

THE REIGN OF JUSTICE

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Joy is indispensable to man

PEOPLE are very distraught. Some are so distraught that they are unable to concentrate on anything at all, so that what joy they have consists of bright patches that last no time at all. That truly is the lot of mankind at present: a little joy and many tears. That is their device for today. The passing joys they do have are all unwholesome because they are selfish. People like to get rich and to take advantage of circumstances and of their fellow men.

All such things are contrary to the divine law and so cannot lead to reasonable results. As the source of their joy is bad, there can be no good effect. On the contrary, it can only serve to accentuate the evil in their character. For instance, there are people who get a lot of satisfaction out of tormenting their fellow creatures. They get what they call "a good laugh" out of watching their misfortunes and perplexity. They obtain further enjoyment from looking back in retrospect at the trouble and confusion into which an acquaintance may have been plunged.

Mankind also have other harmful joys, but in a different domain. For instance, they often get a deal of satisfaction out of stuffing their stomachs with the abundance of food served up at banquets, in the course of which, the most incongruous and the most inconceivable things are mixed together. They take pleasure in greediness, and it never enters their minds to care for their stomachs.

Thus, the joys of mankind are nearly always followed by contradiction, trouble and tears, for indulgence in all manner of irregular things, is always followed by the hour of reckoning, when one has to reap what one has sown. All such joys are spurious. They have nothing in common with those which, being true and consequently lasting, do one good. These are founded on altruism, love for fellow men. They spring from the Lord's approval, communicated to one by his Holy Spirit. It is a vivifying influence that cheers one's heart and makes it glad. It brings one into kinship with the Almighty's glorious Work, which is all altruism.

That marvellous Work has not always consisted of rescuing the poor shipwrecked folk whom mankind are at present. It has always existed, through all eternity. It also, and particularly, took the form of bringing some perfect creations into existence, multitudes of worlds, and creatures such as angels, archangels, cherubim, heavenly dignities and powers. It also included creating

the Earth. We are told that the angels of God — called "the morning stars" — shouted for joy when they saw the Earth appear, and then man, as the result of the creative work of the Son of God. There was a glorious burst of enthusiasm and joy from the celestial creatures. All God's true children also have those transports of gladness, which are awakened by the prodigious displays of the power of God's Work, particularly over the wonderful purposes of the Almighty for the Earth and its inhabitants.

The Lord intends to bring mankind to complete happiness. He intends to restore them to the condition of sons of God, rendered viable on the Earth restored to perfection and become God's glorious footstool. This is the present and principal form of God's Work. In it, He associates those people who wish to become his children. They think it an immense privilege to be permitted to collaborate on that sublime Work. It is the main reason for their joy. It echoes in the hearts of those who obtain it as a vivifying power in the highest degree. That is what the Apostle Paul points out when he says: "Rejoice in the Lord!" This means to rejoice in his Work and in his promises, and to associate, with all one's heart, in everything that makes their fulfilment possible.

A sentiment that is also a great promoter of joy that is as beneficial as it can be, is gratitude. The more we cultivate it by turning over in our hearts the goodness and the blessing of God, the more also do the affairs of God gain in value and force in our estimation. The more we esteem them, the more we are also able to put them to account as immense and glorious riches. Similarly, the more we apply ourselves to bringing the message of God's Work, now being done on Earth, and to making known the grace of God to those around us, the more also will the joy which produces life, penetrate into our hearts.

Divine grace is an active force, which has to be reflected to be felt. The best illustration we can offer to explain how this works is that of the Sun. It is a glorious star, in spite of the colossal distance there is between it and the Earth. The part of the Earth illuminated by it, reflects the light. But the part turned away from the Sun receives no light, and diffused light does not have the power to illuminate the part of the Earth which is in the shadow. That part can be lit only by the Moon, which also reflects light to the Earth. Moonlight is, af-

ter all, merely sunlight which becomes its own light, owing to the fact that it reflects what it has received.

It is the same in man's case. His soul can reflect divine light. He has joy and happiness because it is the reflection of the true light. If, however, our souls reflect the light of men, that light which is nought but darkness, how great that darkness will be! Then, there are terrible disappointments, excruciating pains, floods of tears, and pangs of despair, just as they are to be seen among mankind.

To his disciples, our dear Saviour said: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its flavour, how shall it be salted? ... "You are the light of the world." That light is the reflection of the divine light that shines from us. It has to become increasingly brighter and to scatter joy and hope around us. It is that joy that is pleasing to the Lord, that is sanctioned by Him, and it is the only true one.

Isaiah 61 sets the pitch, for us, that we have to reach in the witness that it is our honour to bear. This is what he says: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the meek. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn...to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. ... Everlasting joy will be theirs."

That is the glorious message entrusted to those who associate in the Lord's Work. To do good, to bring relief, to make hearts glad and to set free the captives and those who are bound, all this is sublime Work, which could never be appreciated enough. It gives rise to such joy in our hearts, that triggers reactions most powerful in the direction of life. It is such sensations — founded on nobility, on love for others and on justice — that our system has an imperative need of. Indeed, our whole being, for its prosperity and durability, depends on us keeping the Universal Law, which requires each to exist for the general good. Mankind are responsible towards one another to give mutual help, to relieve one another and to do one another good and never harm.

Everything we might do to harm our neighbour, to give him pain or cause him disappointment or sorrow, will inevitably contribute towards our destruction. It might, for the time being, bring some advantage to the one who acts so, give one unwholesome satisfaction, but the last word is always utter disappointment. That is the retribution of the wicked, of those who break

Lord, Thou, from shame, didst take me

THE woe of freezing bodies, of empty stomachs and of burdened hearts. Nothing was missing from this gloomy picture presented by this family in Piedmont (a region in northwest Italy), living in a dilapidated house on a high plateau of Mount Bisalta in the Alps. Two more families under the same roof as the first, were equally destitute. A group of children messing around made the picture even gloomier. Yet the spot did not lack for beauty, for behind this crumbling hovel, there was a large and splendid forest of chestnut trees. Near the mountain, there was a big town, and further away, there were broad rice fields.

Neither Maria nor Antonio (wife and husband), at their age and in those conditions, would have wished for another child. Yet the 10th was on the way when she turned 47.

Joseph was not poorly received, but he hadn't been wanted. The atmosphere of the home, just passable as things were, was not improved by the prospect of an added mouth to feed. Being small and sickly, Joseph was an illustration of the consequence of the wretched way the world is going. A small sister already had died, so had a boy in the bloom of youth, and the looks of this latecomer did not encourage high hopes.

Poor mother! Life had not been generous to her. Worn out before her time by fatigue and privation, she further had to encourage her last offspring to live: "Have patience, my boy. When you are 20, you'll be as strong as the rest!"

When Joseph was old enough to go to the village school, he hardly had the strength to stand on his legs. On Sundays, however, well or sick, nothing had to prevent the child from going to church with his mother, for therein, so it appeared, lay their only hope.

The world was nothing but a vale of tears. But one had to believe that it might lead to another still more terrible, where damnation was everlasting. Poor Maria! In her distress, grasping the hand held out to her by her religion, she added the terrible anxiety over the future, to the cares of the present, for today's hell was no guarantee against that of the other world. There was the little sister in limbo, and the elder brother whose whereabouts were highly problematic, but whose soul beyond the veil required numberless prayers. There was little enough money for the living, let alone for the dead, so that fear was urging mother on to the greatest sacrifices, and Joseph to the greatest efforts. The lad could not fail to be impressed, for everything led one to believe that thus was the House of God.

His father must have held much less strongly to the belief, for when his wife fell seriously ill, he had not confessed his sins or

done his Easter duty for 14 years. This must have been a serious matter, for the priest who had been called for the occasion had said: "Very well, we will pray for your wife. But if you don't come back to us, we will pray that she will die!"

Here below, then, Salvation and even health were fragile and often in the hands of men. Nevertheless, being credulous, Antonio had gone to confession.

First, there was the wood he used to fetch from the community forest when his children were shivering with the winter cold. Then, at the same time, there were the bean poles.

The priest interrupted him: "Ah, bean poles. ... I shall be needing some too. Next time you go, don't forget me!"

With the arrival of spring, as God's great law commanded, all nature came back to life. From the effect of this wonderful renewal, Maria was restored to health. Antonio then

the law, who do not live for the blessing of their fellow creatures, but go for some selfish satisfaction: they reap the curse.

All those inconsiderate joys, whether gross or refined, that put fellow creatures down and make them suffer, but rejoice perverted hearts, in the end, inevitably lead to the confusion of the one who indulges in them. Only the joy that is pleasing to the Lord can be true and steady in our hearts, for it is the only one that leaves no trace of bitterness. This joy is formulated, as follows, in the divine Word: "Happy are the people whose God is the LORD. ... The LORD gives his people strength; the LORD blesses his people with peace." His blessing is never followed by sorrow.

We have profound joy in the glorious and splendid Work that the Lord has entrusted to us as the associates of his beloved Son, in bringing peace and deliverance to the Earth. This is not our Work, but the Lord's, in which we have a small share, and in which we rejoice with all our heart. It makes us happy to see that Work progress. It gives us great satisfaction to talk about it, to bring it to life in our hearts, to announce it to those around us, and to deny ourselves so that it may spread and progress in every way till its objective is reached, which is the restoration of the Earth and of mankind to perfection.

That is what gives us health, life and being. In it, there is real and lasting happiness to be found. It is divine joy, which rests our organism and also makes every circulation easy. Then, the organs are able to do their work easily, and the blood is able to circulate freely and to supply the body with everything it needs for its work and maintenance. To acquire the joy that is pleasing to the Lord, and to discard all others, is therefore the right road, the straight path, and the natural, wise and intelligent way. It is the only way that leads to blessing and that makes lasting life possible.

The man who is under the influence of God's Holy Spirit, and has nothing in him that clashes with that Spirit, reflects unreserved joy, which is proof of God's thorough approval. This feeling is the automatic result of the conviction he has in his heart. Then, he displays his joy quite effortlessly, because it is real joy. Whereas, in the world, they smile in an approving manner, and this is nothing but terrible hypocrisy.

Divine joy is also promoted by the perception of some things that are keenly felt by God's children. These people — as they examine the thought behind such and such an action on the Lord's part, or such and such of his works — discover therein some powerful virtues of nobility, of charitable intentions and of loftiness of soul. In their eyes, this is like a magnificent painting, masterly in its play of colour and light. Exquisite details are to be made out, which are so many caresses felt, owing to perceiving the kindness and goodness of the Lord.

Indeed, our hearts are transported with joy and are deeply moved by the greatness of the Almighty, and by the sublime sentiments of his loving Son, who is so obedient. All those divine forces, those wonderful virtues, both penetrating and demonstrative, and thus perceptible to our "sixth sense" set in action by God's Holy Spirit, induce us to shout for joy and to sing God's praise. We cannot help it. When a blush rises to the face of a youthful heart who has never experienced the storms of life, or lost his youthful candour, can he hold it back? Perhaps he would like to hide his feelings, but can't. In such a manner does enthusiasm, happiness and ineffable joy, burst from the hearts of God's children when they discover a fresh trait of nobility in the dispositions of their heavenly Father. They also rejoice keenly when they perceive such admirable resemblance between the Son of God and his Father.

And then what happiness it is to now discover striking traits of character resembling those of God and of his Son, in the members of the Little Flock still on trial, and when that divine character also begins to show in the Host of the Lord!

Such things are now common among God's people. It is this very display of divine sentiments by the last consecrated disciples and by the Host of the Lord, that will convince mankind and urge them to irresistibly lay aside all their spurious joys in order to obtain those that are pleasing to the Lord, the only ones that can set mankind on the road to a happy and lasting life.

The Big Bang, or Creation

In our columns, we have often dealt with the origin of the Universe. This is a very interesting subject, but it seems to cause some difficulties for the scientific community if one believes the following article, which we quote from the "Science" column in the Swiss French-language newspaper *Tribune de Genève* on the 23rd and the 24th of April 2022:

What if the Big Bang model has to be revised?

We are getting closer to the proof of the formation of the Universe, but the standard model of the Big Bang seems lame. What is wrong?

There was the Big Bang, but before that? Nothingness? Another Universe? Was there "a parallel multiverse" [several Universes]? Is that a reasonable question, because time and the notions of simultaneity, before and after, would have all been born together? What was there more than 14 billion years ago where the Universe is now, if we can measure Space, which did not exist then? Those questions are frequently asked, and physics is evolving with them and is discovering and observing "an undefined cosmological background", "a fossil radiation", which would have appeared "only" 380,000 years after the Big Bang. Where are we today? What if certainties have given way to doubt? Let us go back a few months.

Recently in a laboratory, scientists did not reproduce the Big Bang, but produced an experiment in which matter is created by collisions in a cloud of pure photons. According to a theory by physicists Gregory Breit and John A. Wheeler in the year 1934, matter could be created in this way. This corroborates a hypothesis by Albert Einstein 115 years ago, as part of "the special theory of relativity". Namely, that light is capable of transmitting the inertia of matter. According to later developments, it was precisely this process that must have happened during the Big Bang, 13.8 billion years ago, although the date sometimes varies, but that doesn't matter.

As a reminder, the Big Bang does not mean that there was an original explosion. It only designates a cosmological model that tries to describe the origin and the evolution of the Universe that began at a unique moment, called $t = 0$, in mathematics. After that unique moment, there followed a rapid dilation, followed by a period of rapid expansion during which all the objects of the Universe were formed.

Small steps towards proof

Since then, the model has been refined and is generally accepted as the most accurate and the closest, to the astrophysical truth. Without going into philosophical considerations resulting from it, let us return to that recent experiment. By causing heavy ions to collide with each other at almost the speed of light, physicists observed that the acceleration of these particles causes the appearance of a cloud of photons surrounding them. This precisely verifies the predictions of Breit and Wheeler, made in 1934. In other words, a small step was taken towards the proof — if we can use this term here — of the reality of the Big Bang.

Incompatible values

That discovery and its associated enthusiasm, must now be approached with caution. Because nothing is more fluctuating than astrophysics, which depends on observation, and which is often subject to contradictions that lead to deadlocks. In the recent quarterly special edition of the French scientific journal Sciences et Avenir, the French researcher and astrophysicist Thomas Lepeltier returns in a short interview about the different problems raised by the current model of the Big Bang, problems that he already raised last year in several publications.

First of all, there is the expansion rate of the Universe. It determines the speed at which it expands, which is essential for the arrangement of the Universe, and for the estimation of its age and, even more so, its future. The problem is that the expansion rate is 67 kilometres per second, per megaparsec [km/s/Mpc] (1 megaparsec = 3.26 million light-years), if one examines the cosmic microwave background (CMB, radiation). However, observations of regularly pulsating giant stars (also called "cepheids") result in a rate of 72 km/s/Mpc. The two values are not compatible with each other and might mean that the expansion of the Universe is not true and a new physics must be introduced.

Additionally, there is the problem of inflation. The phase of (exponential) expansion, which is supposed to have started 10^{-36} seconds after the Big Bang, is based on the existence of a field referred to as "inflation", whose existence is pure speculation. In other words, this theory has no physical basis. Finally, the fact is that in 50 years, it has not been possible to find "dark matter" or its origin, which would support the standard model of the Big Bang, and which might mean that everything needs to be reconsidered and that this model is not the right one. So, there is more than a dozen major stumbling blocks where the standard model fails. Which probably means that another model must be discovered. Let's talk about it again in 100 years.

The model of the Big Bang was proposed by the Belgian astrophysicist and Catholic priest Georges Lemaître, in 1927. In 1929, the American astronomer Edwin Hubble comprehensively expanded that proposal.

That information surprised us. Was the Catholic priest Georges Lemaître, a disciple of Christ, or a scientist? Because one cannot be both at the same time. When we hear that he was the first to propose the model of the Big Bang, we ask ourselves whether he added science instead of virtue to faith and whether science eventually triumphed over faith.

We can easily understand the thirst of our scientists to fathom the mysteries of the origin and the formation of the Universe, but the method they use for it seems, to us, to be "unscientific". In fact, the concept of the Big Bang only represents a hypothesis, and one goes to unbelievable trouble to prove the truth of this hypothesis, which can be overturned at any time.

For us, it seems to be much more scientific to start with a truth and to examine it until it is completely understandable. But thus it is among those who do not want to accept the existence of God. One wanders around in assumptions that are difficult to demonstrate. Thus, one goes to great trouble to develop a theory that will be replaced in 100 or 200 years by another scientist.

The above article tells us everything might need to be reconsidered, and Mr Pascal Gavillet, who wrote it, says to talk about it again in 100 years. We can say to him that it is unnecessary to make an appointment in 100 years, because the answer is given to us in the Bible if we go to the trouble of consulting it and especially believing it.

What does it tell us? In its first book, Genesis, it tells us the Creation story in such a simple and great way that its truth escapes many people. However, the authority of the report does not escape those who want to cultivate true faith, but not credulity, which, as we already said, is based on hypotheses.

went through the forest, looking for bean poles, which he brought back to the priest's garden.

Life continued as before. But something had been triggered in Joseph's mind, which guided his sentiments along a very different path. He still went to church with his mother, but some burning questions were troubling his mind. Above all, he had, in his ears, the dour echo of the priest's words: "If you don't come back to us, we will pray that she [his mother] will die!"

Trials of every description had long since tightened the bonds that bound Joseph to his mother, and the youngster was upset at the thought that there were men who could express such sentiments in prayer, and, even worse, that there was a God Who would answer such prayers.

Several years went by in the same humdrum way. Joseph had not even finished his elementary schooling when his father decided

it was time he should earn his own living, just as his brothers had had to do before him. At the age of 12, he had to go to work for a brother-in-law who owned a property. He was at work from early morning, and in the evening had besides to sort out chestnuts. All this was hard on his slight strength, but what he missed most was being with his mother. One evening, being at the end of his tether, he slipped away under the cloak of darkness, in spite of the fear that gripped him. He was soon swallowed up by a big chestnut forest. But an unseen hand must have been guiding him, for after an hour, which seemed very long to him, a small light, far away in the darkness, led him to his goal. Next morning, however, escorted by his father, he, once more, had to follow the path of duty, and this path appeared terribly long to him.

Once again, the years sped by in an atmosphere of deadly dull work. The need to

earn his bread was more urgent than ever, and it was most truly "by the sweat of his brow". That sentence passed, in the Book of Genesis, was all that he could remember of his religious knowledge. The harsh reality of things reminded him of it every day. In time, this joyless life, void of affection, called for some compensation. In his associations, Joseph began to form the habit of drinking and smoking. Since the cure was worse than the evil, matters became more and more serious, as the slavery to these habits took a greater hold on him.

Yet such was Joseph's sensibility that it was impossible for him to remain indifferent to the woes of mankind, and at times, he would find himself thinking about this great and serious problem. He would then wonder what possible remedy there was for those world conditions. Not being able to perceive any remedy, he would lift his eyes to the stars, and wondered whether any information

could be obtained from that quarter. He had a feeling that nature had something to say, but he found it impossible to interpret it. He would contemplate the beauties of nature, without being able to perceive any reason for it.

In Piedmont, there was no lack of village feasts, and Joseph was not one to miss any of them. It was on such an occasion that one of his chums had suddenly exclaimed: "Have you heard the latest? The law is going to be altered to change the world, because the time for the Kingdom of God has come, according to my Aunt Jane, who has come home from France with some books!"

Joseph pricked up his ears and was suddenly most attentive. For that was surely what his sister had been talking to him about. He hadn't been able to grasp the whole gist of the matter, but he remembered that she was attending some meetings and that, as she practised the principles of the law, she dis-

The Universe was not formed by the Big Bang, but was created by the Creator, Who is God Himself. God entrusted his Son, the Logos, with the Creation of everything that exists. The substance employed for Creation is God's Spirit. Creation was not made by the Big Bang, but took place over so many years that it is simply impossible for humankind to comprehend.

We are, at this stage, only at the beginning of knowledge of the true God. If we have recognized his existence, we still have to learn about his character, his plan and his intentions for the benefit of fallen humankind. As we see, humankind waste their time establishing theories, which are very scholarly, but which, if we are honest, are useless for the life of humankind. What we should urgently learn to know is God's love and charitable intentions for the benefit of all humankind. Because we still have a long way to go, which is called "sanctification", without which, no one will see God.

Let us therefore belong to the fortunate ones for whom the Lord is not a myth, but a reality. The destiny that He has planned for all humankind is eternal life, in whose course, we can receive revelations, but no longer studies, about all the necessary knowledge of the mysteries of the Universe and of everything else that surrounds us.

A true story

The French magazine *Le Petit Ami des Animaux* (*The Little Friend of Animals*) published the following touching article by Gil Buret: "The journey of a dog, from the Black Sea to Lake Geneva."

In the year 1845, Nicolas the 1st, the Emperor of Russia, approached Mr Pictet, a citizen of Geneva, with the request to send him a flock of Merino sheep to improve the breeding of livestock in southern Ukraine.

Mr Pictet, a distinguished farmer and a skillful doctor, chose the most beautiful animals he could find. All of the animals were very valuable and had to arrive safe and sound at their destination. The road from Lake Geneva [in Switzerland] to the Black Sea [in Ukraine], is long and perilous. It was even more so then, as the railway had just been invented at that time.

At the time of departure, it was realized that one essential thing was missing: a dog. The doctor had not thought about it, and there was only one in the vicinity, his own, a useful, faithful and devoted companion, which he did not want to part with.

What should be done? They had to leave because all the steps had been carefully planned in advance. The doctor looked at his dog, which then fixed its eyes on him. Gathering his courage, he gave it a few signs and said a few words to it. The poor animal understood everything, and although its eyes expressed deep sadness, it obeyed without a murmur...

Mr Pictet had done a cruel thing, he made a sacrifice that many owners cannot resign themselves to... The doctor did not forget his dog, but he did not hope to see him again. He misunderstood its attachment.

★

One day, when his dog wasn't thought about much anymore, his employees saw a shadow of an animal walk past his house, which might have been a dog in the past. It was something hideous that was chased away, despite the sad whine noise it made.

The dog walked away and, remembering the habits of its master, went to wait for him, like it used to, at a bend in the road. A few hours later, when the doctor was returning from a round of visits to the sick, he saw a shapeless four-legged animal crawling towards him, to lick his hand, and making a quiet moan noise. He wanted to push the animal away, but then changed his mind and examined certain marks, certain clues. He said its name, and the animal stood up and made a joyful yelp, but then fell down, exhausted from hunger and fatigue, and no doubt also from emotion. With tears in

his eyes, the doctor picked up his dog in his arms, and revived and saved it. From then on, they never left each other again.

The journey across more than half of Europe, a distance of about 3,000 kilometres, was accomplished by an animal that only had its wonderful instinct as its guide, that had to find what it could eat, that had to cross rivers and mountains, and that was weakened by great suffering, in order to find its beloved master. All of this must soften the hardest heart.

Although that report was written long ago, it moves every sensitive heart. We once again become aware to what extent people have generally lost countless opportunities to experience deep joys through contact with animals, which are sometimes called "our lesser siblings". Through the hardening of their heart, some people have not only become unfeeling, but also terribly cruel towards these helpers, which are precious, and which can show an attachment that is seldom found among humans. Yet a single benevolent gesture or a caress can be returned a hundredfold by an animal.

Countless proofs have shown that no animal is, in fact, ungrateful if it is treated as a friend from its birth onwards. One has even seen animals, which have the reputation of being enemies of each other, such as cats and dogs, and even cats and mice, live together and show an enduring friendship. We regularly receive animal stories that prove this. That is why we like to periodically publish such articles, because they serve as lessons and also as examples that humans could follow to their great benefit.

It is obvious that with the current education of humankind, under the influence of "the god of this world", that cruelty, ingratitude and wickedness have become common currency, especially if a selfish interest is also involved. How can one expect humans to be good to animals, if they allow themselves to be misled into terrible killings of each other? Think of the rivers of blood that have flown throughout history, especially in the last 100 years. With the increase of knowledge, one sees the development of the means of unimaginable cruelty. In view of such manifestations, one can rightly speak of foolishness. Now, this foolishness only brings misfortune for the victors as well as for the vanquished!

When we think, on the contrary, about the Universal Law of altruism — and how it is established in the Universe and in our own organism, which we should treat wisely — it gives us a better understanding of these words of a man of God: "Claiming to be wise, they [humankind] became fools." Yet history is there and shows one who looks at it that these conflicts have never led to anything apart from misery, misfortune and hardheartedness, which itself is the greatest misfortune of all.

Fortunately, "the time of foolishness" will stop as a result of its own excesses. We clearly feel that we are now arriving at "the high point" that is being prepared by the authorities of the nations of the world, so to speak, against their will. It is there that one sees that the current master of all these authorities certainly is Satan, who is called "the god of this world". Because he knows that his remaining time is short, as the Bible says, he simply wants to extinguish all life on Earth. He would certainly succeed without the intervention of God's power, which will bring the Tribulation to a halt, and reintroduce calm, just as Christ once calmed the storm and the raging sea.

It is now up to intelligent and goodwilled people to unite above all the barriers, borders, groups, politics and religions, in order to become true children of God, who are worthy of the name.

When humankind have developed touching and noble sentiment in themselves, which one often finds among animals, there will be rapid progress in the introduction and development of the New Earth, which is known as the Restoration of All Things.

What can we do against the erosion of our beaches?

The Swiss Greenpeace magazine No. 2-2022 informs us about a problem that mainly affects the beaches of the Mediterranean Ocean: erosion. We quote a summary of it:

The beaches around the Mediterranean Ocean are disappearing. The cause is continuing erosion. Now, Spain earns a lot of money from its coastlines. What should therefore be done? A view into the present and the future.

At this time of year, calm still reigns in S'illot [a small tourist town], on the east coast of the Spanish island of Mallorca. Some joggers are running on the beach foot-path, and other residents are walking their dogs. This seaside resort, located 65 kilometres from the island's capital city, Palma, is very lively in summer. Hotels and holiday apartments are massed along a semicircular beach that stretches for 350 metres. The beach is the heart of this town, and is the reason for the construction boom on the coast that began in the late 1950s. Today, the town has more than 1,400 tourist beds plus restaurants, ice-cream shops, rental bikes, souvenir shops and many jobs. But S'illot has a problem: the beach is narrowing, it is losing its sand. In some places, the underlying rock is already bare. What is a seaside resort without a sandy beach? Not much.

Mr Sebastià Llodrà is the local-government councillor in charge of environmental issues in Manacor, the large town to which S'illot belongs. "We see here an example of the construction frenzy of 50 years ago," he says, pointing to an oversized hotel built directly on the beach. The building is very close to the sea, it would be unthinkable today, the laws are much stricter." Mr Sebastià Llodrà is responsible for the 20 or so beaches and bays of the local government. Most are prone to erosion, he notes with concern. They bring a lot of money to the town, and guarantee a large number of jobs.

Ocean view

The problem in S'illot is typical of Mallorca and many other regions. The Mediterranean coast, with its long sandy beaches, is a very coveted strip of land. We love its soft and undulating texture; the lapping of the waves soothes us; the view of the horizon makes us breathe. Sandy beaches are places of nostalgia and probably the most visited ecosystem in the world. They occupy more than a third of the world's coastlines. But by the end of the century, nearly half of the world's sandy beaches could disappear.

In the Mediterranean, beaches are doing particularly badly, as rivers bring less and less sediment, because upstream dams retain sand, stones and organic matter. Furthermore, harbours, breakwaters and other structures alter currents and capture sand underwater. The density of construction on the coastline interrupts the natural regulation of sandy beaches. The problem is particularly acute in the Mediterranean, because the weakness of the tide makes it possible to build almost on the water. The ocean view sells well.

Added to that are the effects of climate change. Sea levels are rising. The Mediterranean Ocean is warming faster than the global average. Compared to pre-industrial times, the temperature increase in its water is already 1.5°C and could rise to 2.2°C by the year 2040, according to the independent network Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC). If this trend continues, sea levels could rise by 1 metre by the year 2100. Also, there is the problem of storms in autumn and winter, whose increasing violence causes significant damage on the coast.

Extreme weather events combined with rising sea levels and coastal construction, require rapid action.

played a joy and a conviction she had never been known to display before. And now, this item of news, which they had taken as a passing fancy, was turning up again from another quarter. Of course, this movement was meeting with a deal of hostility, even though, at the same time, it was giving rise to some interest. The priests were excommunicating those heretics, and some employers were dismissing members of their staff who attended the meetings, for the groups were developing irresistibly.

All those things were coming to Joseph's ears, for there was a deal of animated talk going on. He was astonished at the opposition this movement was meeting with when one of his young friends exclaimed: "Someone ought to promptly stop the man who is spreading these notions, and it doesn't matter how. There can be no lack of means!"

Thereupon, Joseph spoke up for the first time, for at the sound of that threat, his heart

gave a leap: "Whatever you do, don't do that, my friends, for he's a holy man!"

He was not yet aware of the full meaning of his words, but such was the sentiment behind them that they made a great impression on his hearers. In due course, he received a letter from his sister, which contained an invitation together with a paper explaining the aim in view. It carried the information that practising a certain wonderful law was going to make the world happy forever.

The Truth had found a point of contact in Joseph's conscience, and the small light that had been sparked off had, at once, led him to an effort that must be made. To his sister's great joy, he had promised: "Very well, you can count on me for the next meeting!"

He found no occasion to regret that decision, for right there, some questions that had been puzzling him were all answered. He felt that such a weight had been lifted from

his mind, that all the way home, he wanted to leap for joy.

His thought had been for his dear mother. If she had not been able to understand the message from Heaven, this was because Joseph had not yet been able to tell her about it. How greatly her heart would be consoled when he told her about what his heart was brimming over with! He was going to tell her these words of a hymn from the dear Messenger:

*Knowest thou that God forgiveth,
That He doth not chastise,
Nor end the life He giveth,
But is both kind and wise?
That, in his love, He never,
The bruised reed, doth break,
That in his Realm, for ever,
He, the dead, will awake?*

But the time was not ripe for Maria to drink at those springs of kindness. Under

the yoke of the fears engendered by her religion, her mind, alas, refused to admit that God forgives, that He is both kind and wise, and that He does not chastise or put an end to anyone's life.

Joseph had hardly taken his first steps in this new direction when his brother, who had found work in France, sent for him. He had some hesitation about going, but he finally went in spite of it. There, he was once again caught up in the habits of smoking and drinking. Wine was cheap, and there was plenty of it. Away from the influence of his brethren in the faith, the craving was awakened with redoubled force. His brother had even chosen a future wife for him, for he felt that this younger brother, with his idealistic plans, was becoming a cause of worry. His brother said: "One must live and have one's mind on the main thing, like everyone else. When that was assured, it was time enough to think further."

Wolfgang Cramer, a member of the MedECC expert network, in the French city of Aix-en-Provence, is working on the consequences of climate change in the Mediterranean region. He foresees especially big problems for its islands: "The Kerkennah Islands, off the east coast of Tunisia, are 1 to 1.5 metres above the current sea level, and are destined to disappear," he says.

No real solution

Many resorts are tackling the problem of erosion through regular backfilling. The sand is sucked up from the ocean floor and is sprayed on to the beach. But these are massive and very expensive interventions, which damage the ecosystem of the ocean floor.

Today, the Mediterranean coast is lined with artificial beaches. For the past 30 years, large boats have brought up to 100,000 cubic metres of sand to the beach of Barcelona [a city in Spain] every year, at a cost of 1 million euros per year. Without this intervention, Barcelona's beach would have long since disappeared, and the bathers would have to spread their towels on rocks.

In S'illot, Mr Sebastià Llodrà and his team are trying a gentle method. They retain sand with the remains of plants washed up from the sea by storms and high waves in winter. They are the long brown leaves of Mediterranean "posidonia" [seagrass], which grows in clumps in shallow coastal waters. The piles of plants are not very appetizing on the beach, and floating leaves cloud the clear waters. Can such a beach be imposed on tourists? Yes, thinks Mr Sebastià Llodrà, who calls for a change of mentality: "The idyllic image of the white and clean beach of the Caribbean has nothing to do with the reality of the Mediterranean. Our beaches have plant remains, and that's a good thing." ...

No one was interested in coastal protection

... The Spanish coastline is 7,900 kilometres in total, of which nearly 20% are beaches. Since 2019, the national government's Ministry of Ecological Transition [in the capital Madrid] has been developing a strategy in collaboration with coastal governments. ... The measures

include the adaption of defence works, the backfilling of beaches and the protection of the coasts by fixed structures, but also the demolition of buildings by the sea. The ministry representative is convinced of one thing: "We need the beaches because they protect the land behind."

For decades, the protection of the coasts did not interest many people in Spain. ... A third of the sandy beaches are partly or entirely covered with cement constructions. ... Just in the last 5 years, the beaches of the urban area of Valencia have lost 300,000 cubic metres of sand.

And now?

... The challenges in the Mediterranean are enormous and go far beyond the problem of erosion. The model of mass tourism is not sustainable. Countries like Spain need to rethink their business model and to reduce their dependence on beach tourism. From the point of view of climate scientist Wolfgang Cramer, awareness is advancing in many places. But he stresses that adaption will not be enough: "Policymakers must protect us from future damage by reducing global greenhouse-gas emissions to zero."

Beaches are undoubtedly a dream place for a summer holiday, for swimming, for resting, for contemplating or for watching the ocean. But we are quickly reminded of reality and its urgencies. When we consider the damage caused by climatic imbalance and environmental pollution, it becomes clear, through the above article, that beaches are not spared. They are greatly affected by erosion.

This problem does not escape our authorities, which take many solutions into consideration. But as one can imagine, every measure has its price, which is often high. Backfilling is certainly what initially comes to mind; however, to stop the storms on the coasts, and to halt the erosion, one should seriously consider a reforestation that begins on the coast and progresses inland, as God's Messenger, of our time, advised in his

book *The Message to Humanity* (the Book of Remembrance).

By considering the situation, this thought suddenly came to us: "What if humankind, in view of all their problems, could stop and think? Instead of searching for solutions, could humankind simply turn to their God and ask Him what should they do?" The problem that we are confronted with here is not purely physical or material. As a matter of fact, after the Fall of humankind into sin, they were told that the ground is cursed because of them. It is easy to understand that humankind should also collaborate on the restoration of everything that has been damaged.

Now, that restoration begins with us. It is our character that we also have to restore. In fact, the Restoration of All Things does not represent an insurmountable difficulty for the Almighty, because, by means of his Spirit, He can easily repair everything that has been damaged. However, there was an immense problem in enabling humankind to regain the dignity of children, which they lost in Eden: it required the Sacrifice of God's beloved Son, our dear Saviour. A victim had to take the place of the guilty, and to endure the equivalent of sin: death.

Since then, we have had the possibility of coming back into harmony with our God, and of regaining communion with Him, which, for us, is the sure guarantee of eternal life, which is our true destiny. As we see, the Lord has prepared a radiant future for humankind. Through his Son and those who followed him on the path of sacrifice throughout the Gospel Age, the Almighty not only succeeded in saving that which was lost, but in restoring everything better than original.

The great Tribulation, which is rapidly approaching, will be shortened by the zeal of the last members of the Body of Christ, who are still in the flesh. They will introduce the Reign of Justice, with the assistance of the Host of the Lord, for the joy and happiness of all humankind.

So, one Sunday, Joseph had put on his best suit, in preparation for setting off on his bicycle to meet that likely future wife, when his eyes fell on a *Monitor of the Reign of Justice*. The day before, he had received several different editions of it in the city of Toulouse, where he had, at last, come across his brethren in the faith. One of *Monitors'* "short story from life" column brought tears to his eyes, and his eyes were still wet as he started to read that column in a different edition. The hours sped by, and his appointment and marriage project were both forgotten. Finally, he gave up the idea of marriage, and returned to that of the setting up of the Kingdom of God on Earth, and set off for a Paris congress.

On his return, he had the impression that he had left a wonderful island — an island the world calls Utopia — and the feeling of, once again, being alone in an ocean of indifference, was no illusion.

When he informed his brother of his joy and his wish to take part in the introduction of that splendid Reign of goodness, his brother answered: "I suppose you think the Kingdom of God cannot come without your assistance! Well, what are you going to do with those people? Here, at least, there's plenty of work."

Their employer had added: "I thought you were a bright lad!"

Naturally, the intelligence behind Joseph's decision was not that of the world, and the light that lit his mind was not that of those around him. His observations, his joy and the testimony he delivered, were often a source of controversy, of irritation and of ridicule. He was told: "To work for the good of others, is sheer madness. What happened to Christ proves it!"

Not allowing himself to be disarmed by either the threats or the gibes of Satan, Joseph returned to his native land to take up service in the House of God, and there, his heart was able to expand and to sing:

*Lord, Thou, from shame, didst take me,
Saying in accents mild:
"I, to my heart, will take thee,
And thou shalt be my child!"*

Populous towns offered plenty of openings for that noble vocation. So, Joseph worked through endless areas and climbed mountains of stairs, spreading the message which had freed him from countless woes. There were plenty of powerful encouragements to sanction his efforts and to keep him balanced on this narrow way of renunciation. In his native

village, his sister was still valiantly bearing the standard of the faith, and her daughter, Margarita, was one of the meek pioneers of the brave Host of the Lord, which is going to turn the land into one flowing with milk and honey.

Many fruitful years went by, in the course of which, Joseph had many joys in what he was doing. Then, the need for change made itself felt. His progress must be put to account, and further progress must be made. The divine education comprises many stages, and this fresh one was to lead our Brother Joseph to Switzerland, the cradle of the movement. There, there were Test Stations, with the mission of illustrating the Reign of Justice in line with the model set out in *The Message to Humanity* (the Book of Remembrance), and he was being invited to enter one of them.

Joseph was made very welcome by the brothers and sisters who were applying themselves to carrying out the programme of altruism, for the renewal of the soul, and for the restoration of a splendid hunting lodge that a king had once built there. Thanks to the work of the hearts of the brethren, the work of their hands had beautified the manor, a large house, which overlooked a broad valley, and which was approached along an avenue of mighty chestnut trees.

It was there that I met Joseph, one Sunday, in February, when a bitter wind was sweeping the valley with grey clouds. Since loving-kindness and gratitude were the ways here to demonstrate all the reasons he had to be happy, Joseph had raked up his memories for the purpose of telling his story. It was quite a long one, which was continuing here in felicity that agreed with the Gospel.

Being a gardener, he had also reminded me that logically you did not reap carrots where you had sown beans, and that consequently if you intend to reap happiness, you should not sow anything else in the hearts of others.

We were sitting together, nice and warm, in a large reception room. The fir trees in the woods were as black as ebony, and the garden looked quite bare. But, from Joseph's smile, one could see that he was peacefully assured of a promising future with the most splendid prospects. The garden would, once again, produce many vegetables, without chemical manure, and in the garden of hearts, the fruit of gentleness and humility would be to the glory of the heavenly Gardener in his immense Work of Redemption.

News in brief of the Reign of Justice

In this month's column, we have included some thoughts that are useful reminders. They were originally published by the dear Messenger in the newspaper *The Angel of the Lord*, No. 12 in 1944, under the title:

Grace can do all things in an honest heart

"Divine grace is a marvellous influence, which does us immense good when we can feel it. It is granted to us out of pure mercy, without us deserving it in any way. The Almighty gives us grace, and this is a grand manifestation of his ineffably benevolent and altruistic character. The word 'grace' means the forgiveness of a made mistake, the removal of a condemnation that weighs on someone. This is precisely the situation in which humankind find themselves. They are guilty and condemned, because 'the wages of sin is death'. But they can receive grace through divine benevolence, through the mercy of the Lord and through the Sacrifice of our dear Saviour. If divine grace had not already intervened on humankind's behalf, there would not be a single person left on Earth today. They would have all wiped each other out, and it is quite certain that the human race would have disappeared long ago. ...

Divine grace gives humankind the opportunity to change their mentality in order to become viable. But if divine grace doesn't produce an effect in the heart, it is given in vain. That is why all those who are sensitive can feel divine grace and start to change their line of conduct, so that the effect of this grace can show in them in a great and lasting way. ... Only those who are under the protection of the Almighty, because they have accepted his grace and the conditions of God's Kingdom, will be able to survive. They have nothing to fear, everything is for their good, and all the lessons they go through become an advantage and a blessing for them. ... While those who do not want to know anything about the Lord and his protection, obviously cannot receive his grace, because they refuse it. They are then pulled, pushed and suggestionized by the Adversary, who incites them to do terrible things, which then turn against them, so that they end up destroying each other, like evil beasts. ...

It is essential to never keep anything in the heart against whomever it may be. We should never leave a difficulty unresolved. If a trial occurs between two children of God, they should always put things right, that is to

say, they must make peace with each other, humble themselves and extend the hand of friendship, saying to each other: 'We want to repeat the lesson until we have learnt it together.' If we act in this way, the Adversary will soon be completely overcome, and he will no longer be able to touch us, because we will have become masters of ourselves. ...

What we need, above all, is to open our heart wide and not let anything bad remain in it. When everything is out in the open, the Adversary can't do anything, because he can only do his dirty work in murky water. Let us therefore learn to become open and sincere, and the reformation of our character will be able to continue with much greater ease and success. We must absolutely learn to love our brothers and sisters, and our fellow people, in the right way. We owe everyone kindness and affection. One should never force anyone to do anything, the Lord doesn't do it either. He kindly invites, He advises and He exhorts, but He never forces anyone. ... We should never demand our rights. If our brother or sister, or our fellow person, doesn't want to listen, then we pray and wait patiently. Whatever the case may be, the truth will come out sooner or later. So, there is no need to be impatient. The Lord also gives us time. He doesn't reprimand us when we have made a mistake. He treats us with gentleness and leniency. He is the Good Shepherd, Who takes care of his sheep, and Who, if it has gone astray and cries for help, goes to look for it, even in the most dangerous places. So, we can never be grateful enough for the Lord's grace.

What hasn't our dear Saviour done for us! He left the heavenly glory, he came to Earth, and he accepted to go through all kinds of sufferings and humiliations, in order to bring us Salvation. ...

We therefore want to consider, with immense gratitude, the grace that has been granted to us in Jesus Christ, our dear Saviour, and we want to run, with perseverance, the race either of candidates for the Royal Priesthood, or of members of the Host of the Lord, so that we may make our 'calling and election sure', to the honour and the glory of the Almighty and of our dear and divine Saviour."

The next congress in Lyon, France, will be held from the 2nd to the 4th of September, God willing.