



FROM THE HEART OF

# The Pelican

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**COLORADO!**

## Editorial

SR. GERTRUDE GILLETTE

### DEAR FAMILY AND FRIENDS,

SOME YEARS AGO I HEARD of an old monk who lived in the infirmary of his monastery and read novels all day. He had a pile of these books beside his bed and would finish off one after the other, not even taking a break to say his Office. When a fellow monk remonstrated with him about neglecting his prayers, he responded that he had said enough prayers in his life to make up for several life times. Yikes! How could a monk who had given his whole life to God in prayer, think he had had enough and whittle away his final years in such a superficial use of time? It is certainly a very sad story. But on closer examination, isn't the vice of mediocrity closer to home than we think? After all, the old monk probably didn't get that way overnight. The temptation to put off what should get done, to relax one's zeal, to settle for less, and to get bored with spiritual things is a universal phenomenon. The Desert Fathers called it *acedia* or the Noonday Devil. When the sun is directly overhead it seems not to move at all. A hermit in the desert, fasting and awaiting the hour for eating, is tempted to go out of his cell and look up to see why the sun isn't moving. He then begins to distract himself with thoughts of visiting his neighbor to see how he is doing. Prayers have become a drudgery and the thought of praying may even begin to repulse him. Of all the temptations that beset the monks, Evagrius—one of the great desert teachers—categorized *acedia* as the worst. It is often not recognized because it can so easily be disguised as a virtue. Isn't a charitable checkup of our neighbor a greater virtue than prayer? Isn't it better to distract ourselves with something useful rather than praying with many distractions? When we

know what we *should do* but allow our feelings of aversion or inertia to influence our decisions, we are giving in to *acedia*.

This temptation and its offspring go by many names: boredom, listlessness, carelessness, indifference, discouragement, weariness, sadness, melancholy, sloth, instability and need for change, aversion for the good, lack of impetus to work, neglect of rules, settling for mediocrity and, in its extreme forms, hopelessness and despair. A prime biblical example of *acedia* is the Israelites' disgust with the manna given them by God (Num 21:5). They were fed up with the sameness of the food and this led to their distaste and grumbling. We see some of the characteristics of the Noonday Devil in the general malaise that occurs in the "Noontime of life," as we look back in mid-life and bemoan where life has brought us.

Whether we are going through a mid-life crisis, or are despondent and feel like giving up on God, on life, on our spiritual goals, know that the demon of *acedia* is luring us to move us away from our high calling to holiness. The vision that spurred us on when we were young seems now too hard; perhaps also we no longer see the purpose of remaining faithful since it all seems pointless. This is often the temptation experienced by parents who have long prayed for the conversion of their children and over time have become discouraged by the absence of any fruit. They do not see the demon of *acedia* instilling discouragement in their hearts.

What can we do against this demon? The desert fathers offered several remedies—tears: an earnest heartfelt plea to God that we can't do it on our own; a routine of prayer and work: so that neither overwhelms the mind or the body; meditation on death: our final goal should spur us to greater vigilance and energize us to set out on a determined path; a resolution to do the opposite of what we are tempted to do: if you don't feel like going to Mass, overcome the feeling and go anyway—it leads to deep peace and joy; and finally, perseverance:

never give up! It is faithfulness in small things that prevent us from falling into mediocrity and melancholy.

Perseverance eventually produces the peace and joy that I just alluded to. Joy is perhaps the clearest fruit for one who has overcome *acedia*. The demons have no power over a soul which refuses to allow anything to sabotage its joy in the Lord. Joyful perseverance results in an “interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench.” Perseverance also brings about zeal for doing what is right, and charity comes to replace the self-centeredness that is at the heart of sadness.

There’s probably something of the old monk and his addiction to the superficial in all of us. Some years ago I read an article which quoted Pope Francis as saying that he never watches television; for him, it is a waste of time. He was careful to say that he didn’t condemn it for others; only that it wasn’t for him. It was a moment of grace for me. How many people waste an inordinate amount of time on social media, playing games on their phones, movies, television, music or worse? I too have been guilty of wasting time in playing solitaire on the computer, so when I heard of Pope Francis’s renunciation of TV, I decided I would never again play solitaire (or any game) on the computer. There’s nothing morally wrong with enjoying innocent games, but for me it presented a prolonged distraction that was not spiritually healthy. With God’s grace, I had to break the hold that the demon of *acedia* had on me in that particular area. I am still working on other areas!

As I am getting older, I also find that I don’t have the energy—physical or mental—that I had a decade or so ago. Increasingly, I find that *I don’t feel like* doing what used to be done with little effort. The natural slowing down of our physical energy is not *acedia*, but it can become a factor

when I am tempted to pray less, to be less self-centered, to be less helpful to others. I am reminded of Jesus’ words: Be vigilant! (Mt 24:42) It’s one thing to slack off on the amount of gardening that is calling for attention, quite another to slack off in charity and things spiritual.

As the secular world draws further away from God it sees less and less clearly the line between good and evil. *Acedia* may not seem to be a serious temptation but if not recognized and checked, it can lead to the lukewarmness Christ speaks of in the book of Revelation: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth” (3:15-16). We are called to greatness, to stability in our faith and love of God before all else. May the good Lord give us the grace to see clearly the evil of *acedia* and to rise above our feelings of hell-bound mediocrity. +



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\* *The Noonday Devil: Acedia, the Unnamed Evil of Our Times*, Jean-Charles Nault, OSB, Ignatius Press, 2015, p.201. A number of ideas in this article were plucked from this work.

# News & Updates

**THE ADJACENT PROPERTY** that we purchased last Fall has been an ongoing project since it has needed a good deal of renovating. Fortunately, guests were able to use it periodically while the fixing up was in progress. The back yard was turned into two acres of pasture and enclosed with 1100 feet of fencing by the very kind assistance of Chris Nelson who over several months—when available—single handedly dug the holes, stretched the fence, and installed the gates *gratis!* May the Lord reward him graciously! The locals reading this may repay him by visiting his store, *Rutherford Pet Supply*, off Oak Street in Spindale.



On two of the coldest days in January (temp never got above freezing with strong winds), our 500 lb pig, **Spareribs**, was slaughtered *in situ* with the help of very competent hands. After being decapitated, he was too big to put in the cauldron, so we had to resort to pouring the boiling water over his skin and scraping the skin off . . . no job for wimps in that weather! God bless Jim Curley and his crew! We really enjoyed being part of this venture which continued many days thereafter as we rendered the fat and made sausage links. The smaller of the two pigs, **Porkchops**, joined his brother in the freezer some weeks later.

On March 19, Abby had her second litter of **Maremma** puppies. For ten weeks we watched these tiny creatures grow into beautiful white fur balls, whose sole occupations were eating, sleeping, running, romping and playing incessantly. They always bring

us much joy. We are happy that they were all bought by good families with small farms.

In May, we all got Covid for a week, fortunately with only flu-like symptoms. We know that many others have suffered much worse, so we thank God for only a light case of the disease.

Also in May, we launched our **First Saturday Devotions** in our local parish which will continue until October. We have hosted the Devotions for years at the monastery, but we felt inspired to involve more parishioners in this important request of Our Lady of Fatima. She has said that the way to peace is through consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart and First Saturday Devotions. Although once earnestly practiced across the Catholic world, these devotions fell away for many decades, but fortunately are having a comeback. Peace depends upon our obedience and prayers, as Our Lady requested! See below (p. 6) for what is required to fulfill the five First Saturdays.



The first week in June brought some extra work hands to the monastery. Every year **Anna-Karina Parker** and her family volunteer a week of their vacation time to helping some charity. This beautiful family fixed up the well house, mowed grass, power-washed the main house, fixed fences and did whatever else needed to be done. God bless the Parkers!



A few other times this summer we have been blessed with **youth groups** or the local **KOC** coming and working for a few hours in the yard, garden or washing the cars. A number of chores require more manpower than we have, especially when it comes to technical expertise. We offer our prayers in gratitude to you all.



In mid-June, we added two baby **Nigerian Dwarf goats** to the farm. Since goats are notorious for getting into mischief, we thought maybe the dwarf size would cause less trouble? We'll see! Since the breed originates in Africa, we named them Perpetua and Felicity, after two early African/Carthaginian martyrs. The kids were bred on a farm where the cows and goats roam together in the back yard, so they think they are pets. They really are quite affectionate! A year from now, we hope to have our very own goat milk.

Our final additions to the farm are **two kittens** given to us also in June. We had been thinking of getting one to control the



field mice population anyway, so the timing was perfect. We named the black one Fiafia (joy) and the grey one Mira (peace) and they happily reside in the barn.

In late June, Sr. Gertrude (and a week later, Sr. Scholastica) flew to Florida to help her sister and brother-in-law (**Ellen and Jay Helenius**) pack up and move to North Carolina. They are now ensconced in the newly renovated property which they are renting from us.

The latter part of July saw us heading to **Colorado for our annual retreat**. Our destination was **St. Walburga's Abbey** in Virginia Dale, CO near the Wyoming border (altitude 8,600 feet). Making a retreat there has been on our bucket list for some time, so it was a long desire come true. Mother Mary Michael and the Sisters were very hospitable and the retreat spiritually enriching for all of us. We enjoyed their secluded location, the lovely monastic



# First Saturday Devotions

**W**E INTERRUPT OUR series on Mary in Scripture in this issue to bring you an important message from Our Lady of Fatima! Our

Lady promised that peace would come to the world through her Immaculate Heart. With war raging in Ukraine, and threats of war coming from the Middle East, North Korea and China, we cannot sit back and placidly hope that things will change for the better. It is paramount that we must take seriously Our Lady of Fatima's words and put them into practice. I have therefore chronicled what Our Lady has said on the subject and I will let her own words speak for themselves:†

On July 13, 1917 Our Lady told the three children of Fatima:

You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. In order to save them, God wishes to establish in the world **devotion to my Immaculate Heart**. If you do what I tell you, many souls will be saved, there will be **peace**. . . . I shall come to ask for the **Consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart** and the **Communion of Reparation on the first Saturdays**. If my requests are fulfilled, Russia will be converted and there will be peace (41).

June 13, 1929 Sr. Lucia received a vision of Our Lady in which she said that the time had come for the Holy Father, in union with all the bishops of the world, to consecrate

† The quotes are all taken from *Fatima and the First Saturdays* (© 2021 First Saturdays for Peace; info@communalfirstsaturdays.org). The numbers in parentheses refer to the page number in this work. We have added the sections in bold or italics for emphasis.



buildings, their Divine Office, and getting a peak of their farm, which specializes in cattle but includes a few apacacs and lamas. God bless you, Sisters!



We took advantage of the trip to tag on a few days to visit an old friend (Noel Pedry) from Ave Maria who now lives in Denver with her lovely family and then to spend two days in Vail with Scott and Paula Ryan—the latter being a niece of our beloved Sr. Theresa. We were blown away by the natural beauty of the mountains, lakes and woodlands seen from nearly every point in this picturesque village. We are blessed with similar scenes in Western NC, but the height of the mountains (Vail's mountains reach 10,000 feet above sea level) far surpasses anything we have on the East Coast. Thank you Scott and Paula for an unforgettable visit! +



which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment . . . by their blasphemies and ingratitude . . . and there is no one to remove them with an act of reparation. . . . **I promise to assist at the hour of death with all the graces necessary for salvation** all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, go to Confession and receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries of the rosary, *with the intention of making reparation to me* (76).

In a letter written on March 19, 1939, Sr. Lucia, referring to a locution she received from Our Lord shortly before that date, says :

**War or peace of the world depends upon the practice of this [First Saturdays] devotion**, joined with the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Hence I would want it spread and above all because it is the desire of our good Lord and our so dear mother in heaven (105).

Three months later (June 20, 1939), in another letter, Sr. Lucia wrote:

Our Lady promised to restrain the scourge of War if this [First Saturday] devotion were practiced. We will see her warding off this chastisement in the measure people will take the pain to spread the devotion, although I am afraid we are not doing as much as we could and God, not too happy, might raise His arm of Mercy and let the world be destroyed by this punishment, which never been before shall be, *horrible, horrible* (107).

Then a year after the first locution on March 19, 1940, Sr. Lucia relates that Our Lord said to her once more:

Ask, ask again insistently for the publication of the Communion of Reparation in honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the First Saturdays. **The time is coming when the rigor of my justice will punish the crimes of diverse nations. Some of them will be annihilated.** At last the severity of my justice will fall severely on those who want to destroy my reign in souls (109).

Russia to her Immaculate Heart. She also asked for prayers of reparation because souls were condemned by the justice of God for sins committed against her person.

After decades of delay, finally on March 25, 1984, Pope John Paul II consecrated the whole world with an oblique reference to Russia. Then more recently Pope Francis consecrated the whole world with an explicit reference to Russia—and Ukraine—on March 25, 2022. So the first part of Our Lady's request has been done. But for peace to come to the world, **the second must also be fulfilled.**

A few years earlier than the 1929 apparition, on December 10, 1925 Our Lady appeared to Sr. Lucia and asked, holding out her heart:

Have pity on the Heart of your Most Holy Mother. It is covered with the thorns with

These three warnings of course occurred at the very beginning of World War II. Since the First Saturdays Devotion was not sufficiently spread and practiced the grim predictions sadly became reality. Are we on the verge of history repeating itself because we still have not listened to Our Mother's request to practice the First Saturdays? Did she not say "War or peace of the world depends on the practice of this devotion. . . .?" We also know that Our Lady said on July 13, 1917:

In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me and she will be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world (41).

That is a consolation, but before this triumph of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, "the good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, [and] various nations will be annihilated" (41).

**The Purpose** of the First Saturdays Devotion is to move Jesus to **pardon souls who have committed offenses against his Mother** (102).

The Lord chose *Five Saturdays* to make reparation for the **Five ways Our Lady is offended** by sin:

1. Against her Immaculate Conception
2. Against her Virginity
3. Against her Divine Maternity & her Motherhood of all people
4. For turning children against Mary as their heavenly Mother
5. Against Mary's Sacred Images (by mocking or purposely damaging them)

In conclusion: we therefore need to earnestly *practice and spread this devotion* so that there will be **peace in the world at large, in our Church, in our nation, in our families and in our own hearts.** We recommend to our readers to personally make these First Saturdays, speak of them to others and even to initiate them in your own parishes. *May Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Triumph first in our own hearts and then in the whole world.* +

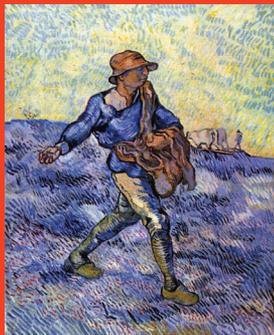
The **Four Requirements** which should be made with the *intention of making reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

1. **Confession** (within twenty days before or after each First Saturday)
2. **Holy Communion** of Reparation
3. **Rosary** (five decades)
4. Keep Our Lady company for an additional fifteen minutes while **Meditating on any of the mysteries of the Rosary.**



## WE THANK ALL OUR BENEFACTORS FOR ALL YOUR

help this past year. We were able to purchase the adjacent property because of the generosity of many of you. Super thanks to all who helped! We are still in need of donations to help towards renovating the new property and the usual expenses of running a monastery and farm. Thank you! We are so blessed to have you in our lives and to experience your love and kindness! As always, be assured of our prayers. ♥ God bless you!



For those new to our mailing list: the Sowers are those who kindly donate \$100 a year to the Monastery, which is especially helpful for our every day expenses. For all donations, please make your checks to:

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