

## E-BULLETIN #33

*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5,16)*

item 69

### Theology in Action

#### Scene 1: The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Divine Love near Rome (Italy)

This sanctuary, dedicated to Our Lady of Divine Love, in the beautiful countryside just outside the noisy city limits of Rome is very popular among Romans as well as among other Italians and devotees from all over the world. The place is mostly filled with pilgrims and devotees and on Saturdays the crowd gets bigger. In harmony with many sanctuaries/pilgrim centres, this centre is also set in a beautiful natural ambience. I am a devotee of Our Lady and so I was more than happy to be there. As I was making my own wishes to Mary I also observed other devotees. The faith was very visible on the faces of the pilgrims. I was particularly struck by a few people who were walking on their knees holding rosaries in their hands. Also by a woman who was white, well beyond her 50's, and on her knees, walking. She was straining much and that was visible. But she did not give up. She walked on praying, and the faith was clearly visible in her face and in her actions.



#### Scene 2: The Sanctuary in Kaamanaickanpatti in Tamil Nadu (South India)

This I witnessed two years before when I was in India on my holidays. My mother, an ardent devotee of Our Lady and St. Antony of Padua, announced that she had promised to undertake the 'devotional practice' that was prevalent in Kaamanaickanpatti, a place of sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady. The 'devotional practice' is known in Tamil (local language) is "kumbidu soru" which is literally translated as "devotion-food". This is euphemistic for a practice that is particularly straining. It can be described thus: a devotee kneels and then prostrates, and then he/she gets up and reaches the spot where his/her head had been when in prostration, and on that spot kneels and then prostrates and rises, then reaches the 'head spot' to do the practice again. They thus go around the church for a minimum of three times. My mother is a diabetic and so I was particularly unhappy with her decision. I tried my best to convince and reason with her. She was unsure of my arguments, and at last on that particular day she kept her promise to Mary.



#### My Reflection

I had this strange notion that people of Asia and Africa were more prone to devotional practices that required much physical strain. I could never imagine that a white person would do such a thing in an expression of devotion. And so, the sight at the sanctuary near Rome of a white woman straining much in her devotional

practice was enlightening in more than one sense. The ordinary people everywhere are alike in their faith. And, as a priest, more than many times I was struck by the faith of simple people.

My idea of devotional practice was totally different. Faith and devotion are expected from a believer. This is the central theme. Strong faith is enough and God who knows your inside will naturally also know your faith. The straining practices are not always necessary to prove the devotion, especially from the old and the sick. I was sure that Mary would not be happy to see the people struggling in such a manner. But a closer reflection taught me something else and that was more profound. While I, a priest, was “merely theological” the ordinary faithful were “highly theological”. In the sense that while ordinary people were living their faith I was thinking over my faith. The ordinary people (no matter where they are from) are in fact “the walking theology”. What else expresses the Christian theology of grace better than the ordinary devotional action of the simple faithful? A believer is infused with grace when he/she is faithful to God. The effect of grace is directly proportionate to the preparation of the individual. The preparation, in simple words, means contrition – confession – the act of turning towards God. I knew these concepts. But the white lady on her knees in the Sanctuary of the Our Lady of Divine Love and my mother, who can hardly read a sentence, were in fact expressing the entire theology of grace through their devotions.

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item 70

## Prayer for Priests

*Dear Lord Jesus, our Eternal High Priest!*

*Though You are the Eternal High Priest,  
You are equally a very Fraternal Pastor*

*You are the most human and compassionate Pastor  
You are the Feeding and Forgiving Pastor  
You are the feet-washing and Fatherly Pastor*

*We thank You for giving us St Vincent, Founder and Father  
So compassionate and ever so caring a pastor  
A priest so holy and so human!*

*As our Pallottine Pastors from all over the world  
Gather in the Eternal City  
We bring them before you for your Eternal Priestly Blessing*

*We thank you for what they are, for what they do  
They are Your Precious Gifts to Our Union  
You love them with your Pastoral and Priestly Heart*

*We pray for all the Pastors in the world,  
Especially for our Pallottine Pastors  
We pray for all those fervent and faithful pastors*



*We pray for all the pastors who shepherd at home or abroad  
We pray for all the Pastors who serve in towns and villages  
in crowded slums and in far flung frontiers of human habitations*

*We pray for those pastors who are weary and worn out  
Who feel burned out and bored  
Who feel lonely and alone*

*We pray for all those pastors who are ailing and elderly  
Who are retired and resting  
Be a source of comfort and consolation to them*

*When they crab and complain,  
Help us to be understanding and considerate  
May they feel Your presence and find comfort*

*Oh, our holy Founder and Father Vincent,  
You are a true pastor at heart and a holy priest  
Keep your Pastors of the Union always close to you!*

*Keep them close to the Sacred Heart of the Eternal High Priest  
Keep them close to the Feet-washing Pastor  
Keep them close to the Mother of pastors and priests*

*We pray, despite their busy schedule in the Eternal City  
May they find, besides the enrichment, rest and relaxation!  
May they relish on lots Pasta and Pizza !!!!!!!!!!!!!*

*Amen*

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