themselves with humankind. Consider the image in the Book of Revelation of the star that falls from heaven and will bring about great bitterness – I do not have this passage before me word for word at the moment, but we can look it up – namely, that bitterness among those who reject the help of the holy

angels, whether within or outside the Church. We see that in the world, the workings of spirits – the world of spirits – is very much a topic of discussion, and esotericism has capitalised on this: never have so many spirits been worshipped as today; writings and books on energies and the spirit world are appearing everywhere – whilst in the Church, where they are truly at work, they are rejected. This revelation has been scrutinised and, it must be said, is in fact watertight; and for those who responsibly reject this grace, there is a severe judgement.

Yet it is precisely the holy angels, when they are allowed to join forces with us, who amplify this cry. Let me use an analogy: I myself do not have a particularly powerful voice; I can only shout loudly when I need to shout at someone or when celebrating a goal at a football match, but otherwise I lack the strength to call out loudly. Thus, the voice needs amplifying, and the holy angels, when they are permitted to join forces with the people entrusted to them, are like a loudspeaker: they not only carry the human voice further, but amplify it many times over; they stand by humanity's side, as it were, on their behalf, for they know the Saviour; they know who he is. They wish to amplify our voice as we cry out for the coming of the Messiah, so that God may answer this cry with his mercy.

Let us also consider what we are actually expecting when we await the Messiah. We await the divine Child, his coming in the stable; yet Jesus is more than just this Child – already in the writings of the prophets, and even today in the O Antiphon, he is awaited as the Liberator, as the Saviour, as the King, as the just Judge in the face of all the injustice in the world. May this multifaceted expectation of the Messiah expand our hearts to a comprehensive expectation, the magnitude, scope and dimensions of which are scarcely comprehensible. Outwardly, we see only the child, yet his coming extends beyond that: he no longer comes to us in the form of the visible child as he did then; whilst his Spirit can indeed be at work everywhere, his coming today is bound to the forms of bread and wine – the deepest bondage, which is at the same time a powerlessness. Yet in this powerlessness of the bread lies hidden the full greatness of the Messiah, through whom all things were created. We await the One for whom the whole of creation was made. We await the One who will come to judge the living and the dead. We await the One who will come with great power and glory. We await the One who will celebrate his triumphal entry, who will no longer come, as he did the first time, entirely innocent and hidden. Even though he comes again today as a child, we must bear in mind that his coming is now different from that of the past: he comes as a child and yet has already returned as the victor; he thus comes simultaneously as a child and as the victor, as the one who lays claim to being Lord of all creation, before whom every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth, before whom every creature shall tremble. We await the One to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth. This litany of who he is could go on, for the expectation we place upon him is a universal one, an all-encompassing one, which we cannot grasp deeply enough in our understanding, in our minds – and so we wish to cry out to him.

We also await the One who brings justice to humanity; above all, however, we hope that truly everyone will accept him for what he is now, above all else: the King of Mercy. This, too, is once again directed towards Christmas – perhaps,

who knows, for the very last time – before he comes as Judge; for if we look to the revelations of Sister Faustina, when he comes as Judge there will be no more mercy for those who have not accepted mercy. Now, however, he comes, offering all the mercy that has so far been largely rejected by humanity. The world cannot find peace as long as it does not accept this offer of mercy, for it is only in this that it finds not merely peace, but redemption and salvation.

Finally, there is something we must not forget, even if we do not wish to acknowledge it: His coming goes even deeper than that of His own Mother. When Mary, historically in this age, presents the divine Child to us today, this is yet another special gift of grace for all humanity. For Mary is the one who receives Him, yet at the same time – and this is the comforting part – she is also already preparing our response to the coming of the Messiah. She prepares this response inwardly for those who welcome him in love. She prepares it for those to whom it makes no difference whether he comes or not. She prepares it also for those who reject him, who fight against him, who will be his enemies, who may even rise up against him today. It is she who prepares this welcome. May God hear her call and, for her sake, not withhold his peace, his grace and his mercy from humanity even today, but grant them the Saviour, despite all ingratitude, despite all turmoil, despite all the resistance he will face even today. Let us unite with her in all that we may look forward to today.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Good Shepherd and the Shepherds of Christmas

Sermon for 2 December 2025, 5.00 pm – Octave of Christmas! St Thomas Becket

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear friends, today – on what is, I believe, the fifth day of the octave, whilst still in the spirit of Christmas – we celebrate a holy Christian: Saint Thomas Becket. May we also become aware of what it means that, right at the beginning, the shepherds were the first to arrive. Jesus would later say of himself that he is the Good Shepherd, the only Good Shepherd to whom all the sheep belong. That which is closest to a person at their birth shapes their life, and so Jesus later identifies with the shepherds when he himself says: ‘I am the good shepherd, and my sheep listen to my voice.’ All those whom he calls to follow him, he appoints as shepherds; thus we have the chief shepherds and the supreme shepherd, and all are shepherds whom he calls into his service. This

quality of being a shepherd defines him as an essential characteristic, which is why it is also said of the first shepherds when they came to him: 'They understood what had been told to them.' We could also say, as we have said time and again right up to the story of the Garden of Eden: 'Their eyes were opened.' According to Maria Valtorta's account, there were precisely twelve shepherds gathered in Bethlehem – I have not read this work in its entirety myself, yet the Italians, although it is not a Gospel, often know it by heart; some have read it four, five, or even ten times; it comprises ten volumes, which are among the most frequently read works among our friends there, and from which they have repeatedly told me stories that I find inspiring and which we may regard as recognised, serious literature. It is not without significance that Jesus, later on, when he called people to follow him, again chose twelve shepherds, and that, as the Shepherd, he identifies so closely with the sheep that they take in his voice to such an extent that they gain a clarity enabling them to distinguish the voice of the Good Shepherd from any other. 'My sheep listen to my voice, and they follow me,' he will say – 'my sheep listen to my voice, and they follow me.'

Just how moving this is is illustrated by a story I have told before, the details of which I no longer recall in full, but which took place several decades ago: a shepherd near Karlsruhe had all his sheep – 111 of them – stolen overnight by bandits. He reported the theft to the police, who set about searching for them, and months later, four thousand sheep were loaded onto a train in Cologne bound for Turkey. The police notified the shepherd and invited him to be present during the loading so that he could identify his animals amongst the four thousand. He let out his call, and one by one all 111 sheep emerged from the crowd, so that he was able to gather them up, whilst the police officers present were greatly astonished that the sheep still recognised their shepherd's voice after all those months. In this way, the animals showed their gratitude in their own way, and this realisation saved their lives, for otherwise they would have been shipped to Turkey and slaughtered. This illustrates how the Good Shepherd knows his own, identifies with them and lays down his life for the sheep – the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. It was precisely those twelve shepherds who, in Bethlehem, were the first to arrive and the first witnesses to tell the infant Jesus of their experience. And Mary treasured all these words in her heart and pondered them. How do we know this? The evangelist Luke must have asked Mary what it had been like in Bethlehem at that time, and she told him how it really was, so that it became the Gospel for us, which we have for all time. So she told him that she had taken what the shepherds reported to heart and reflected on it, treasuring in her heart everything that was said about this Child. We must not forget this either: whatever we bring to Mary and her Child – even now in the Church – whether gifts or words – Mary treasures, ponders and prepares all of this in her heart for her divine Child, even today. Thus it remains not merely a story of the past, but is always present; for in the Gospel of Luke we must always bear in mind that he makes the Gospel a 'today': 'Today the Saviour has appeared to you.' The Nativity is always a 'today' – and nowhere does it become a 'today' as much as in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This very evening, too, it becomes a 'today', a 'now', in

which everything is mysteriously veiled, yet becomes present not merely in the imagination, but in reality.

Since we are celebrating a holy priest today, we are also concerned with that image which stands out clearly before our eyes: how it must correspond to the heart of the Good Shepherd. He must be so deeply transformed into this role of the Good Shepherd that his own, who are his own, may recognise his voice. So today I have also been thinking about what a disgrace it is for priests when we consider how often, during Holy Mass, the priest speaks the words of Jesus: 'This is my body, this is my blood' – how often, then, the miracle of transubstantiation takes place, with Jesus himself speaking these words through the priest. He speaks them not only over the bread and wine, but over all the offerings lying on the altar, and above all over the priest himself: 'This is my Body, this is my Blood.' This miracle of transubstantiation therefore takes place not only on the altar, but also within the priest and within those who are present – we are increasingly transformed into the Body of Jesus. Yet this follows a certain law: The priest offers as a gift not only those present, but many, sometimes thousands, indeed tens of thousands. Just think how many people Father Pio spiritually brought to the altar when he celebrated Holy Mass, over whom Jesus spoke within him: 'This is my Body, this is my Blood', and the miracle of transubstantiation took place, so that they were transformed into Jesus. If this does not happen, it is a matter of divine law that the priest himself must also be transformed; but if, after ten, twenty, or even thirty, forty, fifty years as a priest, he has still not been transformed into Jesus, then—to put it bluntly—that is truly a disgrace upon a disgrace. Let us consider how seriously Jesus takes this, and how little the priest's soul is one with him, with his Body and Blood; how little it has become bread – we have Bethlehem, the House of Bread – so we recognise in this, even today, the greatest disgrace for the Church and the greatest suffering for Jesus and his Mother: that the shepherd may validly perform the miracle of the Consecration, yet it is not enough for him personally, for he does not allow himself to be transformed. But that which is transformed becomes God's own; it is so thoroughly absorbed into God that afterwards one's whole life, all one's thoughts and feelings revolve solely around Jesus, and from there he gives himself to his own. Everything he then does and gives away in his self-sacrifice springs from this transformed state for the sake of his own: thus he gives himself in the sacraments, but also in the lives of those who belong to him. This applies not primarily to the priest alone, but to all of us, and the more we have been transformed in this way, the more our soul too will recognise the voice of the Good Shepherd, for it is the soul that perceives this voice in its innermost being.

In the past, people used to say: **sentire cum ecclesia**, that is, to feel as the Church feels. If a parish priest used to preach nonsense from the pulpit back then, the people would immediately sense that this was not in accordance with the Gospel, because they had remained Catholic at heart. Today, priests can preach all manner of nonsense without the people even realising when something is not Catholic – we accept everything as if it were the truth, and thus the deception is complete. If we truly wish to abide in Jesus, we must be able to discern this voice. Today I wrote my letter to the Dicastery in Rome, which, on behalf of the diocese, has been asking me since 25 November, in eight points, whether I recognise the Pope as such, whether I recognise the Cardinal as Catholic, and so on. I had to write in no uncertain terms,

that I do not recognise the voice of the Good Shepherd in what is happening at present, and that I am steadfast in my resolve to continue along the path we are now following. All the hostility does not alter the fact that, when I look to the Good Shepherd and perceive his voice within me, that voice has, if anything, grown even stronger: that what is happening now is not the Good Shepherd, that it is not identical to what I recognise in my heart, even under spiritual guidance and external scrutiny. I have written – though not yet sent it off – that, provided one can prove to me that it is not true, I am more than willing to allow myself to be corrected on the path of seeking the truth; but the evidence must be presented to me so that I may identify with the voice of the Good Shepherd, with that voice which teaches me that this is not the way, not the truth, not the Good Shepherd, and that, were I to follow it, I would be exposing myself and those I am called to lead to seduction, indeed to the enemy. That, I may say, is my deepest conviction; that is my identity. And what is comforting to me is that, should this conviction prove to be incorrect upon honest examination, I would have to change immediately; yet I receive, time and again, confirmation that things are not as they are currently portrayed to the outside world, but that, when I return anew to the manger and reflect from the manger, from the altar, it becomes more and more a deep conviction: I must not falsely deny myself and say of what I recognise in black and white that it is, after all, true; I cannot call white black when white is white and black is black, even if outward obedience might perhaps require it. So I know that I may well face secularisation for this – the most severe ecclesiastical punishment there is – and that we will likely suffer for it; yet no one can take away from me that innermost core, which is embedded within this innermost core. I had not intended to speak so openly about this today, but it is simply the truth.

So today, too, the Gospel confirms: Heaven is open, and even now, in this action at the altar, we see the great longing of the Good Shepherd, who gives himself anew to his own and wishes to transform as many as possible—indeed, as much of creation as possible—into himself. May our zeal grow within us to offer as much as possible, so that as much as possible may be transformed and become his own, his Body and Blood. For what has become Body and Blood cannot be transformed back – what is merely blessed may lose that blessing again, but what has been transformed into Body and Blood remains forever the property of God. Herein lies our hope: that we must recognise the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as the highest value and defend it to the very end, for it is already being taken from us in many ways; indeed, in practice, it has already been taken from us in many ways. That is why, especially now, during the Christmas season, our highest priority is to truly go to the manger, just as the shepherds went to the manger, and to understand there what was said about this Child: that He is the Redeemer, the Saviour, the King of Kings, the Ruler before whom every knee shall bow, the Lord who is to come to judge the living and the dead. Now that we have this Child before us, let us not forget this.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Song of Love and Love for One's Enemies

Sermon for 2 January 202c, 5.00 pm – St Polycarp

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, as we have already said, the main theme of Sunday's Gospel continues throughout the week. On Sunday, we focused in particular on the commandment to love one's enemies, the purification of the will, and also the humility of faith shown by that centurion who spoke to Jesus with great reverence: 'Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof' – a faith that moved Jesus himself to admiration. Today, in the Epistle of St John, we have heard once again how we have come to know the love of God. St Paul writes in the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians that sublime hymn to love, describing how marvellous it is, how love believes, hopes and endures all things – those famous words which are usually read out at weddings, but where, as soon as it comes to the reality of everyday life, everything that was so solemnly stated – be it on the invitation card or proclaimed as a life motto – is often forgotten after just fourteen days, as I myself have experienced many times. St John puts it this way: How do we know what God's love is? By the fact that he laid down his life for us – as a sacrifice of atonement, a sacrifice of love, a sacrifice of thanksgiving, a sacrifice of supplication, a sacrifice of worship, a sacrifice of praise, a sacrifice in every respect. Herein lies a mystery for our own path of discipleship as well, for how else could we lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters—for those we love and also for those we do not love—if not in the liturgy, in worship? This is perhaps the deepest mystery of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass: that, just as Jesus gives himself up out of love for him for every person dear to our hearts, we make an inner offering within the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, offering ourselves to God for everyone, spiritually presenting ourselves as a sacrifice and being prepared to take everything upon ourselves. This is a truly great act of self-surrender – the Holy Mass is always a truly great act of self-surrender, in which we offer all gifts, symbolised by bread and wine, yet it is always about the entire sacrifice. And when this is done with a pure, sincere intention, then that is truly the greatest thing.

Let us now look at this in very practical terms: we can, in spirit, in Jesus, sacrifice ourselves entirely for one another at any time, with all the consequences that entails. We do not know how God then ratifies and brings about this sacrifice; yet once it has been offered as a sacrifice, it will one day be revealed, it will come to light. It is always a profession of faith before God, towards our neighbour in love, but also towards those we do not yet love, those we might call our enemies. I have begun, even for my enemies, during Holy Mass, when I offer the bread and wine, to offer up the whole of creation's life—including that of my enemies and my friends—as a sacrifice, by saying: 'Accept it, even the blood, in its entirety.' And when the enemy then behaves like an enemy, I think to myself: What do you actually want – I have already offered my life for you; in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass it has already been offered up for you; you can do whatever you like; my resolve is firm, for out of love for God, out of victory, I have offered my life for you, for your good. We can do this a hundred thousand times, and the greater our strength becomes in doing so – and this is a particularly relevant

topic – the more possible it becomes when, in Holy Mass, we offer ourselves with Jesus for the sake of many, for instance for the conversion of sinners; that is a generous offering.

I remember Gabrielle Bossis, who was once travelling by train with Jesus and to whom he revealed himself. She recounted that there were perhaps a thousand people on the train, and she said to Jesus: 'I offer myself up for all those thousand people on the train, so that none of them may be lost.' To which Jesus first replied: 'You're making quite a bargain with me there' – and then added: 'But I like that, I like that; do this bartering with me often. I offer you my life, but in return you must commit yourself: let none be lost. You can demand anything of me, but let none be lost.' When she had seen how her fellow passengers on the train were behaving, she had simply said: 'I offer myself for them; let none be lost' – and evidently Jesus was pleased with that. This is also an example for us today: we need momentum, we need an offering, for God grants us his love for the salvation of the world and the longing for it. This should apply particularly to the priest, and for myself, it is becoming more and more a joy within me to offer myself for all of you, for everyone with whom we are connected. I need not say this to anyone, but before God: all of us who are called to this, I offer myself in every Mass for others, wholly and completely; with the purest love I wish to unite myself with your sacrifice, to unite myself with Mary's sacrifice, and whatever you may ask of me, I want to be ready to trust in your grace. Once this is made manifest before God, it is a confession to my enemies as well as to my friends, known to God alone, just as he also knows how much my intention still needs to be purified, so that I do not offer my sacrifice with an ulterior motive, such as in the hope that I might thereby become a good co-worker. Of course, we hope that as many as possible will join us, but the point is simply that we give away our strength.

We know that Jesus wants us, above all for the priests, to offer ourselves in this way – for those priests who have simply gone astray and often do not even realise it themselves. You cannot say to them: 'You have gone astray; who is the most astray?' Deep down, however, we know just how far astray they are, even if we cannot speak to them about it. Yet inwardly, before God, we can make this offering: 'You can say what you like, you can do what you like – but I offer myself to you before God, with the holy escort of angels, I offer myself to you in your sacrifice, entirely without reservation.' This is more than a prayer, more than an intercession; it is truly going all out. If one repeats this daily, nothing in the other person need change as a result; I must not expect the other person to finally convert simply because I have made this offering so many times. Nothing need happen outwardly – God knows. But it counts before God; it counts before God. And therein lies our hope, even in secret: that we gather all this up, so that, if we are allowed to celebrate Holy Mass perhaps twice a day, it becomes ever more powerful. I must say, when I realise that we are allowed to do this, I feel downright overwhelmed by it, unreal in my joy, when I see with what pure intention God rewards it, how generously He rewards it, how He truly bestows His grace and lets it flow out, drawing as many people as possible into this sacrifice. As this field of power grows within us, we can offer up more and more of our entire surroundings before God – both those we know and those we do not know. We could now dwell on everything that is going wrong in the world – it may be right and

just to recognise this – but the sacrifice remains: He loved us whilst we were still sinners; He gave Himself up for us whilst we were still sinners. That is why it is also important for us to give ourselves up whilst we are still sinners. For a saint, it is indeed a joy to give oneself and to be united with him; but for a sinner, this actually embodies the commandment to love one's enemies, a love that is greater than anything else.

This is the path that Mary also shows us, and something we may devote ourselves to for all eternity. Whenever I read this, I am fascinated by it anew every day; I am filled with it, and I wish to expand upon it daily, to take more of it into myself. Not that we should become megalomaniacs and think we could save the whole world, but in this intention we recognise God's plan: that the world is saved through sacrifice, through the offering of sacrifice. This is something truly wonderful, if we believe it – it is a mystery of faith, but also a grace of faith, a power of faith that is immeasurable and pleasing to God, because it is His life that He so generously bestows upon us in every Holy Mass. Conversely, we must say: if we do not do this, Jesus' sacrifice remains, in itself, the miracle of the Consecration, the ever-valid event; yet if our cooperation, our sharing in the sacrifice, is weak, then the efficacy of the Mass is also severely limited. And it is precisely in this area – in practice, in catechesis, in theology – that we have not been properly trained since the Council – I cannot recall exactly when; such training is lacking, yet it would be of the utmost importance. Children should also be taught this in catechesis and at school; that would be of the utmost importance. These are the inner mysteries of the faith, which we cannot rejoice in enough, but which we also wish to constantly renew. So let us ask our heavenly Mother to teach us, following her example, always to say a wholehearted 'yes' to every sacrifice that God asks of us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God's gifts and the gifts of the adversary

Sermon of 4 February 202c, 5.30 pm – St Andrew Corsini

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, this parable of the talents, which recurs time and again in the traditional liturgy, prompts us to reflect anew on how these talents relate to the current situations in our lives. It is not immediately clear whether the master who sent out his servants was a good or a bad master – simply one who entrusted his wealth and possessions to his servants. In the Kingdom of God, it is certainly God himself who has given these talents to his own, yet we also have an adversary, whom Jesus himself describes as the lord of this world, the prince of this world. He too has many talents to distribute; he

work to be done in his vineyard, puts his talents to use and makes them bear fruit. When we observe public life, we must conclude that those who are active today – managing, working and profiting from everything they possess and are capable of – do not exactly look as though they are using their talents in the service of our Lord God.

I remember how, years ago, when I was still involved with the Kisi – a youth movement that had a different motto each year – I once experienced the motto: ‘On His Majesty’s behalf’. Throughout the year, the children lived out this motto, and the question was: ‘What can we, as children and young people, do on His Majesty’s behalf?’ So they came up with ideas for what they wanted to do – for example, when they performed as a choir – and the question was always: ‘On whose behalf are you doing this?’ ‘On His Majesty’s behalf’ – and they went about their work with such total dedication that they really made it wonderful. So today, too, we could ask anyone who is active anywhere in this world, who works in a company or a shop and puts their talents to good use: ‘On whose behalf are you acting?’ Even if they would not say so themselves, the way they work and create gives a hint as to which Master stands behind them. If we observe this closely, it seems that many who are active today are acting on behalf of the one who wishes to take everything into his possession, to get everything under his control – and that does not exactly seem to be the Holy Spirit, nor exactly the dear Lord, of whom we know that through him a harvest for the Kingdom of God comes about. Rather, we see in it a kind of rampant growth, a restlessness, a frantic rush, a drive to create, a burning out, a state of servitude, a being driven to the very limit. This applies to us too, and we must examine ourselves to see whether that Lord, the One who makes us great, might not also wish to put his talents to use within us somewhere, or whether we, who call ourselves Christians, who are God’s own, are truly acting solely on behalf of His Majesty.

In the case of the holy priest whom we celebrate today, we can see – even without having his entire biography before us – that he truly, on behalf of his Lord, on behalf of His Majesty, won over many souls and accomplished many acts of kindness, from which one could always recognise the mission on which he was travelling and who stood behind everything he did. So, for us today, it is also a matter of examining our consciences as we reflect on this. It is like the proofs of God’s existence: Saint Thomas Aquinas sets out five natural proofs of God’s existence, and he shows that when one examines, for example, creation or nature – let us take a rose – one must ask about its origin. Where does the rose derive the regularity that makes it so beautiful? If one goes back to the root, to the seed, and asks where all this has its origin, then, according to St Thomas, any honest thinker would have to conclude: that is God. For no human being can, of their own accord, bring about this regularity in an animal or a plant. This is certainly not conclusive proof, and some say that it is nature itself that one must revere, indeed deify. But where does nature come from? Nature, too, has an origin; it did not come into being of its own accord, so that we must once again conclude: it is God. This is what happened to one of the great saints – I cannot recall his name exactly now – who, as an atheist, gazed at the starry sky and, as he contemplated it, realised just how vast it all is, so that he fell to his knees and said: ‘How great must He be who created this!’ And that can only be God. Thus he was converted and became a saint.

It is exactly the same with talents: if we consider the case of someone who works solely out of greed for possessions, pursues a passion or seeks earthly fame – even if, outwardly, this is not yet a sin – let us think of the record books, of the world champions whom we hold in high esteem, honour and value: Every year there are new world records, but what was the motivation of the person who wanted to achieve such a record? Who is their sponsor, who gives them the drive to toil, to put themselves under pressure, to give it their all? In sport – take football, for example – the whole world gives its all for victory. Yet let us ask ourselves who this ultimately benefits, who is really behind it all – certainly we can say that a wonderful community with noble goals is created, but we must examine closely who the ultimate beneficiary is, for that is where the truth is revealed. Such impulses and inclinations lie in human blood, in the flesh: if we investigate where anger comes from, where desire comes from, we realise that all this lies in the flesh and blood. But who is the source of all these desires, all these cravings? Is it God? We must conclude: it is not God. In contrast, let us consider the person who, with their talents – be it one, two, five or ten – is acting on God's behalf, such as someone who practises works of mercy without regard for reward, without seeking recompense, out of a selflessness that goes to the limits and beyond – where does that come from, on whose behalf are they acting? Here we must say: The one who commissions them is someone who lives out of God. We can apply this across the board: to forgiveness, to works of mercy, to the Beatitudes. When someone makes themselves spiritually poor, fully committing themselves to this realm of poverty in order to be entirely at God's disposal, to be completely free for God – who is behind this, and on whose behalf are they striving? We must say: the devil does not do that. Or let us consider a humble person who always assigns themselves the lowest place, not out of tactics, but because they truly feel that way deep down, who considers themselves to be nothing – if we examine this in the case of a truly pure, genuine humble person, we must say: this can only come from God.

So today we find ourselves in the midst of these events, yet the harvest will come. It may well seem as though those who are currently acting on the enemy's behalf could truly take possession of everything whilst it is in bloom. Yet above all this stands an angel who, when all this is in full bloom, will appear on God's behalf; whose seal will be broken; and who will then proclaim where the true reality truly lies. Even though we do not know this angel by name, he is described in the Book of Revelation, in the fourteenth chapter: the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever; day and night there is no rest for those who worship the Beast and his image and bear the mark of his name – that is to say, all whose works bear this distinguishing mark, if we consider this spiritually. Thus, it is all those who worship the Beast and its image who will be reaped when this angel is released: they are to be tormented with fire and brimstone before the holy angels and the Lamb, day and night without rest, because they worship the image, serve it and bear the mark of its name. We are now in that phase in which it is becoming increasingly clear with what name, with what distinguishing mark, we mark our works; and when the reckoning comes, it will become apparent what will truly happen. Those who are working in the name of God, on His behalf and with His talents,

may still remain hidden for now, but in the end the true victors will be those who are rewarded, for all their works follow them: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord', that is, those who were working on His behalf – they shall rest from their labours, for their works follow them, a phrase often heard in the Liturgy of the Dead.

So let us entrust our path again and again entirely to the Heavenly Mother. It is she who guides us through this darkness, who enables us to recognise where the truth truly lies, and who may also help us to uncover what is hidden within ourselves – so that, when we discover it within ourselves, we may immediately send our notice of termination to that false master. If we are engaged in any form of service today, we know how to give notice, and it is likewise in our own hands to issue this notice of termination without delay to the one who may be taking possession of us without our realising it, so that we may once again work solely for the One from whom our talents truly flow and from whom we know we shall receive eternal glory. This is a fascinating topic because we are constantly grappling with it: whatever I do – however pious everything may appear on the outside, with the most devout appearance and the most devout behaviour – what lies deep within, in my very blood, reveals on whose behalf I am actually acting. Thus, we are constantly engaged in a struggle and faced with the decision as to what mission we are on and for whom we truly wish to devote all our strength.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The hidden presence of Christ in the Eucharist

Sermon from 2 February 202c, 5.00 pm – Holy Mass of the Epiphany!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us take another look at this mystery. What concerns me is this: Herod, at that time, had very detailed information about the birth of the true Child; he knew exactly where this Child had been born. For us, however, the reality of his birth is most certain, most assured, beyond all doubt and in a perfect way, precisely where he is present amongst us in the forms of bread and wine. There is no doubt about that. All other forms of his presence are precious too. When we venerate the Baby Jesus in a church, wherever he may be placed there, it is a sacramental, and we can encounter Jesus there as well. When children set up a nativity scene somewhere in the woods and venerate the Infant Jesus, an encounter with God is likewise possible, in prayer and in spiritual communion. Miracles can also happen, for miracles are always possible with God; and when we receive Holy Communion spiritually, that too is an encounter with the divine Child. Yet the deepest encounter is that which takes place in the Sacrament,

reserved for those who have access to Jesus in the sacrament, where he truly gives himself and bestows his grace.

There, too, it is necessary – we know it, we believe it – that we truly experience and feel him within. To do this, we must descend into non-being, to that place where the enemy can no longer reach. And where can he no longer reach? There where a person, in humility, completely divests themselves of everything, where they become utterly small in poverty and humility. How do we recognise that they are truly utterly small? It is not enough for me to resolve to become utterly small, to want to be entirely like a child. Rather, this humility, this non-being, is brought about through trials: we are transformed and tested from within, and it is by the nature of our reactions to these trials that we recognise whether there is still resistance deep within us. When we are denied, when we are mocked, when we are despised, when we are reviled, when we are accused, when we are hated by everyone in whatever way – one might even think one is doing God a service by doing so – then what matters is how we react. If we get upset about it, if we want to call down judgement, if, like the sons of Zebedee, we want to call down fire from heaven and demand justice, then that is not yet the preparation; that is not yet the level of humility at which we can truly meet the Child face to face, heart to heart.

Only when a person is no longer anything, when even the lowest place seems too exalted for them, when the lowest place, by far, must still be the lowest – only when we recognise ourselves there is the way clear for us to encounter the Child, so that it may accept as a sacrifice our treasures, our gifts, all that we can offer it as a sacrifice, and that it then allows its presence to dawn and shine forth within us like a light, so that we know: this is no deception. It is the divine Child itself, who in his grace has taken shape within us, who is present within us, who is alive within us. This is not bound to any office, it is not bound to anything external, but it is truly the inner grace, the inner transformation, the inner readiness.

And there, as our ultimate source of trust, Mary always stands. If we allow ourselves to take refuge in her presence, she will lead us there and prepare us; if we allow her to prepare us, she will, together with the holy angels, equip us even now for this encounter with the true Child, so that we can have no further doubt: He is here, He is among us, taken up in the flesh, made man – not somewhere in the world, but in you and me.

We see the testimony to this today, as we celebrate the Passion, in our ability to follow Jesus, the divine Child, on the Way of the Cross. There, in the Stations of the Cross – we are contemplating the twelfth station – it becomes clear how we too can follow Jesus, the Crucified One, in our daily lives, and how deeply grace is at work within us. Let us simply reflect on this and give thanks when God leads us along this path, and view the Way of the Cross with gratitude, as befits the humble: the humble recognise that they do not really deserve for God to lead them along the Way of the Cross, that he should test them in this way and allow them to share in his suffering, in his journey. This is the grace in which we are allowed to rejoice in his presence.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Faith of the Centurion of Capernaum

Sermon of 1 February 202c, 5.30 pm – Thursday after Ash Wednesday

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My brothers and sisters, today, on this Thursday evening, we always commemorate Jesus in the Holy Eucharist; the Gospel reading of the day serves as a preparation for the Passion of the Lord. Today we are presented with this example of faith in the centurion, who entrusts his servant to Jesus so that he may heal him. He was not even his own son, and yet Jesus sets out to heal him; he sees the centurion's faith and responds to it, so that his servant is healed. But even more than that, Jesus is amazed by the faith he has found here, a faith he has not found throughout all of Israel. This example may not be the greatest miracle that Jesus performed, yet this example of the faithful centurion has had a profound effect on many people over the course of two millennia: Many have come to this faith through it, to the certainty that one can truly entrust everything to Jesus, that one may expect miracles from Jesus through faith. Certainly, many such miracles have taken place. I recall an instance where, inspired by this example, someone entrusted a very serious matter, a grave distress, to Jesus and experienced marvellous help.

So today, too, it is an invitation for us, as we enter the season of Lent, to reflect on what we have already seen in the Old Testament, in the prophet Isaiah: how the king, to whom death had in fact already been announced, whose death had already been foretold, prayed and wept, and how God then prolonged his life. Let us bear in mind: the fruit of sin is death. Anyone who lives in sin is, in fact, a candidate for death, for sin ultimately always leads to death, and it often also means an early death here on earth. Mortal sin robs life – and nature too – of a great deal of vitality; it robs us of many of our strengths, even if a person perhaps drags themselves along and still reaches a ripe old age. Sin robs a person of their vitality, their courage to face life, and their joy in life.

And yet there is also the fear of dying. Many are afraid of death because they are burdened with heavy guilt, cannot free themselves and will not allow themselves to be freed; and so they face death with dread, postponing it by every possible means, just so that they can delay that hour for as long as possible, because they fear the worst. Because they fear the worst. How many people do we encounter who live with this fear and who try to mask it by every possible means?

That is one thing. The other is what we are invited to do today: to follow the centurion's example and ask ourselves what we can do, how far we are prepared to take upon ourselves the suffering of our fellow human beings, how far we are prepared to go for the people around us who are heading towards death. We know they are, in fact, condemned to death – I am thinking not so much of the physical aspect, but of how many people, even in our own midst, live in grave sin, are heading towards death and

have the worst to fear. And who stands up for them? If only we had someone to stand up for them, to take them upon themselves and bring them to Jesus – it need not necessarily be their next of kin. But precisely where Jesus lives within a person and is at work in their innermost being – and this is his desire within each of us too – it is that we should willingly stand up for them, that we should intercede and pray, that we should truly take responsibility – take responsibility, not because we could redeem them, not because we are the saviours, but responsibility in faith.

Every gift of the faith has, in many ways, bestowed upon us a great grace of faith, yet it is not an end in itself, merely so that we might save our own flock. It is a gift to us, a responsibility, that we intercede before God on behalf of as many people as possible, that we bring as many as possible before God, that we bring as many as possible before God in such earnest supplication that He may have mercy, that He may bestow the miracles of healing and transformation. There lies a rich harvest before us. As we look ahead during this Lent, we are invited to practise the works of mercy, the great works of mercy; this also includes bringing before God all those around us who are far from Him, who are in error, who are in spiritual confusion, who are captive, who are enslaved, who are oppressed, who are forgotten and lost – just as we find them – so that, in an act of faith, with the courage of faith, with conviction of faith, with the strength of faith, before God. That is the first thing: that we bring them before Him, that we present them to Him in spirit. If we were to gather them up spiritually every day, as it were, in a bowl, in a basket – spiritually speaking – or if we were to picture the harvest being brought in on a harvester, or however we might choose to imagine it – they themselves may no longer be able to set out and go to meet God. Thus, we believers are blessed with the grace to take responsibility and bring them before God on their behalf.

And if we also offer ourselves as a sacrifice for this, if we offer this up for our own lives, it will have its effect. The more generously we offer ourselves, the more generously God, for His part, will begin to act. Of course, we do not see it: how many are converted through this, how many come to faith, how many turn back inwardly, how many at least reach the point where they are not lost, where they are not lost for ever. We do not know. Outwardly, we may see only failure, only resistance. But how many are saved even today certainly depends very much on the strength of our inner faith.

When, for example, we enter into the Passion service, when we are with the Lord during the Passion service, outwardly this is merely ‘being with the Lord’: ‘Watch and pray with me.’ Yet it is precisely these Passion services that are of ineffable value for the salvation of the world. In a teaching by the Holy Angels on the Passio Domini, it is said: If, for example, you are overcome by tiredness – we were accustomed to always observing the three hours of the Passion in the evening, persevering for three hours in the Lord – then take heed: one thing is natural tiredness; prepare yourselves for that; but if, afterwards, sleep then overwhelms you as an attack, then it may concern the salvation of a soul that is now coming before the judgement. If you fall asleep, if you give in to sleep, they are lost; if you give in, they cannot be saved. Your struggle against tiredness – you do not see it, but your struggle against tiredness is

crucial to the salvation of so many. That shook me deeply at the time, for during the Passion of the Lord one is always prone to becoming drowsy and falling asleep. So it was not a matter of offering fervent prayers, but simply of persevering, of fighting, of fighting against tiredness, of fighting for the salvation of the soul.

And being in distress, being in distress, being in need, persevering and standing firm in the Spirit – all of this should truly be an act of faith, so that as many as possible may be saved. In this way, day by day, especially in these works of mercy, we can commit ourselves to the faith in this manner, so that perhaps we may receive more and more each day when we present ourselves before God. You yourselves need not even be aware of it. God knows. We do not need to shout it from the rooftops. But when, for example, we pray for the priests we know, those who are far away, the priests or leaders who are in need, wherever we may be – God will bring us close to the people who are waiting for us and whom He wishes to bring to us. May the Holy Angels help us in this; our guardian angels, too, will surely stand by us and bring us closer to those in their care. Our Heavenly Mother knows exactly how many she can entrust to us. And perhaps by way of explanation: many who then begin to pray more fervently, who are on the path to conversion and are committing themselves more deeply, often come and say: ‘Since I’ve been praying, I’ve been under much, much more pressure, much, much more burdened.’ ‘When I don’t pray, I feel much better. When I don’t pray, I feel much more at ease; life is much more beautiful then.’ Perhaps this is often precisely because, through prayer, we exert a pull on those who are waiting for help, for salvation; those who can no longer cope without prayer and without the prayers of others; those who cannot take the leap towards their own conversion, towards their own path.

So may this example serve as an invitation to us today: that we may truly be ready in every way; that we may present a great harvest to God every day if possible; that we may bring as many people as possible to him in full faith, so that he may work the miracles of healing; and that we ourselves may also say: ‘Lord, I am not worthy that you should grant this to me.’ I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but speak but a word, and not only my soul, but the souls of the many may be healed.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

From lawlessness to God’s commandments

Sermon of 25 February 202c, 5.30 pm – Ash Wednesday during Lent

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today's Lenten readings trace a path back to the event at which God's commandments were first given. We must bear in mind that many years, indeed millions of years, had passed before the people of Israel were chosen – although some doubt exactly how many millions of years elapsed between the Fall in Paradise and the choosing of the people of Israel, it was certainly a long period during which the world became populated. Holy Scripture tells us little of all this, and so the history of salvation begins only with the mention of the people of Israel, with the story of Abraham. Until then, let us say, there was a state of lawlessness: although human beings had a conscience of sorts – we think of Cain and Abel even in those days – there were as yet no commandments. Everything was, so to speak, lawless. Then God chose his people and saw all their disorder. And he then made them realise, through great signs – which for the people at the beginning was the greatest grace, the greatest sign of their election – what is right and what is wrong. These were the commandments. Yet this lawlessness was so deeply ingrained that, no sooner had Moses brought them the commandments than they immediately returned to worshipping the golden calf and fell away once more – truly appalling. We know this story. So God's Commandments were given amidst great signs and wonders, so that the people might believe: so that they might see that God had truly given them amidst signs and wonders, so that they might believe and abide by them. And this apostasy has continued throughout the ages – yet God has not therefore abolished His Commandments. To this very day, He has not set them aside, but has deepened them even further; He has even added the new commandment to them. This is the guide for us, to which every person can and should adhere; if they adhere to it, they will find happiness, if they hold fast to the commandments. 'This is the one who loves me, the one who keeps my commandments,' says Jesus.

And so, among the people of Israel as well as today, we have the same apostasy. We know the commandments, and yet we have apostasy; we have unbelief. And so we ask again and again: Who is now in unbelief, who lives in sin – what must happen for them to be converted? Where and when have people been converted over the centuries? It is an interesting story how these conversions took place. In the beginning, it was the Apostles: when they preached, they had five thousand converts baptised. Then there were the signs and wonders of the saints; then some were converted through natural phenomena. Let's jump straight to the present day: what do people today look for to excuse themselves from having to be converted? It was the same with the Israelites back then: Jesus performed signs and wonders, and yet the vast majority simply did not believe. They said: 'Give us a sign!' – as if the miracles had not been signs enough. 'Give us a sign!' This demand continued right up to the cross, even as he was dying on it: 'If you are the Son of God, give us a sign; come down now, so that we may believe!' It went on like this right to the very end. 'Give us a sign!' In this way, people always find an excuse, a justification. Just think of all the pretexts the Pharisees came up with to avoid having to repent! In the end, they went so far as to claim that he was possessed by an evil spirit—an evil spirit who cast out demons through Beelzebub, the prince of demons. And we know how that ended: even before they repented, they preferred to kill him. That was the better choice for them—to kill him rather than to believe and repent. That is the story.

And so it is today: the need for conversion is glaringly obvious. But how does conversion take place today? Where are the conversions? What, if they still exist at all, are the paths to conversion today? The paths to conversion are, on the one hand, the places of pilgrimage, and it is always the extraordinary signs – today, for example, when we think of Iran or China: There are no missionaries there, but people have dreams, the Lord appears to them, and they are converted – a path through miraculous apparitions, through the apparition itself. Yet when people see the ordinary signs, even the greater miracles, this does not have nearly as great an effect as the greatest miracles: the miracle of baptism, for instance, or the miracle of the forgiveness of sins. There is no miracle comparable to it – not when someone experiences a miracle of healing, not when the stars turn in the sky, not whatever else anyone might experience. Nothing compares to the miracle of Confession. I must say: this is a far greater miracle, but it no longer appeals to people. If it did appeal to them, it would also lead to more conversions; but as it is – I don't understand it – it actually leads to fewer conversions. Yet people spend so much money on their health, do everything for body and soul: psychiatrists on every corner, an invitation on every street – psychiatrists, psychotherapists, who knows what else. But there are no signs saying: 'Here is an open confessional.' In Altgöttingen we have not yet found a single street where it says: 'Here is a confessional' – except, of course, in the church doorways, where the confessionals stand almost gathering dust and empty anyway. This means that the greatest miracle does not appeal to people. Thus, it is precisely the extraordinary signs that still lead people to conversion today.

Another way is the calls of the Mother of God, which go forth everywhere: they do lead to individual conversions, but not to large-scale conversions. And what other ways does God have? God has yet another way to bring about human conversion: the way of purification. This means that when disasters, wars or other events occur, people do convert; they call upon God; they cry out to God. And it seems that the good Lord continually invites us to conversion, that the signs are always open to us, as is the path of prayer – and yet very few are converted through sermons. I sometimes feel disheartened because so few are converted, and yet I do not stop preaching: every day I preach for twenty minutes, and the conversions can be counted on the fingers of one hand. In other words, little is happening.

And what are we to do? We can wait for God to intervene. Even now: from tomorrow, I believe, there is to be war in Iran; the war is to begin. And if God then allows wars as a trial, perhaps conversion will come about through them. Or: When does a person cry out, when do they call upon God, when do they truly turn to Him? When do they truly cry out to God? I must confess: I have never cried out to God as loudly as I did in that moment of mortal danger. I've told you this before: during a night of penance with a prayer group in Lower Austria, I set off at midnight, heading somewhere where I was living at the time. And then I reached Simmering – that's a winding road near Vienna that leads up the hill. I was driving up there, and at the top there was a patch of oil that caused me to skid off the road. Then I tumbled down the hill. There, in the middle of the night, I screamed so loudly – I don't think I've ever screamed that loudly since – because I was calling out to the holy guardian angels: 'Dear God, help me!' Why shouldn't I have screamed so loudly on that day? I screamed so loudly that surely all the

foxes and deer nearby must have run away. And then I actually landed safely back on the ground – the car was a write-off, but as I realised afterwards, I myself was unharmed. You saw this as a miraculous rescue; but I remember above all that I screamed so loudly as I have never done before, even when praying. It was, quite simply, an existential crisis. This means that even in screaming, powers are unleashed, and God intervened. God intervened.

We see this too in the lives of the saints, indeed in Jesus himself: the Letter to the Hebrews tells us that he offered his prayers to God with loud cries and tears, and because of his reverence, he was heard. This means that he also answers our earnest prayers; they help us out of our distress. God waits for our trust, for that act of faith in our distress, for us to truly bring it before him in faith and trust. And God always does so – there is no example where he has not intervened. Let us think of the hymn to the Mother of God – how does it go again? ‘Gracious Queen, remember...’ And how does it continue? It is unheard of. It is unheard of for all eternity. It is unheard of. That means: we must cry out. That is the cry, the cry for conversion. People hide, they flee from conversion – humanity flees from conversion. But God will reach them. He will find them. And even if it is through catastrophe, through war – he will find them, because he loves them. It is not punishment, it is the wrath of God; but the wrath of God is the love of God, because he does not want humankind to destroy itself, because he does not want humankind to be lost.

That is the one thing today: the theme of conversion, and what lies ahead, what God is waiting for. What are we to do? What are we to do? God sees the necessity and acts in His own way; yet the necessity of conversion, the cry for it, must reach heaven. And the other point is this: when we think today of those who are on the journey, who are growing weak, who are losing heart, who have no strength left, who, as followers, are facing the hardest struggle, the most severe trials – what then helps us? What is the nourishment that helps us? For Moses, it was the bread that the angel had left behind; for us, the forty days are, as it were, a symbol of the journey through the desert, of the journey – forty days is the journey to our eternal home; the symbol is time. And the nourishment, the main nourishment for us, is Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. There is no more powerful nourishment; there is nothing greater; there is no greater strength. There is nothing greater than Jesus in the Holy Eucharist – it is He Himself. And the Holy Spirit, in His working and through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is entirely centred on Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. It is true that Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is the power – yet this power is not automatic in the Holy Eucharist, so that when I receive Jesus, I would automatically already possess this power. It requires cooperation. It requires active participation. It requires walking alongside Him.

And now I’m going to tell you something quite different – the very last thing mentioned in today’s Gospel. I don’t understand either why today’s Gospel brings up one topic after another; the various topics seem to have nothing to do with one another, the way it’s all described – quite different topics have been thrown together. But one thing has become clear to me: what this is all about. When a house has been swept clean and the devil has left, when the house stands there empty, swept clean and decorated, then the devil wanders about, finds no place to stay, and

finally realises that the house is now empty and decorated, and returns with seven other spirits – that is a mysterious phrase. But I have an example of this that really surprised and moved me: during an exorcism. I could describe the circumstances in detail, just as I still have them before my eyes – it concerned a man; I do not wish to go into the details of the circumstances, nor who he was. He even held a high position, a prestigious profession. He had been converted, had walked the path of conversion, but then became lukewarm – lukewarm again, even though he had truly been a man of faith. He went along with everything, let himself be swept away by the spirit of the age, and carried on in that spirit. And what he did then: although he was living in grave sin, he nevertheless continued to go to Communion on Sundays without giving it a second thought – and suddenly he was possessed. Suddenly he was possessed. His wife brought him in, and people asked themselves: what do you do when a man is possessed? During the exorcism, the devil had to confess what had led to the possession. And what did the devil have to say? He said: simply his sins – but the devil had gained his greatest power through the sacrilegious, unworthy reception of Holy Communion. That is to say: he had been living in grave sin and had nevertheless continued to go to Communion, simply because that was the custom. And this led to the devil returning seven times stronger than he had been before his conversion – many times stronger. And he had to confess that it was the unworthy Communion, the sacrilegious Communion received whilst in grave sin.

Isn't it really also a sign, the way so many are now simply going to receive Communion? Hopefully it would still be a blessing if, at the very least, Communion were not taking place; if, at the very least, the grave sin of sacrilegious Communion were not added to the mix – that would still be an act of mercy. That would still be an act of mercy. But it is alarming just how seriously we really must take this: how the greatest grace is being used by the enemy to exert the greatest power. And so we are faced with this issue even now, on the way to Jerusalem, on the way to the Resurrection – these are the issues we are confronted with, the ones we face day after day. And we must respond to them. God is waiting for our conversion; he is waiting for us not to let the time slip away, for us to take this truly seriously: for us to believe, to perform acts of faith, acts of conversion, and to truly strengthen ourselves; for us, in times of trial, to make use of the opportunity for Holy Communion, for a worthy Holy Communion; that we make it fruitful, that we put it into practice, that we cooperate with this grace, that we work together with grace so that it may truly become a source of strength for us, so that we do not fall into sin, so that we are strengthened for all trials – for the trials are extraordinary. Yet we need not fear anything; we must not say: 'I cannot do this, I cannot manage it.'

For whoever is in God's grace, whoever is in God's grace, will never say: 'That's impossible.' They will never say: 'That's too much for me.' They will never say: 'That's too hard.' They will say: 'In God's grace, let us try.' In God's grace – if grace stands by me, grace will help me. That is why we never say: 'I can't, it's impossible, I don't want to, it's too much, I don't feel like it.' Instead: 'With God's grace, in God's grace, everything is possible.' Those who live in grace, in Jesus and the Holy Eucharist – we know what powers are unleashed when a person of faith lives and experiences the Holy Eucharist, together with Mary and the Holy Angels.

The

Mother of God helps us to do this; she accompanies us so that we may truly live and experience it worthily.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Saint Joseph as Foster Father and Protector

Sermon of 1 March 202c, 5.30 pm – Saint Joseph

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, my beloved, today we celebrate the feast of Saint Joseph. We may recall the great deeds handed down to us about him, which he accomplished during his earthly life. The Evangelists report that he was judged and found to be righteous, and he fulfilled all the tasks to which he was called and for which he was prepared, one might say, with true brilliance: as foster father and protector of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, as protector of the Holy Family. He accomplished all this with distinction, with truly great grace, for his life was full of grace, and he lacked nothing – there is no evidence of anything he did not do perfectly. When the holy angels refer to him as ‘the Just One’, it is because he was absolute in everything: absolutely faithful, absolutely obedient, absolutely poor, and also absolutely devoted to caring for others.

Admittedly, it was precisely this concern – as he conceived it in his heart – that caused him much distress, because he was often unable to make Mary’s life as easy as he would have liked and as he himself realised he ought to do. One need only think of the search for lodging: the fact that he could find no place for Mary even amongst his own relatives, particularly during the difficult time leading up to the birth, was no small source of pain for him, but a severe trial and a grave humiliation – he, who was called to ensure that the Holy Family had a good place to stay and that the child would be born in the best possible circumstances. What father, when a child is born, would not do everything in his power to ensure that the mother has the right place to give birth, provided he loves her? And he truly loved her with all his heart. What anguish it must have been, too, when they were searching for the Child in the Temple and he experienced that search alongside Mary with such deep sorrow: the Child had been entrusted to him to protect, and now he was lost. Those three days of agonising search were not a failure on his part, nor a mistake, but a trial, a suffering through which he passed; it is not wrong to say that it was his three-day foreshadowing of the Passion, just as we now, in preparation, approach the three days on which Jesus suffered and died. For Saint Joseph, these were truly days of pain, a martyrdom, a single suffering which he shared with Mary. Thus he was perfected and

returned to the Father's glory. When the saints – such as these and others who bear similar witness – describe his death, which was accompanied by the angels, they certainly do so as the death of the one who, alongside Mary, is truly the greatest saint in heaven.

But what use is this to us today – this admiration and veneration of times gone by? What matters to us is how he can continue his work even today. He remains the Church's foremost patron saint and holds numerous other patronages, such as that of the dying – not because he provided end-of-life care during his lifetime, but because he prepared himself so thoroughly for death, and worked so diligently towards this encounter with the Father in heaven, that this patronage was bestowed upon him. The power he now possesses in heaven for his mission is inestimable. What is special about this is that, unlike during his earthly life, when his ministry was historically bound to one place – to Nazareth, where he was present – his presence and ministry as the glorified One in heaven are now possible simultaneously throughout the whole Church. Not that he is omnipresent, but wherever he is invoked within the Church, he can act simultaneously – even in the most dilapidated churches – and carry out his work there without restriction. If we were to call upon him everywhere at once, in times of need, in times of war, this would not be a strain for him; quite the contrary: he is endowed with such an abundance of grace for his mission that one might say his efficacy is almost inexhaustible.

The problem lies elsewhere, much as it does with Mary. Her entire position before God – as the intercessor of the Almighty, for whom nothing is impossible, as the living embodiment of the fact that nothing is impossible with God, then as now – all this no longer unfolds automatically, but requires our cooperation. We must recognise and acknowledge this position. That is why the dogmatic recognition of Mary's position is so important: if the Church affirms this position as dogma, Mary gains more power, more scope to intervene and to exercise her power. The situation is similar with Saint Joseph: it is linked to our veneration of him. The more we venerate him, the more deeply we recognise what he is capable of, who he is, and what talents God has bestowed upon him – just as with everything that has been given to us – the more he can work. I do not wish to speak in terms of percentages, but I believe that at present he is able to exert less than ten per cent of his potential influence. He would have much, much more power.

He remains the patron saint and protector of the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, this mystery of which he is the guardian and patron; and as patron of the Holy Church, he bears a title befitting this role. Yet who, for example, calls upon him against all the desecrations of the Holy Eucharist, against the profanation of the Eucharist, against the apostasy of priests, against the whole breakdown that is evident there? Saint Joseph does not yet hold the position there that is due to him; he is not yet deployed there to the extent that his power would allow – he could help much, much more. He also has his own hosts of angels at his disposal for this task, always in union with Mary: she is the Queen of the Holy Angels, yet Saint Joseph is not far removed from this work of the Heavenly Mother in fulfilment of his mission. This is what we should reflect upon today in our understanding and veneration of Saint Joseph: how many resources lie within him, of which we scarcely ever speak, but which we must truly begin to utilise and which will certainly be confirmed through miracles and testimonies. He is

responsible for the building of the house of God, for he is a carpenter; and so, in a spiritual sense,

also the architect of the City of God, the architect of the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. In his knowledge of God, in his full grasp of God's greatness, he was not, admittedly, a theologian, but he possessed such profound insight that he can be a great help to us against all the aberrations and heresies of our time. He has the task of safeguarding the Church's doctrine, and the task of safeguarding the priesthood – for he served Jesus, who was the eternal High Priest from the very beginning, as that very eternal High Priest on earth, and preserved this knowledge. If we were to venerate him more, with a view to the protection of the priesthood and all the apostasy evident there, he could help far, far more and work many more miracles. The same applies to the protection of purity: Saint Joseph, the Bridegroom, recognised the mystery of the Immaculate Conception's purity as perhaps no one else did; he had access to this mystery and was its protector. Thus, even today, within families, he embodies the ideal of purity and sexuality; he knows this mystery and, together with Mary, would help us far more to realise God's plan in the sacrament of marriage and, in particular, in matters of sexuality and purity. Alongside Mary, he would be our greatest helper, for he possesses the greatest insight and the greatest power of intercession.

Of course, this requires a relationship with him: that we call upon him, that we make use of him. It is a mystery that he himself is one of the most powerful helpers, one of the greatest weapons against the enemy – yet if we do not use him, he is of no use to us. He is also our representative in all things before God, much as in David's battle against the Philistines: Israel and the Philistines were at constant war, and the people could have torn one another apart, as often happens in such wars. Then the idea arose that a single individual should fight on behalf of the whole people, so that if he were victorious, the whole people would be counted as victors. So the Philistines sent their giant Goliath, and had Goliath remained victorious, the whole of Israel would have become the property of the Philistines. So they sent little David out to face him. David was the representative of the whole people, and how magnificently he fought for the whole people! I do not wish to compare this with Saint Brother Konrad, but in a certain sense Saint Joseph is also part of this struggle: if we call upon him, he is our representative in the battle against the powers of darkness, to whom we may entrust this struggle, and in many other matters besides. We could pass through all the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem – he is the architect, and at every gate he has his task.

This is what we must do today in our veneration of Saint Joseph: open the gates, recognise his greatness, his position and his power. I believe that in the end times, as the Church grows in this realisation, as the gates are being sealed by the holy angels at this very moment and as the understanding of God's plan—the Incarnation—deepens considerably within the parishes, St Joseph too will be recognised much more deeply in his role and will be able to unfold his influence many times over. We may look forward to this. But this also means: we need not wait for someone else to step forward; rather, it is up to us to deepen this devotion and to recognise this plan of God. God has not devised a new plan or a new strategy for this phase; he does not first need to equip Saint Joseph in any special way – he prepared this plan long ago. We simply have to – the Church simply has to – respond to it, recognise it, accept it and act accordingly, above all in prayer, in devotion, and in our sacrifices in honour of Saint Joseph. On Wednesdays, too, we turn to him in a special way to seek his intercession

to deepen our understanding; in fact, it would be good to celebrate Holy Mass for Saint Joseph as often as possible, in his honour and for his intentions, so that his position, his role and his greatness may become more effective in many areas. If we do not do this, if we do not recognise this, then we are leaving one of the greatest gifts, one of the greatest treasures, one of the greatest weapons lying unused on fallow ground. Then we must say: it is our own fault. God has shown it to us and would grant it to us, yet we slumber and would rather let the enemies march in, shouting and shouting, whilst help has long been at the ready – but we must play our part. This is a task for us in particular, even in this small circle: to recognise this role, to acknowledge it inwardly, and to truly pray and make supplication. I do not know how we could do this any more, but we must do it. Surely, with the help of the holy angels and the Heavenly Mother, we will find ways to experience Saint Joseph many times more deeply, even in these troubled and ever-increasing times. Let us ask for this grace.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On the Nature of Sin and Free Will

Sermon of 10 April 2025, 5.30 pm – Thursday after Passion Sunday

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

This evening, one week before Holy Week, I would like to invite you to reflect on at least one thought, particularly in light of today's Gospel about the woman caught in adultery: on the very nature of sin, on what sin actually is and what defines it. First of all, this: sin always involves human free will. We cannot influence our inherited weakness, original sin, ourselves – it is not subject to our free will; we are subject to it, yet we are freed from it through Baptism, even though the inclination to sin naturally remains. As for the sins for which we are responsible, however, we have all made a choice; every sin involves a choice. Whether I let myself go and consciously consented, or whether I was taken by surprise, drawn in, seduced, pressured or threatened – in every case, I ultimately gave my consent. And this consent to sin does not merely entail a separation from God inherent in it; sin always gives the enemy a share. We have considered this time and again over recent weeks: those enemies who beset us, these powers, thereby rob us of a good that is actually God's property within the soul. The greater the sin, the greater the share the enemy gains from it.

In the case of Mary Magdalene, this can be seen to some extent in the context of her life: she was possessed by seven demons, having thus given room to seven demons, above all the demons of sexuality. She was one of the most notorious public

sinner of her time; this realm of sin—sexuality, prostitution, seduction—was under the power of at least seven demons. According to various accounts, she essentially drew every man she desired into sin, and through these aspects of sin the enemy reaped a rich harvest via her. She was, it must be said, a splendid instrument through which the enemy truly reaped a great harvest – this is a fact for which she herself also bears responsibility, for she thereby led others into sin as well. Thus she lived openly in sin, as we also see today. We must not pass judgement on everything, but we know this: where someone objectively incurs serious guilt – there is a whole list of such sins in the study of conscience – our conscience signals to us most clearly that we have ceded ground to the enemy.

How, then, do we break free from this? I am currently looking into how other religions – including nature-based religions, Buddhism and others – deal with sin and how they seek to free themselves from it: all the measures they take to ensure that sin is forgotten, that it appears to have been dealt with, so that a lid can be put on it and peace can be restored. Yet it would be so simple, for there is only one person who can forgive sins, and that is God Himself, in the second divine Person – the Pharisees knew this full well too. We have, for example, considered the angels and their roles in creation: their administrative duties, all the wonders they work in nature to ensure everything runs smoothly, and how precisely nature operates – just think of how the swallows arrive, how precisely they know everything, how precisely they build their nests. Every bird, every animal follows its own laws, which are wonderfully conveyed by the angels. Yet only God can forgive sins; only Jesus can. Why? Of course, we too are to forgive one another's sins where one has something to forgive the other for, but this stems from the fact that we ourselves have received forgiveness from God. If, for example, we forgive one another serious sins – such as a curse or a grave invocation of misfortune – and the other person asks for forgiveness, then we withdraw it. However, sin does not only have an effect on a horizontal level, but also within the soul itself, which is, after all, God's property: it must be set free by God, and only then can grace flow once more.

The forgiveness of sins is actually the most marvellous event in all of creation, if we understand it properly. After Jesus had conquered sin on the cross, he did not merely give us the authority to forgive sins; rather, he himself triumphed over all powers and forces, over every devil that takes possession of a soul through sin. If someone now comes and receives forgiveness, the devil must, whether he likes it or not, return the soul instantly; he cannot make any demands, he cannot say: 'Give me at least a million euros for this, if we were dealing in business terms' – this sinner would be worth far more to him than a million. He must give everything back immediately and retreat in defeat. If, on the other hand, the grave sin were to persist and the devil were to retain his power, that would mean: with him for ever, for ever in damnation, far from God. But if a person follows God's call, then Jesus suffered with such great love, took everything upon himself, so that the sinner might have this path opened up to them, that the path to the forgiveness of sins has become a triumphal path of God – a path of victory that cannot be sung of or praised highly enough. It is truly the

most beautiful thing: the sinner's journey home, on which the devil must surrender all his claims. When the sinner returns home to God, it is the greatest thing there is to celebrate; that is why Jesus also says that such a feast is celebrated in heaven when a sinner returns and the devil must give everything up.

Yet people scarcely recognise this, scarcely experience it. The vast majority of humanity around us lives in grave sin. We cannot see into the innermost depths of a person's soul, but viewed objectively, the enemy holds the overwhelming share in most of the souls we encounter. This is almost impossible to comprehend, and yet we are guilty of it: a person living in sin cannot be happy. Consider the sin lived out in sexuality – think of Mary Magdalene in the sin of lust, which is so highly praised today: even she, who was perhaps the most desired woman in the world at that time, did not find happiness through her sin. Sin, fundamentally, makes one unhappy. And people do not understand why this forgiveness, this path of mercy, is so difficult for them – that God wishes to show them mercy, to give them what they do not deserve, without them having to pay anything in return – why this does not set them free. Thus, unfortunately, humanity remains trapped in sin.

And when, as an apocalyptic angel will do in these times, his bowl is poured out, then all those who persist in sin will be shaken by judgement and will experience punishment and purification. This is an intervention of God's justice: the worst sufferings, the worst catastrophes, the worst diseases, the worst destruction and deaths that will then befall the sinners are not martyr's deaths, but a consequence of sin, through which the sinner is essentially simply told: 'Go where you wish to be. If this is what you want, then the parting is now upon you.' And the fact that we do not understand this, that humanity does not understand this – if we realised how God is waiting, how Jesus is waiting, how many sinners there are today **(6)**, what mercy, what bliss He has prepared, and then saw the current situation in which no one sets out, no one comes, then we must say: This cries out to heaven, it's enough to make you scream, it's almost unbearable.

If only we had a way of reaching people as in the Middle Ages, when the penitential preachers were active, or as in the days when John the Baptist appeared and people still listened – today we no longer have that means of reaching people that would prompt them to set out and truly recognise the truth. That is why the Day of Judgement must come, so that, at least before the very worst happens, people still have a few seconds in which to call upon mercy and perhaps still be saved. That is the last chance. But this is part of the course of world history that awaits us, and it is no child's play, but truly a matter of life and death. Were all this not in the hands of the Heavenly Mother, it would be even more terrible; yet we may hope that this judgement and the angels who will carry it out will, under her guidance, nevertheless show the highest degree of mercy towards mankind. Let us hope for this.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Lady of the Snows and the Dogma of Ephesus

Sermon of 5 August 202c, 4.00 am – Our Lady of the Snows

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My dear friends, today we celebrate the feast of the dedication of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, which was also built in response to the proclamation of the first Marian dogma: that Mary is the Mother of God, solemnly proclaimed at the Council of Ephesus in the year

431. In gratitude for this, the plans for this basilica in Rome were received in a miraculous way: in the midst of the Roman midsummer, in the oppressive heat, snow lay that morning precisely where the church was to be built, and this provided the impetus to erect this house of God – a house of God which, one might almost say, remains unfinished to this day, for every century has left its artistic mark on this church. Thus it ranks among the truly most beautiful and famous churches. One might say that this, too, is a form of bliss: that Mary is, as it were, the most beautiful gift even in art, and that one can never make things beautiful enough for her, the heavenly Mother.

Thus, all the beatitudes we can possibly imagine are united in her; there is not one of the eight beatitudes that we would not find in Mary. Only one beatitude is lacking in her: that which we sinners know when, through our repentance for our sins, we find mercy. Mary never had to repent of a single sin; that experience of being freed from sin, which we know as a blessing, as a true discovery of mercy, is one that Mary herself did not experience – it is not part of her path. Yet she does share in the experience of her children, who are allowed to experience all these wonders of mercy: she prepares them for it and mediates it to them.

Today, on this feast day, let us listen to the well-known Gospel of Mary, in which a woman from the crowd stands up and exclaims: ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that nursed you’ – to which Jesus replies: ‘Far more blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.’ We usually apply these words to Mary’s earthly life, to her story: that she heard and obeyed the Word of God. In reality, however, this continues daily in heaven, as part of her mission from there. Every day, Mary is the one who, like no other, receives the Word of God; she is very close to God; she takes in every word that we call the Word, but above all she takes in daily the Word of God who became flesh, and passes it on. There is no mystery—not even that of the Eucharistic Presence, in which Jesus gives himself to humanity—that does not pass through Mary. And that she hears and obeys the Word of God is something we may repeat a thousand times over.

Thus, even today, in the situation in which we find ourselves, Mary remains wholly focused on God and is the primary mediator of the Word of God. All prophecies, all messages, continue to have a relevant impact on our time and on the hearts of children – not only those messages which we know as private revelations and which are on the increase, however difficult they may be to discern, but which often do indeed have their roots in Mary’s mediation. But even more than that, the proclamation of the Word of God is a daily occurrence in

every prayer. There is no prayer to which God does not respond. Every prayer we offer – whether it be the Hail Mary in the morning or the Rosary, which we present to God through Mary – is answered by God; God leaves no prayer unanswered. But it is the Heavenly Mother who conveys this answer to us, this Word of God bestowed upon her children – an answer that remains deeply hidden, entering our hearts without us always realising it. I remember how, as children, we had to pray the Rosary and resisted doing so because the prayer simply seemed boring to us; yet we still had to kneel and pray. But even if there was resistance at the start, as soon as the Rosary had been prayed to the end, there was always a different atmosphere. Even amidst our childish resistance back then, the Rosary always brought about a change; there was never a Rosary we were obliged to say after which a special grace was not perceptible within us. It is only in hindsight that I realise this now, and unfortunately we have not responded sufficiently to it so far – but it does bring about a change: God gives an answer.

So even now, in this hour of trial for the Church, Mary is the one who, like no other, conveys to us the Word which is currently a light for us as the Word of God, and which gives us guidance and direction. No one knows the world, all its children, and the present situation as well as she does. And if we listen to her carefully, she points out to us that there will be great upheavals within the Church. We are facing a turning point, a time when the Church has strayed so far from its identity. She knows the Church intimately; she knows what is happening within it, and some lament that the Mother of God does not address the abuses more clearly. It may be that, outwardly, she does not express herself as clearly as we might expect; but neither should we expect Mary to reveal the guilt that each individual perceives in their own conscience. After all, she also speaks to us through the angel in the voice of conscience, and there everyone knows exactly where they stand; no external, powerful message is needed for that.

But what Mary is also conveying to us right now is this: wherever human arrogance, pride, the ego and selfishness find expression – even within the Church – and this is the case almost everywhere, if we think of recent events, be it the papal question, other matters, the various synods and so on – this always springs from the individual's own ego. With the support of the angel of light—who is in truth an angel of darkness—pride and the works of pride, the works of one's own self, and the whole struggle for positions within the Church have gained ground; this is not Mary's attitude, but has arisen from man's own self. Thus we are now witnessing a climax of pride, selfishness and the self within the Church. And we can be certain: God casts the mighty from their thrones and humbles the exalted. The Mother of God clearly points out that God casts the mighty from their thrones, and it is only a matter of a short time; we may expect to witness this casting down of the mighty ever more profoundly.

The way in which Mary enters into this battle also teaches us something: we see Mary, and we ourselves are called to the battle. How did she intervene – at the Battle of Lepanto, in Vienna, in all the battles in which she helped? It was not an intervention with a sword against the enemy, but a visible, tangible intervention aimed at the

rescue of her children from the clutches of the enemy. So we too may expect her to help us with her weapons. And her weapons are always the same in this battle too: a humble existence, a quiet, hidden life, relying on the power of God, on God's intervention – an intervention that also takes place through her servants, the holy angels. If we imagine that the holy angels, who will appear in this time as soon as they are released from their seals, will bring about such an intervention by God upon humanity, then, thank God, the Book of Revelation describes in precise detail what awaits us. Even the natural phenomena we are currently experiencing – the heatwaves and everything else – are apocalyptic events that have long been described. They do not befall us unplanned; rather, they are ordained by God, not as a punishment, but for the purification of His children, so that we may realise the situation we are in, and so that all children who stand to benefit from this may act accordingly.

Just recently, someone rang me and told me about an elderly woman who is suffering greatly from the heat – indeed, to the point where it is a threat to her very existence. She said – and I was truly moved to hear this – that she gladly accepts this because she wants to do something: to make a sacrifice for the salvation of the priests, for the healing of the priests. From a human perspective, this is the worst thing for her, yet she accepts it – and, as she said, with joy. It is very difficult for her, but she accepts it with joy so that she can offer something to God, to help and also to contribute to our remaining steadfast and being able to profess our faith courageously. A wonderful testimony. This is precisely Mary's attitude: to teach us to put all this into practice, to serve God in it with joy and thus allow it to become a sacrifice – not outward criticism and protest against world events, but the hidden sacrifice, that which is revealed in secret. That is Mary's attitude; that is the nature of her intervention. For this, she also receives God's grace – perhaps even the grace of miraculous power – so that one may bear and endure the miracle. And so, too, the hidden miracles we are now experiencing amongst us are miracles that truly spring from the very depths, from the very being of Mary. Her miracles are those which, in secret, bestow upon humanity today the closeness of God and the confidence that God is always greater and leads all things to a good end.

Let us reflect on and celebrate this today, and let us be truly ready, when these great upheavals, these great changes, this intervention of God come, to process all of this inwardly with the humility of Mary, so that it may always become a blessing and a source of joy. For she does not want her children to be destroyed; she wants her children to survive, to persevere, to be renewed, to be healed, to become a witness to God's love, intervention and mercy. May this feast day, with the richness of its grace and all its miracles, accompany us. Today, angels endowed with miraculous power are, as it were, on the agenda, on heaven's menu – that is heaven's menu today: angels with truly great appeal, with miraculous power, with the closeness of God, with the closeness of God in His own, even amongst us. So we may trust that we are not left alone in these trials, but that through them, joy, gratitude and a willingness to give of ourselves may grow ever stronger within us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Seventy times seven – on forgiveness

Sermon of 10 March 2026, 5.30 pm – Tuesday after the Third Sunday in Lent

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are continuing on our journey to Jerusalem, and we are in the school which, even now, provides us with new teaching material every day through the liturgical texts, which we wish to put into practice time and again. It is not the first time we have heard this, but this Lent is a time when we return to the schoolbench time and again – indeed, all the more so – for it is a discipline, above all the discipline of the Cross, in which we stand and which presents us with new trials and new tasks every day. So let us begin straight away with one of today's themes.

It concerns forgiveness, and first and foremost, it concerns guilt. This, too, follows a certain principle: as Jesus says, if someone has done wrong, then go to them and tell them face to face, rebuke them. We regard this as a spiritual work of mercy: rebuking the guilty. This does not mean because we ourselves are suffering as a result, but because it is a commission from Jesus that we should, as a work of mercy – not as an accusation, not as a condemnation, but as help, as support – rebuke the one who has been at fault and then stand by them in love, so that they may make amends and rectify the mistake.

And so here too there is a clear word from Jesus: if he does not listen, then we go to him with witnesses; if he does not listen even then, then tell the Church; and if he does not listen even then, then let him be to us as a Gentile. This means: we have a distinct relationship with Gentiles. We also have a relationship with sinners that is governed by the Gospel, which separates us from them and does not constantly expose us to the influence of sin – which, if we do not behave properly, simply leads us into confusion, disorder and chaos, so that what is truly essential cannot unfold.

This is also a call for us, wherever we live and go about our daily lives, to walk our path in an atmosphere of truth, faith and love. Thus, Jesus' commission is not: 'If someone is at fault, I will go to someone else, talk to them about it and speak ill of them, perhaps even behind their back' – but rather, I have the courage to truly tell them the truth in love. That, Reiner, is true love for one's neighbour: being there for them and helping them. But then also taking the next steps: if they do not listen, we go to the witnesses, then to the Church – that is, to the leaders.

This pattern of behaviour also serves as a guideline for how we deal with those who are sent into our lives as trials: that we have the courage to maintain this distance in our dealings with them too, that we do not expose ourselves to sin, that we do not treat sin lightly. That is one thing – an order that the Gospel gives us. Who lives by this? How do we live by this? This is what we must now examine, and that would be the task at hand: to look at these relationships and come to terms with them.

The second point we are considering today – which is not merely an invitation but a call to action – is that we must not only forgive seven times, as Peter asks – which would already have been a great deal in the Old Testament, the very limit – but seventy-seven times. Jesus imbues this law of forgiveness with boundless scope. Seventy times seven – this means that this willingness to forgive must always be present: where guilt exists and is followed by realisation and repentance, but also where no such realisation occurs. This forgiveness is an essential inner virtue that we cannot value highly enough. For where we do not forgive when someone has wronged us, the guilt remains lodged within us.

Many come and say: ‘I cannot forgive that; it is beyond my strength; I simply cannot forgive what has been done to me; it is too much.’ Let us not forget: if we do not forgive, we set a limit on our own ability to receive forgiveness. For in the Lord’s Prayer we hear it clearly: ‘Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.’ So if we do not forgive – even if it were the worst, the most monstrous thing – then we ourselves are also more limited in our ability to receive forgiveness.

For a person who does not forgive, this inability to forgive will always be present in all their behaviour, in all their actions, in all their dealings – it is always a constant feature of everything they do. And this inability to forgive is a burden that remains upon the person who does not forgive, and which thus also becomes an additional problem for the other person, including in our interactions, because all of this, consciously or unconsciously, affects our behaviour and the way we relate to others.

The next thing we want to practise right now is to examine whether I am inwardly ready to forgive. And if I cannot – where do I find the strength? It is humanly understandable that some forms of forgiveness are not possible. I know from my pastoral work how difficult such forgiveness can be, how some people are unable to forgive, and how this truly leads to bitterness and a hardening of the heart.

A person who cannot forgive becomes embittered, withdraws, isolates themselves – and, out of anger, they also deny themselves the chance to receive the forgiveness that they themselves need time and again. We are all dependent on forgiveness, and those who do not forgive shut their own door to God’s mercy. Even the power to bind and loose is of no use here – if we receive the Sacrament of Penance or the other sacraments without an inner willingness to forgive, then even the Sacrament of Penance, with its otherwise all-powerful effect, is limited, hindered and blocked.

So this is a test, and ultimately also a longing. Behind this lies Jesus’ great longing to forgive and to bestow mercy – he did not come to call the righteous, but the weak and the sick. That is why we wish to examine this today and pray that grace may flow to all those whose hearts have grown hard, to all those who cannot forgive and whose entire relationship with God and with others suffers as a result.

Let us not forget this either: those who cannot forgive, those who find it difficult to let go of blame, will find it increasingly difficult to expect their prayers to be answered before God. They will not receive an answer, because within themselves they also prevent the reception of grace.

And finally: when Jesus tells us today that if two or three ask for something in my name, it will be given to them – if two or three ask the Father in my name, they will be heard – it is not written there that these must be two or three human beings. That is why we also build a bridge here to the holy angels: the angel, too, is a person, and so we can join with him to form these two or three who ask something of God and to whom it is granted.

So let us confidently unite what we bring before God with our brothers and sisters, whilst also, individually, building a bridge to the holy angels. Where two or three are gathered in my name, together with the holy angel, there we know: He is most certainly always in His name, in the name of God, who is fully manifested and perfectly alive. Where we pray with him, we are already fully gathered in the name of God and may ask for much.

And above all, let us include our Heavenly Mother in all our prayers, our prayers of intercession. Her intercession, her prayer – in every Hail Mary, in particular, we ask her to pray for us. Let us pray that all her intercession, all her power from God, may be effective in her intercession on our behalf. Therefore, in the Hail Mary, in prayer, let us always be mindful that we stand before God in humility and that we ask our Heavenly Mother for her intercession – and may we expect, may we be certain, that no sincere prayer, offered to God in an attitude of forgiveness and purity of heart, will go unanswered.

This presents us today with a challenge to put this into practice. But it also spurs us on to become more zealous, to offer intercession even now as a work of mercy – to intercede for the great concerns of the Church, that God may have mercy.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Sharing in the Suffering of Jesus

Sermon of 1 April 2026, 5.30 pm – Wednesday in Holy Week

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is really not appropriate to deliver a long sermon after this account of the Passion. Nevertheless, I would like to invite you to recognise in which of the figures in Jesus' Passion we recognise ourselves. That is to say: the figures who are there – whether it

Judas, whether it is Peter, whether it is the criminals, whether it is Pilate, Herod, the soldiers or the crowd – they are always representatives of people of all ages.

When I think, for example, of a Stations of the Cross from our collections, it says there, amongst other things: ‘Back then, Judas was one of the Twelve; today there are thousands amongst the priests – but none of them are aware of it.’ And how does one become a Judas? By betraying Jesus, who gave himself to us – not just to the priests. I believe that every time a priest is unaware of what he is doing when administering Communion in the hand, it is a betrayal, it is a handing over. Every time a priest administers a sacrament – including the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Matrimony – and fails to point this out, fails to ensure that Jesus is protected, that is a Judas, that is a betrayal. If, during the Holy Eucharist, we do not ensure that the priest does everything in his power to ensure that those receiving Holy Communion are truly prepared in their hearts, that is an act of Judas, that is a betrayal, a betrayal.

Or let us think of Peter: he denied Jesus; he no longer recognised him. How often is it the case that, under certain circumstances, we do not wish to show ourselves to be Christians, that we are ashamed? Let us think of Cardinal Marx – I do not wish to criticise him, but he too is an example of this – who takes the cross down so as not to cause offence anywhere, because he is a bishop, because he is a cardinal. This is not just in him; it is in all of us. How often have we reacted like Peter when it really mattered that we bear witness to Jesus?

But what is moving about Peter for us is this: when he realised what he had done, he wept immediately. He immediately recognised what he had done and, for God’s sake, immediately burst into bitter tears. What about us when we betray Jesus? I would like to see those who, like Peter, deny Jesus and then immediately burst into tears when they realise it. That is not to be taken for granted. These sins take root; they inflict the deepest wounds on the Body of Christ.

Or let us think of those who mock Jesus, who shout: ‘Crucify him!’ Every grave sin amounts to saying: ‘I am crucifying him.’ When I willingly commit a grave sin, I am saying: ‘Crucify him.’ Or: ‘I do not know you; I want nothing to do with you.’ We could go on like this.

What is perhaps still moving today is the story of all those who witnessed the crucifixion. Let us think of the centurion, the commander of the soldiers, who was tasked with ensuring that everything proceeded in accordance with the law. Afterwards, having seen everything – including how Jesus died – he, a Roman, not a Jew, realised: ‘Truly, this man was the Son of God.’

And in Luke’s Gospel we hear that even the crowd who were there, who had shouted, ‘Crucify him!’, in the end, after it was all over, beat their breasts and said, ‘My God, what have we done?’ The fact that they beat their breasts and said this was the first sign that they had found their way back to grace. For by this beating of their breasts they bore witness to their guilt, saying: ‘For God’s sake, what has happened? What have we done? Where did we go along with it? What have we got ourselves into? What have we done to him?’ And so they went home.

We could continue to examine this in every respect. I would advise that, when we look at all these people, we scrutinise ourselves closely to see whether I, too, am among them – in every case: whether it is Judas, whether it is Peter, whether it is the accusers, whoever it may be. Whether we want to admit it or not, that is how it is. This should move us deeply, so that we come to realise our error and feel remorse, so that we truly renew our faith and our love, so that we repent and cannot thank God enough when we are deemed worthy to share in his cross.

I am convinced: the greatest punishment for my sin – at least for me – is that no penance would be as terrible for me as not sharing in the suffering of Jesus. Nothing is as terrible as Jesus denying me a share in his suffering. For me, that is the worst punishment I can imagine: that he no longer entrusts himself to me. I have sinned, he has forgiven me, but he no longer trusts me; he cannot trust me – just as he told an Italian mother to whom a priest had offered himself: ‘I can no longer entrust myself to this priest.’

So let us pray that we do not regard it as something evil when we share in the suffering of persecution and contempt, but that we truly recognise that Jesus is allowing us to share in it. Outwardly, this is no marvellous revelation; it happens entirely in secret, entirely in silence. Outwardly, it really does look quite different when we are truly despised by the people. But in reality, it is a grace to share in this.

In Luke’s Gospel, the Heavenly Mother does not speak from beneath the cross – we only read of this in John’s Gospel. May she open our hearts even now, so that we may recognise our own place within it, so that we may find ourselves in it.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mary, Queen – Queen of Angels, Mother of Mankind

Sermon of 30 May 2026, 5.30 pm – Votive Mass for the Feast of Mary, Queen

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, I must confess: whenever we celebrate such feasts – such as when we now have the opportunity to celebrate the Feast of Mary, Queen – I am always curious in advance as to what grace will be bestowed upon us this time. There are always surprises. This week too, I believe, every day of this octave has been a special gift of grace – every Holy Mass, of course, but also the content, all the reflections that reveal to us how this unfolds in the Holy Spirit.

It is surely no coincidence that we are able to celebrate the Feast of Mary, Queen, on the very last day of the Octave of Pentecost. Liturgically speaking, today is not actually the proper time for it, but

since we celebrated the octave of Pentecost earlier this morning, and this evening marks the transition to the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, and tomorrow we celebrate the Feast of Mary, Queen.

This does not refer to just any single royal title, but to the universal one: Mary as Queen par excellence. There is, of course, also Mary, Queen of the Apostles, Queen of the Saints, Queen of Love, Queen of Peace, Queen of the Poor, and whatever other titles may be used – but today's celebration honours Mary as Queen in her own right.

This royal dignity was not added later, but was already contained in the Immaculate Conception, in the Fullness of Grace – just as the whole tree is already laid out in the seed, in the root of the tree. In her Immaculate Conception, in her Fullness of Grace, the kingship was thus established from the very beginning.

But when did she truly become Queen? We reflect on this in the mysteries of the Rosary: in the last of the Glorious Mysteries, where we contemplate how you, O Virgin, were crowned Queen in heaven. She was thus crowned in heaven, and as soon as she entered it, she simultaneously became Queen of all creation, Queen over all – just as the kingship of Jesus is a universal kingship, a kingship of love, justice and peace. She has a rightful share in this universal kingship; she is therefore a Queen in the fullest sense.

The angels, too, recognised this. At the time of their trial – that trial of the Cross, in which more than half the angels fell – it was not yet intended that Mary should be accepted as Queen. Rather, the plan was for them to serve her in the Incarnation: that God wished to become man and that the Son of God was to come into this world through this one woman. The fallen angels did not accept this plan; they considered it beneath their dignity.

Even the angels who stood firm at that time did not yet know exactly who she truly is – they had not yet, as we have, received the revelation, the light of the Holy Spirit, which would have made this clear to them. For them, too, this was and remains a surprise.

So now they have her as their Queen. She stands above all the angels; when we recognise the angels in their greatness, each of them simultaneously recognises her as their Queen. She is Queen of all the angels – including those who have not yet served humanity, who have not yet become guardian angels. There are still a great many angels in heaven who have never been guardian angels; they, too, all have Mary as their Queen. And for them, that alone is the highest bliss: to have her as their Queen.

This means that all the graces which God bestows through the work of redemption flow through her – as Queen, as Mother. These are, above all, the great graces of transformation through which we are transformed. At the Angel's greeting – that is, at the very moment when the Mother of God was greeted by the Angel – the greatest miracle of transformation of all took place: that God took on human form, that he was transformed downwards. And now the path of re-transformation passes through Mary – not merely a process of bringing someone back by the hand, but a genuine transformation, because humanity too, the whole of creation, has been transformed downwards.

Even the devil, to put it in the highest terms, has been transformed into darkness: he was not merely drawn into darkness and thereby became dark, but he has

become darkness in his very nature. In the same way, humankind is being transformed, increasingly transformed into the glory of this kingship – so that we have her as our Queen. And so the holy angels teach us to recognise her as Queen when we grasp the greatness that lies in this Queen.

In the Easter Praise, for example, we invoke the Triune God, and the whole of creation passes before us: all people, everything is called forth – a text which is often contemplated, and which we too have already discussed in our first catechesis. And when this praise of the whole of creation is complete, when everything has been included, then our Queen steps forward. Then we stand before our Queen, and for her we let this praise resound – for her, who is unique in her will and her greatness. What, then, are we all; what is all our glory, our praise, our worship, in comparison to her? In the face of her greatness, even the greatest, most glorious angels are, as they themselves say, simply nothing. And she herself is the great nothing before God – no one is as much a nothing before God as she is, because God is wholly within her. All queens, all kings have their Queen in the King, Jesus Christ.

But now comes the other aspect: at the foot of the cross, we first received Mary as a mother. Our primary relationship with her is that of a mother, not that of a queen. That is why we usually depict her not as a queen with a crown, but as a mother with the Child – that is the most familiar image we have of her.

And now comes the great mystery: we are allowed to say to her: ‘my mother’. What it means to be a mother is revealed in her whole being, in every expression: in her likeness, in her closeness, in her compassion, in her very presence, in her motherly gaze – just as a perfect mother is simply there.

This is what the angels are also permitted to do: to call her ‘Mother’. She is their Queen, yet as a mother she is something entirely new once again. That is why the angels long so much to be allowed to become guardian angels – for only then can they experience Mary as a mother. It is only through the consecration to the guardian angel that the angel is permitted, for the first time, to implore Mary as a mother from the very depths of her innermost, maternal heart.

So if we wish to thank our guardian angel for all the ways he has helped us in our lives and from what he has protected us – even in ways we haven’t even noticed – then we should ask him: Holy Guardian Angel, how can I thank you for everything you have done for me so far? Please give me the opportunity to experience Mary as a mother through you too. Grant me the greatest gratitude by allowing me to experience who she is as a mother. We already know her as Queen – but her motherhood is something quite different. Even as Queen, she remains a mother, a royal mother.

For the angels, this is the highest honour: when we allow them to experience this, the angel is simply overwhelmed with gratitude. He then asks again and again: ‘How can I help you even more? What do you want? What else can I do for you? And so he is constantly thinking about what he can do for us. But that is up to us: the angel cannot open this path of his own accord; we must open it for him. Only then will we truly be under his protection.

We may pray that tomorrow’s feast – Mary, Queen of Heaven – coincides with the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity – it is yet another divine providence that these should come together in this way. Therefore, we may also expect many graces for tomorrow,

which will open this up to us, so that it does not remain mere theory, but becomes a real experience.

What the guardian angel experiences instantly takes us humans a long time to put into practice: until a realisation truly transforms us, until it becomes part of our very being – that, for example, royal blood flows in the stream of our lives, that we become conscious in our flesh of the royal blood of Mary, the royal blood of God – many stages of transformation are required. For the angel, on the other hand, it happens instantly; in his case, it becomes part of his very being immediately.

Let us ask for this today, on this night, for this day: that we may open ourselves fully to this feast – certain that Mary, even now, for the Church, for the present situation, is powerfully employing all her royal might and royal guidance, for all the distress we are currently experiencing in every respect. And part of this distress is that, through her light, we may be freed from deception and brought out of it.

I would like to cite one such manoeuvre of deception as a final example. There is now this new encyclical. Outwardly, it appears marvellous, downright dazzling, in terms of its entire content. When I then examined it for myself, as best I could judge, it became clear to me: this is not right; there is poison in it.

So I asked the Mother of God to help me – after all, nobody believes me when I say such things. And when I opened the book, I found the words of the Mother of God from 11 April 1993: Many have quenched their thirst with living water. Many, too many, prefer other, contaminated and sinful sources. My motherly heart suffers with Jesus because of this. And I have come to tell you: do not stand still, but continue to strive to bear witness, as you have promised, so that the Spirit may work in the hearts of the whole Church. Renew your covenant every day.

Had I had to search for such a passage myself, I would not have known where to find it. Yet there it is: too many prefer polluted and sinful sources – and that is the word of the Mother of God. I am convinced that, with this encyclical too, we are once again being subjected to a deception and that we really must be vigilant. Outwardly, in its presentation, everything initially appears dazzlingly clear and convincing – yet behind it lie the poisons. My aim here is not primarily to criticise, but simply to urge that we allow ourselves to be guided by the Mother of God and the holy angels so that we may remain vigilant, for outwardly this deception is not discernible. For this, we need the light of the holy angels and the light of Heaven. She has also granted us this in connection with the Feast of Mary, Queen of Heaven. Those to whom I have already confided this within my innermost circle felt the same way: it simply became clear to them what she meant by this.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Cast your cares upon the Lord – he serves as your sustenance

Sermon of 23 July 2026, 5.30 pm – St Apollinaris, Bishop and Martyr; St Liborius, Bishop and Confessor

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, day after day the liturgical texts contain so many teachings, so many instructions, so many suggestions for putting them into practice, that we cannot possibly take it all in. However, if we repeatedly pick out individual points and seriously examine whether we are truly living them out, it becomes clear that, precisely through these liturgical texts, we have daily cause for repentance. For so much creeps into our lives without us even realising it.

Take, for example, today's reading from the First Letter of Peter. In Paul's writings too, in the Lenten readings, we are told: 'Do not worry, for the Lord is near' – repeated three times: 'Do not worry'.

Today, Peter writes in his letter – in which Peter speaks, as it were, as Pope –: 'Cast all your cares upon the Lord; he cares for you.' That is a powerful expression; I do not know how it reads in the original text, but it remains powerful in German and Italian too. 'Cast all your cares upon the Lord; he cares for you' – that means I truly hand everything over. Elsewhere, Jesus says: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened.' Or: 'When I am lifted up on the cross, I will draw all people to myself.'

Let us contemplate this today in the context of the Eucharist, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which we are allowed to grasp, live and experience ever more deeply: Cast all your cares upon the Lord. We must not forget that, whilst this sacrifice is for us a bloodless renewal of the sacrifice of the Cross, in reality – when properly considered – it remains for Jesus the bloody re-enactment of his Passion – the bloody experience of the sacrifice of the Cross, in which he takes upon himself all sins, is crucified, bears all illnesses, struggles, wrestles, takes everything into himself and is crushed, so as to offer it thus to the Father.

Tomorrow the Novena to the Heavenly Father begins, the time of preparation for his feast day. He offers us all up to the Heavenly Father – a spiritual event, yet a deeply personal experience.

If I put this into practice by carrying it out in a practical way – after all, we express it in the act of offering – then the worry is handed over: 'You take care of it, Jesus.' We are all familiar with this thought, yet we urgently need to practise it so that we truly live by it afterwards: 'You take care of it.' This is a tremendous, inner event.

Handing something over does not mean that there is nothing left for me to do. I hand over the worry, but what comes next remains my responsibility: to put into practice what follows from it.

When God takes care of things, then everything truly falls into place; then everything turns out for the best. He finds a solution for everything; He leaves nothing we entrust to Him untouched; He takes it upon Himself, takes it

and resolves it in his own way – not always in a way we can understand, but he resolves it and brings it home to the Father.

What we do not hand over to him, however – what we want to resolve ourselves, what we think we know best ourselves – in such cases we usually ask him: ‘Help me to resolve this as I envisage it; help me to arrive at this solution.’ I can certainly pray for that; there is nothing wrong with it, yet behind it lies the wrong inner attitude: It gets stuck with me because my own ego can be so led by the devil that I mistake what I myself consider right for the Gospel. I then, as it were, force the dear Lord’s hand – and if he does not answer me, I think: ‘What’s going on? Am I such a bad person that he won’t help me, won’t stand by me? Why is he keeping me in suspense for so long? Why won’t he help me?’

Let us examine this – we cannot do so at every opportunity, yet these passages of Scripture invite us to do so time and again: Do I really live like this? If I do not, I must not expect God to grant me His grace. If I realise that I have been doing it wrong up to now, this demands of me the humility to speak it out in confession.

I myself have, of course, never confessed this. Who would confess to having taken care of too much themselves and not letting God take care of it? Nobody confesses that. It is not recognised as a sin, but it is a wrong attitude of mind that prevents God from intervening – and the same applies to the Heavenly Mother as it does to the holy angels.

So today, too, we must examine ourselves: am I acting in this way? And what can I entrust to Him? He is receptive to everything. I may truly entrust all my needs, all my suffering, all my sins to Him, for He is great enough. His infinitely vast, loving heart grants us, in everything we entrust to him, not just any solution, but a divine one – not just a human one, but always a divine-human one. Even if we often perceive only the human aspect in it, it remains, nevertheless, a divine-human solution that he has in store for us.

That is something marvellous. We would do well to put it into practice time and again: to wait and see how God resolves it – and we will be surprised time and again in the process.

That is one thought for today. The other – to which we are also invited, which we may and should strive for, and from which we may step back time and again – is the stress of this world. We live in a society that focuses everything on achievement: on the better, the greater, the more beautiful, the stronger, the more powerful, the more perfect – according to the laws of this world. This has seeped into the Church to some extent, and even into its hierarchy to a small degree. Yet this is a false principle. If we do not acknowledge someone in their position, if we do not show them the honour they are due, then we notice – above all in the unconscious reaction, in a glance – how the heart reacts when someone does not receive the honour they are owed.

These honours, which are so highly prized everywhere today – yet we see how quickly the honour of this world fades, how fleeting it is. We all know that. Our honour, however, in which we may be great, consists in being the least. We need not strive to be anything; rather, our effort is directed towards being nothing, towards letting things happen: ‘Whoever wishes to be the greatest must be your servant.’ Whoever is truly great harbours no ambitions for titles or honour, whatever they may be. He may rejoice in being small

and nothing before God, and in this attitude lies, in essence, that carefree serenity which bestows upon the soul a fundamental sense of inner joy and cheerfulness.

Even if this is lacking at times – even when we have heavy burdens to bear – the awareness remains that we are allowed to be so small before God. Jesus himself sets the example for this when he says: ‘I am like one who serves you.’ When I think this through to its conclusion, I come up time and again – viewed from a human perspective – against something incomprehensible: that he says he is like one who serves.

If we think in Eucharistic terms, we recognise how he serves: in his sacrifice, in his suffering, in his prayers, in his intercession, in his atonement – and he serves us as bread, as nourishment. But how is he usually received by us? How is this nourishment valued; how is he honoured by people as nourishment? It is actually incomprehensible. And although this causes him pain, Jesus nevertheless does it willingly; giving himself as nourishment brings him joy.

How is this to be understood? It cannot be understood. Yet it remains a joy; otherwise, he would put an end to it all. He could say in an instant: ‘That’s it; from tomorrow, no more nourishment, no more Eucharistic nourishment’ – and he would suffer greatly if he could no longer do so. But that is not the case: he truly wishes to be food for his own, and more than that, a silent food. This being food remains so silent and hidden that we can overlook it a thousand times over. And yet it is this very nourishment of which Saint Lawrence of Brindisi, whom we celebrated a few days ago, said: ‘The Word of God made flesh is like water and bread – but for those who partake of it, this bread and this water become the finest wine, the finest nourishment, the finest food.’ All that is needed is access to it.

Then we sense what a joy it is for Jesus to be able to honour his Father by serving his children, by serving as their nourishment.

This thought must fill us with a festive spirit, with joy, with elation, with jubilation. Anyone who reflects on this can find nothing else to do but praise and thank God for it.

So, on this very Thursday evening, we commemorate the mysteries we celebrate, and at the same time the priesthood. And we see how God is giving us two holy priests today, to whom he has entrusted the flock, so that they may exemplify this in their lives.

If I do it merely as a duty – well then, it remains a duty. But if the Master’s love lives in those who serve him, it always becomes joy: the joy of serving, the joy of doing it, indeed, bliss. It is a bliss to be allowed to serve him; truly the greatest bliss I know.

Let us reflect on this again and again and pray that we may be allowed to live it out and experience it ever more deeply. May each day thus bestow upon us anew this wealth of his love and enable us to set out with joy, constantly correcting and putting into practice what truly needs to be changed – for this leads us ever deeper into his presence, into intimate union with him. That is what really matters, step by step.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Understanding Suffering – Trials as a Path to Sanctification

Sermon of 24 July 2026, 5.00 pm – Votive Mass of the Holy Cross

We pray that we may grasp the mystery of suffering more deeply, understand it better and deal with it more effectively. I maintain that the vast majority of humanity simply cannot cope with suffering. Only a few understand how to deal with suffering, with the Cross, in such a way that it becomes a victory for them, for their own good. This is where the whole of humanity fails, almost daily.

Let us consider this more closely: in the beginning, after the creation of the world, came the great trial for the spirits, for the spiritual beings. Such was the nature of the entire angelic world – let us imagine it: today we can picture it organised into the various angelic choirs. We do not even know how great the number of angels is; we know only this: there are billions upon billions.

If we knew how many people would have lived by the end of the world, we would also know roughly how many angels there are. For it is said that at the Last Judgement, when the world has passed away, the number of angels will correspond to the number of people – that is, there will be as many angels as there are people. There is no revelation as to how many of them are guardian angels and how many are not; our dear Heavenly Father has not revealed this to anyone, so the world will continue to exist for roughly that long. All these angels were created at the beginning, for there is no new creation of angels: their creation was a single act of God.

In the beginning, God created the light, and that was – the whole of the very first day of creation. According to Genesis, this first day is also the creation of the angels. Before God continued with creation, the test came, which did not affect the angels one by one, but the entire creation all at once: not an examination before the Heavenly Father with his assistants – the Holy Spirit and the Son of God – in which each individual would have had to appear, but a single test for the whole angelic world, carried out in a few moments.

For the angels – although they did not yet know what lay in store for them – this trial was the trial of the Cross, the path of the Incarnation, which is at the same time the way of the Cross. No angel was given two or three trials; each had only this one, a matter of life and death. Just over half chose the Cross, chose this path – whilst almost half of all the choirs chose against it.

We should always bear this in mind: it was a tremendous struggle, a tremendous rift in heaven. Angels forget nothing. Even for them, who – in human terms – had all previously been brothers, it meant being separated forever from one moment to the next. This pain, too, remains eternal, for an angel cannot forget pain. Yet the faithful angels were rewarded for their faithfulness: with eternal bliss in the vision of God.

Ever since that trial was decided, every fallen angel has been fighting ceaselessly against the Cross, against God – a constant rebellion against the Cross and suffering. And this struggle continues wherever the devil finds an opportunity in human beings: however

he may attempt, it always remains a struggle against the Cross, against that first trial, against God and His decree concerning the Cross. For humankind, however, God has ordained a different order of things.

As long as a person lives on this earth, they are constantly subjected to the trial from the very first moment – not just once, but daily, indeed ceaselessly. Essentially, all our decisions are at the same time decisions within this trial, for or against the Cross. If one applies this yardstick to every commandment, to everything, it always becomes clear what a person has chosen for or against.

This, too, is part of human decision-making. If I were to ask now: ‘How many trials has each of you already passed today?’ – you would first have to think about how many there were, for we do not know exactly, even though we are constantly being tested. Every decision of the will is such a test. Let’s take an example: I’m having breakfast; it’s Friday, and the thought occurs to me that I ought to fast, to abstain from sausage and other things. I think to myself: ‘Well, what’s the harm? It’s not forbidden, so I’ll at least eat a bit of meat, and I’ll enjoy breakfast and lunch as usual.’ That is not a sin. But if it is a personal test – perhaps because a grace for a particular child is at stake and the angel is urging me to abstain – then, whilst outwardly there is no prohibition, inwardly it is very much a test. If I then tell myself that I can easily gloss over it, easily justify myself, that I simply need it – then I have failed the test. And we do not know how our performance in it will be judged.

Here, school marks are given on a scale of 1 to 6; in Italy, it’s the other way round, from 1 to 10, with 10 being the best mark. A six is at the very bottom of our scale, whereas in Italy a six isn’t bad at all; only a one here counts as a fail. An Italian five corresponds roughly to our four; anything below that I can forget – the systems are simply different. When it comes to the test of the Cross, I would apply a different yardstick: we can pass it one hundred per cent. The simplest thing, it seems to me, is to say: I have passed it one hundred per cent, even though we ourselves cannot judge that. Not even Paul could: ‘I am not aware of it,’ he said, ‘but God judges me; the Righteous One alone will judge.’

If I pass a test one hundred per cent, I have acted correctly in every respect. Similarly, of course, it can drop to zero, or even into negative territory, and is then judged accordingly more strictly. Let us therefore assume that we must constantly prove ourselves in these tests – and to this end, God grants us the necessary grace at every test so that we can pass it one hundred per cent.

To put it vividly, in mathematical terms, so to speak: if we always cooperate with grace, we are continually trained through these tests. Just as in the world: a Year 1 pupil faces different tests to a sixth-former; one grows into them; they become increasingly difficult – the higher the qualification, the more demanding the test. But for this, too, there is training, preparation and grace. And so everything that God subjects us to in the form of trials, when we cooperate with grace, has an effect later on throughout our entire life of virtue.

Take someone who, for twenty or thirty years, has failed almost every test – nothing but debts, as it were, a declaration of bankruptcy in which the

Devil holds all the cards. Then, through God's mercy, a special intervention takes place once more: if the person realises what they have done wrong, how often they have failed in their trials – failed a hundred thousand times – but is now truly sorry, then the Lord says: 'If you repent and confess, I will, in my mercy, transform all that is negative in such a way that it will even turn out for your good, for mercy makes the best of it. From now on, you need only cooperate with grace – work through the trial, and you can make a fresh start.'

Let me give an example. A priest once came to the Angelic Work who had led a very poor priestly life, had been involved with various women, and had been on the fringes of the priesthood. He had committed grave sins and had also neglected his ministry and the Liturgy of the Hours – he had been a candidate for hell. Then he came, recognised his faults, and there were still unresolved issues from the past – various debts from earlier times – to be dealt with. Our Mother asked the Lord at the time: 'What is to become of this priest?' The Lord replied: 'If he follows me now and loves me as Mary Magdalene loved me, I will take full responsibility for his past; I will turn everything to the best possible outcome and ensure that this happens.' The priest was, of course, overjoyed – he had never expected God to be so merciful. And indeed: if we repent, God also takes responsibility for all past burdens and turns everything to good. The prerequisite remains that from now on we truly live in faithfulness and in first love.

From that point on, even the trials we have missed out on are set aside, because God's mercy enables us to make a fresh start – so that from then on, such a person can truly become a saint. Let us think of Saint Augustine, who led a wicked life, or of many others who first converted and then became great saints.

This is the right way for us to deal with it: God sends us these trials at this time so that, if we see and face them correctly, we can truly grow in his grace. These trials are entrusted to us, not just for our own sake, but – to put it figuratively – because hanging onto our tow rope are a hundred or a thousand others who can no longer manage on their own, of whom nobody suspects a thing, and from whom we cannot expect them to prove themselves in the faith. The Lord then says: 'I entrust them to you, I entrust them to the Heavenly Mother – are you prepared to bring them to me?' 'Yes, gladly.' 'Then I shall send you trials accordingly, so that the grace of salvation may be offered to them all, even if they are ultimately saved only at the very last moment.'

Let us consider a promise: if God calls someone through a blood relationship, through a family tree, and says, 'Follow me', that person need not even have led a particularly good life. Yet God truly calls them to recognise Him, to love Him, to put Him first, to be there for Him. If they give their lives entirely and offer themselves up, the promise holds true that in that lineage, spanning seven generations, no one will be lost – solely because of that one person. Seven generations: a symbolic number.

How God then brings this about is His wisdom, His providence. This was the case with Cardinal Van Thuận, who spent so long in prison and later, after his Vietnamese

imprisonment, led the retreat for the Pope who had brought him there. In his book, he recounts many examples of how God, as it were, manages an 'impossible' ledger of lost souls – a ledger in which He calculates quite differently from us. He tells, for instance, of the woman who lost a drachma: she searches for it, finds it again, invites all her friends and celebrates lavishly because she has found what was lost – the cost of the feast was ten times more than the drachma itself. Yet this joy is the way God rewards: even the joy of the angels in heaven increases over a single repentant sinner who emerges from the trial.

So let us be mindful that even in trials, as soon as we recognise this and choose to do so, we can act rightly. For ultimately, everything hinges on my relationship with God, on the first commandment. If I love God and take care to keep it holy, everything else falls into place of its own accord. If I truly keep it holy round the clock, everything else falls into place of its own accord, even in trials. If I stray from this foundation, chaos and confusion set in immediately – and once caught up in it, there is no escape, no method, no tactic, no detour. We can study and devise whatever we like: the only option is to return to the first commandment, whereupon everything falls into place of its own accord. This return is a 'yes' to the Cross, a 'yes' to God's plan, to his will, a 'yes' to everything he has decreed for us. It is as simple as that.

When Jesus says, 'I thirst', he thirsts for us to strive to understand and recognise this. He has placed this thirst in no one else as deeply as in his Mother, and also for her children, because she harbours such a longing that they may all understand and live it out. That is what we wish to celebrate today, once again on this Friday: that we may grasp it ever more deeply and make the most of the time set aside for it. If we spend this time before God, it always determines the salvation of those with whom we are connected. That is why we have the courage not to let anyone deter us. We have the opportunity to be outsiders, even as a group: We must not allow ourselves to do anything that is against God, yet as far as the favour of people is concerned – let them think and say what they will about us, we are no longer dependent on them. Nor do we need to fear ecclesiastical punishment, as we are already excommunicated; so there is nothing left to fear. We may truly live in freedom as children of God. And that is a beautiful thing.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Who goes home justified?

Sermon for 2 August 2026, 9.30 am – 10th Sunday after Pentecost

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us reflect a little today on the Gospel and the whole liturgy of this Sunday. In the Gospel – which is, of course, always the most important part of the service – we hear today the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector.

Jesus watches as they go to the temple and approach the altar; today, he is also watching everyone who comes to him. He knows all those who have just approached the altar, and he also knows all those who are not there – he knows who belongs to him. He also knows the inner attitude of those who are here now.

There aren't too many of us here, but if we look, for example, at the evening service, there were two hundred, three hundred or even a few more who attended. Everyone had some reason for being there. But what is their motive? How do they stand before God? Why are they there? And we too – why are we here? What moves us to be here? Are our motives pure? Are they honest, are they sincere?

Of course, we identify with the tax collector – naturally, we are, after all, among those who are humble. But isn't it already presumptuous for me to presume that I truly have the same attitude as the tax collector? What does this entail? It entails that I truly feel myself to be the least of all in every respect. The other man, however, who had so many good works to his credit, paid no outward attention whatsoever to what might still have been within him, because of his great deeds. His good works overshadowed everything, so that outwardly he was the great one, shining in the full splendour of his achievements.

Let us take this a step further today: let us suppose that the two were not standing in the temple today, but at Holy Mass, in a church, and both went to receive Communion, both subsequently received Jesus. Which of the two will truly experience this union with Jesus in Holy Communion as fruitful? These are questions we may – and must – ask ourselves.

And there is more: we are also familiar with that other parable: if you go to the altar to offer your sacrifice and it occurs to you that a brother has something against you, then go first and be reconciled with him, and then come and offer your gift. This, too, is a call to us. But how do we examine ourselves? What standard do we have; how can we gain certainty?

We all naturally wish to experience this work as fruitful, and to delve as deeply as possible into what we are invited to do. Yet what criteria do we have to truly discern this? What prepares us, what enables us inwardly to prove ourselves worthy of the grace that is offered to us?

What we are celebrating today is linked to inexpressible promises – not only insofar as we are honouring our Heavenly Father today. Everything we celebrate holds within it the greatest promises; it is the greatest celebration, the greatest event that takes place every day. This truly requires the right inner attitude as well. And we want to continually

examine again and again: in everything that moves us, what we carry within us and what we wish to bring with us.

This is particularly true during our preparation: through the holy angels, we always have the Rosary to prepare for Holy Mass – whether it be some of the mysteries, or all fifteen, however we may be prepared. Our Heavenly Mother prays for us when we pray the Rosary: ‘Pray for us now and at the hour of our death’ – even now, in this half-hour whilst we are preparing: ‘Prepare us for Jesus, prepare us for what is to come, pray for us that we may be ready.’

This preparation always means, first and foremost – to put it another way – that we are poor, that we are nothing before God, that we make ourselves small, leave everything behind, and recognise and acknowledge our nothingness. This is always a crucial part of preparation: if we do not truly humble ourselves before God, we come away empty-handed even at the confession of our sins and the reception of forgiveness. Then, whilst the confession of sin remains a solemn act, it does not reach the very depths of our being.

Secondly: if we do not adopt this attitude of humility, of nothingness, then our offerings too remain suspect of that Pharisaical attitude – and will therefore not be accepted by God either. It is not a given that our gifts will be pleasing to God, however much we may ask for this; it is not a given that we ourselves will be accepted.

How do we recognise this? We recognise it afterwards, when we leave: whether we are justified, that is, whether we are filled with the riches of the grace that God can bestow upon us. But if we lack this humility, if we lack this attitude, then although we go through the outward motions of all the rituals, inwardly we come away empty-handed or even feel even more guilty.

Looking back, one of my most distressing experiences as a priest was that on Sundays I often had the impression that the few who had come went home in a state of mind in which they felt more guilty than when they arrived. They thought it was enough simply to have been present somewhere – yet they went home feeling more guilty because their inner attitude simply did not correspond to what we were celebrating.

And this happened time and again, Sunday after Sunday – quite apart from sacrilegious communion, simply because of their inner attitude. This is how the mysteries are hollowed out, how the miracle of Holy Mass is hollowed out; it becomes fruitless, it becomes boring, it becomes a laughing stock, a scandal, a spectacle – where the enemy reaps more spoils from these holy mysteries than God Himself. This is what I felt deep down, Sunday after Sunday – and yet I was powerless to do anything about it. One does not surrender to it; one simply endures it. And if one speaks of it, it may sound out of touch with reality – yet in truth this is how it happens, and it still happens in many ways today. Of this I am utterly convinced.

That is why we need purification; that is why purification is truly necessary. We are on the path with the seven angels who prepare us, through the catechesis that prepares us for inner union with God, that purifies us, that teaches us the steps by which we can become inwardly free – so that our encounter with God may truly bear fruit, so that we may experience it, so that it may give us strength, fill us, equip us with everything and

equip us, so that God may fill us with Himself to such an extent that we can face every struggle, every trial, every suffering.

There is no richer programme than taking part in Holy Mass – this is what God wills. If this does not equip a person for all trials, at all times, in every difficulty, so that they can stand the test, then we are truly at a loss; then the whole mystery of the Incarnation is called into question, then all the wonders and mysteries of the Incarnation are called into question.

This is not meant to be an accusation against us, but it does call for rigorous self-examination: that I examine myself, even when I compare myself with others – how do I see myself in comparison to them? Comparison is never the right approach if we never see anyone as an example who, in humility before God and in what is pleasing to God, encourages and challenges us to continue on the path of humbling ourselves, to go deeper – then that is something marvellous. But if we compare ourselves – who prays better, who sings better, who is more devout – then such comparisons do not come from the school of humility, nor from the school of Mary.

So it is again today in the Gospel, especially on this feast day at the Portiuncula: once more we are invited to participate wholeheartedly, to commit ourselves to the works of mercy within this plenary indulgence – both for the living and for the departed.

May this be a concern for us all. And we will only see this for ourselves when we return to our daily lives, when we must face our trials in every direction: whether God can fulfil us completely in our encounter with him, so that we may face the struggle with gratitude, joy and confidence – but also with inner trust and inner certainty. If God is with us, who then is against us? If God is with us, within us, what then can hold us back, what can separate us from him? What can hinder us, even when outwardly we experience defeat, humiliation, all that we have discussed over the past few days, when we face contempt – for those who are in God, all this always works for the best. If they are in God, it even becomes nourishment for the soul, the very substance that strengthens them and unites them ever more closely with God.

May this very celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sunday make us aware of this richness and bestow it upon us. For the more we humble ourselves, the more we are exalted by God in this grace, and the more richly we are blessed. And so, after the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we may sing with Mary from the bottom of our hearts: ‘The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy extends from generation to generation to those who fear him.’

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Charism of Religious Orders and Lost Identity

Sermon of 4 August 2026, 5.30 pm – Feast of St Dominic

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Brothers and sisters, it is interesting that the Gospel message of vigilance is associated precisely with the founder of the Order, Saint Dominic. Symbolically, this vigilance is a burning vigilance – meaning that we should always and at all times be prepared for the Lord's coming. This applies not only to members of religious orders, but to each and every one of us; yet the fact that it is emphasised so strongly on the Feast of St Dominic does require some explanation.

Perhaps it helps to consider how God has structured his Church – in this hierarchical form, in which he governs it, built upon the rock. This, too, is an interesting symbol: normally nothing grows on a rock; whatever is planted there does not take root. And yet all the fruits found in the Church grow precisely on this rock – a contradiction in terms in itself, which is precisely what makes it symbolic: the rock signifies firmness. This ties in with the many comparisons with the seed – the Kingdom of Heaven is like a seed that the sower sows, which sprouts and bears fruit. In the same way, we see the various religious orders that God has brought into being: it is always a call from God, from the Holy Spirit, calling men and women to become, as it were, a seed – a seed all of its own, unmistakable – many seeds, but each one from which a distinct tree grows, with a very specific characteristic that cannot be compared to any other. We call such firm, deeply rooted trees within the Church the 'permanent religious orders'.

Saint Dominic, born at the end of the twelfth century, whose Order flourished in the thirteenth century, can now look back on many centuries of history. What is its distinctive feature? In his day, Dominic saw the many heresies and realised: we need an explanation; we must defend the faith; we need arguments. So he began to study the Holy Scriptures intensively and founded the Order of Preachers – endowed for all time with the charism of studying the Gospel, venerating it, contemplating it, passing it on, and allowing the Word of God to truly become our nourishment. Dominicans are generally highly learned people; great saints have emerged from their ranks, foremost among them St Albert the Great and his great pupil, Thomas Aquinas. Albert the Great, incidentally a Swabian, is regarded as one of the wisest Swabians in history – he embodied the entire body of knowledge of his time; there was no field of science in which he was not well-versed, be it medicine, physics, geometry or astronomy.

Another characteristic: the Dominicans are, by their very nature, deeply Marian. It is attributed to the Mother of God that she showed Saint Dominic the Rosary, modelled on the Psalter – the one hundred and fifty psalms that the monks prayed – and so the Rosary goes back to Saint Dominic, and Dominicans without the Rosary are inconceivable. This Order has produced such great scholars who have left their own mark on the Church right up to the present day. And

this is the case with every order: the Benedictines are a seed of their own, not comparable to the Dominicans; the Franciscans have their own charism, as do the Capuchins – all trace their origins back to their respective founding charisms. Thank God, the first figures called to found these orders were almost all saints: Saint Francis, Saint Dominic, Saint Benedict, then Ignatius of Loyola; the same applies to women's orders, such as the Carthusians founded by Saint Bruno.

It is only in more recent times that religious orders have been founded without saints at their helm – and that is when things become problematic. A classic example of this is the Legionaries of Christ: a wonderful charism, yet their founder, as it has transpired, was guilty of serious and repeated offences – more a candidate for damnation than for sainthood. A distinction must be made here: in a certain sense, he remained true to the charism itself, but naturally the founder's personal traits also become intertwined with the charism. That is why the Legionaries had to distance themselves from their founder in many respects, so that his poison – his sexual offences – would no longer taint the charism. The same is true of some more modern foundations today, where I do not believe the founders are already in heaven – in the early days, with the old orders, it was different; there they were almost without exception great saints. Every saint is a seed in their own right, and to those who are called to it, God grants the corresponding grace – this expresses the diversity of the Church, even if this diversity takes very different forms.

Imagine someone wants to get to know the Catholic Church and, deep in the jungle, comes across a monastery with a sign saying 'Catholic Monastery'. He knocks and asks what he's doing there. They tell him: 'We do not speak here; come back in nine years, then we can talk when you are truly ready.' Many people have indeed waited that long – a film was even made about it later, **The Great Silence**, about the Carthusians. If someone were to visit the Carthusians now, they would encounter nothing but silence and, interpreting this as

'the Catholic Church', they would say: 'That's a sect; it's not in keeping with the times.' And yet it is precisely this charism of the Carthusians that is entirely legitimate within the broader framework of the Church. We must not judge the Church by a single aspect – we must see it in all its diversity. The Church is a mystical body in which all this diversity comes together. If someone were searching for a saint whilst travelling and were to enter a church, they might encounter Saint Benedict Joseph Labre there – who wandered about in rags and tatters, plagued by fleas, unwashed, outwardly a vagrant. And yet this man would have himself locked into churches at night, pray all night before the Blessed Sacrament, fall into ecstasy and forget everything else but God. That is not 'the Church' as a whole – it is a seed of its own, a vigilance of its own, which tells us, as it were: 'You have no time to worry about whether I am clean – what matters is being there for God.' That, too, is a charism of its own.

And now I come to what I actually want to say. Today we have all the classic, time-honoured religious orders – and by today's standards, almost all of them have largely lost their identity. If you meet a Franciscan and see the brown habit, that is no proof in itself that the Franciscan spirit truly lives on here – you have to look closely at what really lies behind it. If you strike up a conversation with a Jesuit, it's almost

a miracle if, after an hour, you do not begin to doubt your own faith – because, in my view, they have strayed further from their original charism than almost any other order. There is practically no charism, no religious order left that, in the current situation, has publicly preserved its original strength, its light. Certainly, there are individuals working in secret – I am thinking, for example, of Father Hönsch, a Jesuit who, in my view, was truly a holy man, a Jesuit through and through, but who could no longer identify with his own order. And this applies not only to the religious orders, but to almost every spiritual community within the Church – be it the Fraternity of St Peter, the large community of the Society of St Pius X, or the communities tracing their origins back to St Philip Neri: almost all of them, with a few exceptions, have lost their original charism; it no longer shines forth.

How, then, does God intend to save this? This is where the work of the holy angels comes in. It is one of their tasks for the holy angels to come and show the Jesuit once more what a Jesuit actually is, the Franciscan what a Franciscan is – but also in secular life: to a man what a man is, to a woman what a woman is. Identity is needed everywhere once more, and the holy angels are called upon to restore this identity to people. I like to compare this to so-called ‘frequency water’, which is given to plants and animals: in nature, the original identity does not normally change as drastically as it does in humans, and yet such frequencies restore the plant’s own originality. Take, for example, a variety of apple that has strayed from its origins over two or three generations; if you treat the fruit using this method, after one or two years you will once again obtain something that comes remarkably close to the original – you can hardly recognise how far the fruit had previously strayed from the original. The same applies to religious orders. That is why we still see this as our task today: the work of the holy angels is currently still prevented from truly fulfilling this mission – but it has this task, and we are waiting for it to be able to fulfil it. That will then be one of its essential tasks. I am already looking forward to it: the holy angels know every founding charism inside out and will not be deceived. They know exactly what is really going on, and they know exactly how God intended it. They will clear things up without compromise – always whilst respecting human free will, but without compromise. Those who do not go along with it will be left behind. We need people who can make this charism shine anew. This is what we wish to admire today, on the feast of St Dominic: a marvellous charism that has produced so much holiness and yet now, like almost everything else, seems to be at the mercy of the dictatorship of the spirit of the age, almost without exception. This is the great tension of our time, which we wish to keep before our eyes today.

One more interesting aside: an order may also have a patron who does not belong to that order itself. Thus, the patron of the Dominican Order is Saint Francis, and the patron of the Franciscan Order is Saint Dominic – as if one order had asked the other: ‘Preserve the fire of childlike love in your studies and in all your endeavours, so that you do not become one-sided or cold-hearted.’ We must truly bear this in mind today and be aware of the current situation. God will provide an answer; of that we are convinced – it is a process of growth that requires people to walk this path alongside Him. It is not enough merely to take note of it

– we must grasp it, work with it, play our part. Otherwise it will pass us by, we will wither away, and God will not achieve his goal with us, but will try anew with the next generation. The danger of us missing out is great – let us respond in good time.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.