



LIGHT & LIFE

VOICE OF THE ROSARY CENTER & CONFRATERNITY

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Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P., *Director*

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May God be Glorified in His Angels and in His Saints!

This will be a very glorious Fall for our Confraternity and all who love Our Lady's Rosary, and it's not a mystery why! As I write this, I don't have a concrete date and time, but Bl. Bartolo Longo, that great modern Apostle of the Rosary, as well as Bl. Carlo Acutis, the young cyber-missionary, will be canonized. Although Bl. Carlo Acutis is generally more known for his work in promoting Eucharistic miracles (and I don't believe he is a member of our Confraternity), still, he also maintained a website with approved Marian apparitions, and loved to pray the Rosary. As Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect for the Congregation for the Cause of Saints stated in the preface of an Italian Rosary book, "Carlo loved the prayer of the rosary: an ancient prayer, which he refreshed every day on his lips; a prayer he learned and loved since early childhood... Our Blessed was an authentic apostle of the rosary of the Blessed Virgin." ¹

Between these two wonderful persons, it is understandable as to why Bl. Carlo Acutis has drawn more attention in our times: he was a young saint, and very relatable to the youth, playing Pokemon and computer games, and even being active on the internet very early on. He has much more of an "Everyman" quality about him. Bl. Bartolo Longo, on the other hand, ended up losing his way in his youth, falling into the Occult, and even becoming ordained as a Satanic priest. After some time in his days of darkness, depression, and error, a friend helped lead him to the Faith, through the good counsels of a Dominican friar and priest, Alberto Radente. Inspired, he would soon become a lay Dominican (Dominican tertiary), and married. Finding the faith of the people in Pompei to be in a shocking state, he would restore a dilapidated church, help found a local Confraternity, and eventually

become a leading shrine and basilica. His humanitarian works even earned him two nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize. So his life is a little more extraordinary, in both the good and the bad extremes.

However, as someone named after the "Good Thief," St. Dismas, I tend to have a weak spot, if not always for the underdog, then certainly for the "bad dog" who turns his or her life around and becomes good. Bl. Bartolo



Longo may not directly inspire as many people to follow in his footsteps, but he is certainly an inspiration for all the parents and families of loved ones who have fallen away from the Faith, and especially for those who have not only abandoned the Faith, but thrown themselves into lives of darkness, blasphemy, and sin. This soon-to-be saint reminds them, and us, that while we may be tempted to despair for our loved ones, that we must never give up on them. We do not know what happened with St. Dismas' parents – perhaps they were already deceased, perhaps they did not know what happened to their son, perhaps they disowned him, but Our Lord was there on that fateful day on Golgotha to snatch that soul from the gaping maws of Hell, even at His physically weakest and most vulnerable point on the Cross. Neither Our Lord nor Our

Lady command us to cease praying if someone seems beyond hope and to not "waste our time" on them. I would daresay that it is the contrary – the more lost, the more help they need. The Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine that was managing well enough to find the one lost sheep who probably despaired of ever seeing its flock again.

God's ways are mysterious, and will work in due time. The murderer of St. Maria Goretti turned his life around, and became a holy religious brother, as did the murderer of St. Peter Martyr, Bl. Carino of Balsamo. St. Paul was

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TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

Omniscience

By Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.

Baltimore Catechism (edition 4):

Omniscience

18 Q. Does God know all things? A. God knows all things, even our most secret thoughts, words, and actions.

Certainly God "knows all things." First, because He is infinitely wise, and if He were ignorant of anything He would not be so. Secondly, because He is everywhere and sees and hears all. Darkness does not hide from His view, nor noise prevent Him from hearing. How could we sin if we thought of this! God is just here, looking at me and listening to me. Would I do what I am going to do now if I knew my parents, relatives, and friends were watching me? Would I like them to know that I am thinking about things sinful, and preparing to do shameful acts? No! Why then should I feel ashamed to let God see and know of this wicked thought or action? They might know it and yet be unable to harm me, but He, all-powerful, could destroy me instantly. Nay, more; not only will God see and know this evil deed or thought; but, by His gift, the Blessed Mother, the angels and saints will know of it and be ashamed of it before God, and, most of all, my guardian angel will deplore it. Besides, this sin will be revealed to the whole world on the last day, and my friends, relatives, and neighbors will know that I was guilty of it...

During the Watergate congressional hearings, then-Senator Howard Baker asked the question that would come to be the central focus of that entire political crisis: "What did the president know and when did he know it?" This question is often repeated when some new crisis comes along in a presidency or political career. In many ways, we throw this question back at God, assigning complicity to God for the evils, whether natural or moral, in this world. So the question is: What did God know and when did He know it? All and always. Not even exactly always, but even outside of and before time began, He already knew it. So if God knew it, then why did He allow it? The first inclination is simply to assign blame to God for our own misfortunes.

This has always been part of the classical "Problem of Evil," in which we ask, "Well, if God is all-knowing, could He not have seen and prevented this evil from happening to me?" And, like Job's friends, we look for someone to blame, whether it's ourselves, our spouses, our world, or even God.

In Scripture, we hear the story of Job, who is described as "blameless and upright... who feared God and avoided evil" (Job 1:1). Job would bless his many children each day, bringing them up rightly, and offering sacrifices for them—*just in case* they had somehow offended God (cf Job 1:5). Job, to his credit, proclaims his innocence in

the face of the calamities and disasters that befall him, and refuses to curse God. Finally, under the weight of his sorrows and his not-so-helpful friends that tried to console him, he cries out, "Oh, that I had one to hear my case: here is my signature: let the Almighty answer me! Let my accuser write out his indictment!" (Job 31:35).

To which God finally explicitly replies, "Will one who argues with the Almighty be corrected? Let him who would instruct God give answer!" (Job 40:2). Where was Job when God created the universe from nothing? And who was Job to give the All-knowing God instruction? Job then repents of his haughtiness, and God blesses him even more than in days before.

God's answer may seem like a non-answer to us, and indeed, it *would be*, if God were a man. Yet, God knows all things, as to their causes and effects, as to their substance and to their nature. Even if we planned out the entire genetic code for a fruit fly and studied it for a hundred generations, we could not even *begin* to understand what is a fruit fly in its very essence. We can only observe and try to deduce certain things, but we have not the slightest inkling of what being a fruit fly means to the fruit fly. We cannot even know ourselves fully, or our reasons for why we are the way we are, or do the things that we do. "More tortuous [deceitful] than anything is the human heart, beyond remedy; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9).

Free Will is Not Free of Consequences

But as far as God is concerned, this brings up a great question: If He created everything from nothing, and knows how we will act and what we will do, doesn't this make Him responsible? If we, for example, created a robot that we know will try to kill humans the first chance it gets, then we would surely be held criminally liable in court if it ever got loose and killed even a single soul. The robot we made does not have a true free will, but rather, it follows a set of programs and instructions. Some would argue that human beings and all sentient creatures do not really have a free will, so much as they are following genetic instructions which are formed by life experiences, what they learned, etc. If we have no true free will, even when we are not under threat or duress, then our legal system would seem to fall apart. There could be no culpability or blame assigned to the criminal, but rather only to God, or nature, depending on your view. One might argue that punishment is a way to guide our "programmed" nature. But common human experience does not seem to bear this out – people in very similar circumstances and upbringings might *tend* to do certain things, but may act in a much different fashion than simple genetics or education might allow. It is sometimes argued that out of

need, poverty leads to crime. Poverty does not in itself cause crime. There are plenty of beautifully honest and generous poor people, and some very heinously criminal oligarchs and autocrats.

The classical Christian position is that God knows the future and all possibilities, *and* that we do have free will. But, hold on, if we *do* have free will, and it is God Who creates us, then *how* can we have free will, if it's already been determined, so to speak, by God knowing beforehand what would happen?

A Limited Perspective Hinders Us

Part of the problem is that we do not see as God sees, and we do not know as God knows. We are attempting to grasp something that is by its very nature outside of our capacity to understand, in some way comparable to what we already know or see in nature. Adults seem incredibly marvellous to young children, for we *seem* to know everything. They are amazed that we can cook their food, that we can operate a motor vehicle, that we can fix one, that we know how to get money from these ATM machines on the walls, that we can add and subtract without seemingly putting much effort or using our fingers and toes. Wow! Children, of course, will come to grow disappointed in us when they realize we do *not* know everything. They realize much later just how much we actually *did* know, but they could not understand without their own adult life experience.

One of the ways that physicists view the universe and time is by using the "Block Universe" model, in which we can see all of Creation and all of time as one static "block" that has already preceded and finished, according to an outside viewer. We see the Bible, for example, and we might think, "Oh yeah, God wins in the end." But if we were in the pages of Scripture, we could never know that. Or, think of our life as a kind of flip book, where one flips pages, and the drawings or photos form a kind of movie. In each individual frame, we are making a decision, choosing freely. We are active agents in our own story. But if someone were holding the book of our life, he or she would easily be able to see and know everything we do or think. If we are living our lives inside this flip book, we cannot know that. To us, as we live the continuum of our lives, page by page, instant by instant, we act as human beings.

But God does more than "hold" the book. He sets the flip books of the universe in motion, and He creates the "space-time" or universe of the countless numbers of flip books that flow together and intersect and interact in various ways. He created our nature, and He created who and what we are, and we do act according to our human nature, but in our own human nature, He allows us to have free will. Indeed, He respects our free will so absolutely, that He will even allow us to tell Him "no." Someone once described Heaven as the soul finally surrendering to God and saying, "Thy will be done," and Hell as the soul finally withdrawing from God, and God telling *us*, "Thy will be done."

Could He have made us or things around us to work differently? Certainly, but then He would be interfering in our free will and destroying it. He does not cause our individual acts of free will, but allows them. Why? Well, because there can be no love, or any moral act, without the possibility of free will.

Now, some things God allows in order to teach us, and educate us along the path of righteousness and understanding, and we can only really learn the hard way. I know of a few parents, who, when their young kids would ask them if they could smoke dad's cigarettes, for example, would freely allow them to try it out. After one nauseating experience of the wonders and marvels of tobacco, many kids would swear off such a bad habit for life. No amount of verbal cajoling would work on the kids as well as experiencing that first (and hopefully final) drag on the cancer sticks. Of course, we would not do the same thing with kids running around loosely and unsupervised with fireworks or cars, for example, since we know the results would be disastrous. And human history is nothing if not filled with disasters. We cannot foresee every action our kids might carry out driving our cars without proper training and supervision, but we can certainly stop our kids from carrying out their free will in this regard.

But, God has allowed such terrible things to happen – wars, genocides, violent crimes... Does God not see? Does God not care? He does indeed see, and He does indeed care. He is careful not to destroy who we are, and part of the image and likeness of God is having our free will. Still, He enters and guides human history from its most disastrous end – eternal separation from God, by sending His only Son. He allows the greatest evil, the torture and putting to death of His innocent Son by His own guilty creatures, and His answer is to bring the greatest good possible out of our greatest evil. Only God can do this and allow this, because He has the proper perspective to see all things and know how to do this while balancing our free will.

An Exceedingly Timely Example

As I type this very sentence, Pope Francis has just been buried, and the conclave to elect the pope has begun. The way some well-intentioned people speak of God electing the pope makes it sound as if God always picks the best guy for the job, or He is the only voter, or that if God has allowed the election of a pope, then by necessity it must be the best option, or at least, always a good man. This is where we can see how God works in spite of us and with us.

Pope Benedict, while yet Cardinal Ratzinger (yes, "only" a cardinal, but still in charge of doctrine as head of the Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith), in an interview with Bavarian television in 1997 replied, when asked if God chooses the pope:

"I would not say so, in the sense that the Holy Spirit picks out the Pope... I would say that the Spirit

does not exactly take control of the affair, but rather like a good educator, as it were, leaves us much space, much freedom, without entirely abandoning us. Thus the Spirit's role should be understood in a much more elastic sense, not that He dictates the candidate for whom one must vote. Probably the only assurance He offers is that the thing cannot be totally ruined... There are too many contrary instances of popes the Holy Spirit obviously would not have picked!"

God guides and counsels the pope away from that which could destroy His church, but popes, if they are bad or immoral, can certainly cause much harm. In addition, in times past, secular nations and states would try to influence the election in their own ways, having varying amounts of success in "guiding" the cardinals.

Nevertheless, He is the one that allows the pope to be chosen, but the pope does not have his own free will surgically removed upon election to the papacy. There has been corruption and evil in the hierarchy before – Our own Lord chose Judas as a warning to us that even those in the highest office can fail. He also chose Peter to show us that even those who deny their very Lord at His greatest hour of need can be restored and redeemed.

This should give us some pause and cause for concern, and once again reinforce the need to pray for our clergy and leaders, but also give us no small cause for joy, in that God has *also* taken our *own* stupidity, foolishness, and immorality into account when He calls us to our own vocation. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Prodigal Father had to allow the Prodigal Son to go his own way, in order that the Prodigal Son might come to fully experience and understand the love and mercy of the Prodigal Father and not take him for granted. The elder son in the Prodigal Son story never failed so horribly, but He did not need to learn the same way, although he still had to learn how to forgive his foolish brother.

The Good and the Bad of Omniscience

The good news is that God knows everything. The bad news is that God knows *everything*. Only when we truly enter outside of normal natural time will everything come to our knowledge. Scripture tells us that "He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will manifest the motives of our hearts, and then everyone will receive praise from God" (1 Cor 4:4b), and "nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known" (Mt 10:26b). *That* will be when we will have our big "aha!" moment, when it will be revealed and we will come to understand, as best we can, how God's will has been carried out, in spite of our best efforts to thwart it.

In the next issue, we will move to part of an issue we brought up in passing in the beginning when we spoke of the problem of evil, namely, if God is all just, all holy, all merciful, and all perfect. God, of course, already knew that we would do that.

Rest in peace, Pope Francis!



Ordained Priest:
13 December 1969
Consecrated Bishop:
27 June 1992
Elected Pope:
13 March 2013
Born into Eternal Life:
21 April 2025

May God be Glorified

(Continued from page 1)

either directly or indirectly complicit in the persecution of the early Church and the death of some of Her saints. The "hard work" of conversion of a soul is up to God; the praying for and giving a good example and encouragement to that soul is entrusted to us.

So to honor this wonderful member and promoter of Our Lady's Rosary and her Rosary Confraternity, and to further inspire hope in those who fear for their loved ones, we will dedicate our September-October issue of *Light & Life* to Bl. Bartolo Longo, taking a pause from our normal programming for this special issue. We will add a special holy card in his honor. His feast day is October 5th, blessedly close to that of Our Lady of the Rosary, so it is rather timely as well.

Oh soon-to-be saints, raised to the honor of the altars in Churches throughout the world, pray for us!

1 <https://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/blessed-carlo-acutis-rosary/74371>

Four New Priests and Promoters of Our Lady's Rosary:



(Left to right: Fr. Elias Guadalupe Ford, O.P., Fr. Nathaniel Maria Mayne, O.P., Fr. John Peter Anderson, O.P., Fr. Antony Augustine Cherian, O.P.)

Thank you for your prayerful and financial support of our seminarian student brothers! Without you this blessed ordination, on May 30th, would not have been possible. Pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send many more young men out into His fields!

REQUIESCAT IN PACE
Fr. Brian Mullady, OP
1946 - 2025



A popular Catholic author, speaker and teacher, who passed away April 22nd. He frequently appeared on EWTN, and was an itinerant preacher spreading the Good News and mercy of Christ.