

THE REIGN OF JUSTICE

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A judicious choice

FOR mankind, there are two sorts of wealth — one which ennobles, encourages, comforts and confers real power, real joy and real glory — and the other which torments, corrodes and hardens the heart and defiles the conscience so much that one can even become a criminal.

It is the second sort of wealth that is known, at present, by mankind in the kingdom of darkness, which still prevails, for a little while, on Earth and of which Satan is the god. Mankind are conceived in sin and born in iniquity, as the Holy Scriptures tell us. Then, they receive a deplorable education, one that impels them to seek the wrong kind of wealth, which makes them suffer and die.

People study for the purpose of becoming clever. With studying all sorts of things, in some cases taking great pains, they succeed in acquiring knowledge, ability and capability, which will permit them to acquire wealth. What things people in the world will do to attain that object! Some even undertake great privations to gain their end. At the cost of immense effort, they endeavour to carry out the programme they have set themselves. What they have learnt, above all, is to supplant their fellows.

Thus, mankind proceed in the ways of the Adversary, he who has adopted selfishness as the basis of all his teachings because he himself is the embodiment of selfishness. He knows that if they follow that deplorable line of behaviour, mankind are utterly cut off from God.

In the Realm of light, which is the Kingdom of God, the exact opposite takes place. The realm of darkness is a wretched imitation of it. In the Kingdom of light, that of altruism, wealth is also sought, but this wealth is utterly different from the other. The seeker does not want it for himself selfishly, but for the purpose of placing his fellows at the benefit of it. That wealth is granted by the power of God's Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom *par excellence*, of real power, of real glory, of real science, of real ability and of real capability. It consists of incommensurable riches that radiate a profusion of light. It crystallises into a character in the likeness of God.

Those wonderful spiritual riches are described in the Holy Scriptures in the symbolical attributes of precious stones, those that are splendid and rare, and very much sought after by mankind, and to which they attach immense value. To God's children, who are "children of

light", those stones remain a symbol, and the reality is infinitely more beautiful. It is entry, through sentiments and a character, into the highest spheres, into the glorious regions of divine grace. They, as the Apostle Paul says, are things that no eye has seen or ear has heard, and that have not entered into the heart of man, things that God has prepared for those who love Him, and He reveals them to us through his Spirit. To receive them, you have to do as our dear Saviour said: "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things [everything else] will be added to you."

To acquire such wealth, such riches, of course, one has to make serious efforts in one's heart, for the poverty of men resides particularly in their characters. The riches which the Adversary (Satan, also called the Devil) would give them, could not possibly satisfy anyone, they can lead to no blessing at all. They always change into bitter disappointment, the more bitter that one has clung more desperately to those unjust riches, and that one has loaded one's conscience in various ways in the process of acquiring them.

For the purpose of becoming possessors of the veritable riches, those which never tarnish and which never pass away, abundant teachings are given to us by our dear Saviour. First of all, he asks us to go to him: draw near to this glorious person, who radiates the purifying power of his Sacrifice, of the Ransom he paid for mankind by giving his life. When we humble ourselves deeply for all our poverty and our wretchedness, and receive the Ransom of Christ as the Payment that discharges our debts and frees us, by means of faith, this enables us to get into harmony with the Almighty, making a covenant with Him on the denial of self.

The foundation proposed to us is to lay selfishness aside, together with all self-interest, to be free to seek the interests of others and to work on the Kingdom of God. Our Lord tells us that no one can enter his liberating school if they will not deny themselves. Self-denial means the laying aside of our former habits and character, to adopt God's ways. In this way, we can obtain incommensurable riches in the new character we shape in accordance with the Universal Law, which requires all things to exist for a good purpose.

The Son of God never sought anything for himself. When he created the Earth, he enriched it with numberless species of trees, of plants and of various coloured flowers with delicious scents, and with graceful animals

that had their being in the Paradise of God, enjoying the blessing of prosperity. In no time, the Earth was enriched with everything required for it to be the superb Garden of Eden. To crown this magnificent work, the Lord established a king over it, who was man. He was to cultivate the earth in accordance with the Universal Law and to glorify the Lord's holy Name, hallowing it with a good line of conduct, honouring the Almighty with his appreciation for the things given to him.

Such were the great riches generously granted to man. But all that wealth was lost because the line of conduct which had produced it, was scorned by the Son of the Morning in the first place, and then by mankind. Little by little, all true wealth disappeared or was so greatly dilapidated, ill-used and despised, that, instead of being a blessing to man, the Earth became a curse, and produced thistles and thorns.

So, man lost the true riches given by the Lord. He followed the bad advice given to him by the Adversary, and was guided by the cunning of the satanic spirit, which suggestionizes man and constantly advises him to seek his own satisfaction, that is to say, to be an egoist.

True riches are those that do not pass away. They are only acquired in the Kingdom of God. Indeed, when he was on Earth, the Lord Jesus demonstrated, in tangible form, that he had all the divine riches at his command by healing the sick, by raising the dead and by multiplying the loaves and fish. All things obeyed his divine commandment. The incommensurable wealth of the Saviour consisted of divine justice and love, which he dispensed for the benefit of mankind who were wretched and condemned. He came to enrich all men with the gift of eternal life.

Of what use are the riches given by the Adversary? Even if a man possessed them all, he would still be wretched in spite of it, since the foundation on which those riches are built up is injustice. Since this is so, they are ephemeral. In the end, everybody is swindled by those unrighteous riches, whereas the riches the Saviour intends to confer on mankind, are incommensurable and everlasting riches, which will never pass away and do not deceive.

In the course of the time of the High Calling, mankind have not been able to make out a great deal concerning the wondrous riches which the Lord dispensed to his people, who are those who permit themselves to be reached by divine grace. Indeed, it was possible to only spiritually judge the matter. Today, however, we are in the presence of the beginning of the Restoration of All Things, which God has spoken about through all

If, to an open door, He guides you, Who then that door may close?

THE blacksmith made no attempt to hide his disappointment when the son he was hoping for turned out to be a girl. One more female, when he was counting on the brawny arms of a man of his blood. He comforted himself with the notion that Mathilda might nevertheless be like a son to him. His wife, whose health was none too good, had wanted neither a girl nor a boy. Therefore, baby Mathilda's reception had no welcome in it, in the dullness of this January weather and the gloom of this joyless home. Discord had long since driven all joy out, and poverty made their wretchedness complete.

When he first met his wife, she was working to bring up a son, but the blacksmith was unable to stand the presence of this boy whom he felt was an intruder, so the unfortunate lad had to go. Serious disagreements had

followed, which got worse as time went on. No boy, however, came to take the place of the one who had been driven away.

In those drab conditions, it was not to be expected that Mathilda could blossom out as a little girl should. The atmosphere of her surroundings was crowded with contradictory impressions which, at times, were exceedingly painful because her mother did not love her, and her father displayed sentiments similar to his wife's. Mother made a show of her preference for the elder daughter, whereas father would always take Mathilda's part, while poisoning the child's mind against her mother.

On reaching school age, the feeling of being different from the others was already making the little girl suffer. She thought there was mockery in the glances that rested on her poor clothes and her hair cut like a boy. Some remarks she overheard humiliated her. The blacksmith was no good at getting paid for

his work, and from their small farmland, poor crops were all that the exhausted soil could produce. This state of things did not hinder the blacksmith from cherishing an exaggerated opinion of his status, and he had his share of the human failing which leads one to consider oneself superior to others. Mathilda had inherited the failing and found it difficult to put up with anything that belittled her in the eyes of others. She was obedient, mostly to her father, but would jibe at anything she felt to be unjust.

"Come to supper," her mother said one evening, just as Mathilda was starting her homework. "You can do your lessons when we've finished."

Contrary to what she usually did, the little girl had been playing up to the last minute. Now, a stupid impulse impelled her to resist her mother's bidding: "No, I'm going to do my homework, and if I can't, I'll tell my teacher you prevented me."

That was just childish vengeance for the bitter moments caused by mother's partiality for the elder sister. The little girl had to come to eat her supper with the others. However, she stood her ground and went to bed without opening her schoolbooks.

Next day was local market day, and on the way to the market, mother had to pass the school. She went in just as all the children were going to eat their lunch. She spoke to the teacher in the presence of the whole class: "That child is a storyteller. She is a bad girl who refused to obey. Don't believe a word she says!"

Mathilda was stunned and felt her heart beating as never before. With a lump in her throat, and through a blur of tears, she watched her mother go out. She was so upset that she sobbed the whole afternoon, and in the evening was still inconsolable.

A passing neighbour called to enquire:

his holy prophets. We know that, in the course of the Gospel Age, the Lord has called, educated and shaped the Little Flock. This is a class of people, out of all mankind, who have been able to understand the divine programme and have been inspired with the desire of associating in the Work of reconciliation done by our dear Saviour, laying down their lives with him as part of the Ransom for mankind. Those people have faithfully carried out the programme set them: to make atonement, to live a life of sacrifice, and to lay down their lives. The power of God's Holy Spirit came on them to help them to fulfil their ministry as saviours. They acquire immense riches, the greatest and most precious, those of divine nature, which contains immortality.

At the present time, the final members of the Little Flock are concluding their sacrifice. So, the Ransom for mankind is about to be paid in full. That is why the results of this powerful Work of blessing, are already taking shape in the first fruits of mankind thus redeemed. They are the people who, in turn, understand the divine programme. They make a covenant with God to do their share in the Restoration of All Things. They submit to the Universal Law for the purpose of recovering all the riches lost in Eden, especially the wealth which, to a human being, is the most wonderful of all, namely, eternal life on Earth, which will be restored and again become the splendid Paradise.

What indeed could be more desirable than the Restoration of All Things, the restoration of man to perfection on Earth for the purpose of being a reflection of the likeness of God? What riches are to be compared, for mankind, with the restored Earth, on which there will be no scorching summer or freezing winter, but only the season of flowers and that of fruit, constantly renewed? What other riches are to be compared with those granted by our dear Saviour to the Little Flock, that is to say, life and immortality in the heavenly spheres?

As for the earthly calling, it is an offer to mankind of lasting life, consolation, peace, joy and happiness. So, now it rests with God's children to estimate the greatness of both the heavenly and the earthly callings at their true worth. Gratitude is an essential part of what the eternal riches must give rise to in all hearts. For that purpose, they need to be receptive to God's Holy Spirit, which is the Initiator of all things. As the Lord said when speaking of the end of grief, of tears and of death: "Behold, I am making all things new."

That is the way in which the New Heavens and the New Earth will be set up. The New Heavens are made up of the Little Flock, which inherits the greatest riches there are in the Universe, that is, divine nature and immortality. The New Earth is made up of restored mankind, who receive, for their inheritance, the Earth and all its blessings for ever and ever.

The true causes of hunger in the world

From the French newspaper *Ouest-France*, on the 30th of November 2022, we quote the following report that explains the real causes of famine:

Are there too many of us on Earth?

Is the impact of population growth on the climate, sustainable? "It all depends on how our lifestyles evolve," says Guy Baudelle, a professor of geography.

"Five billion people in the year 1987, six billion in 1999, seven billion in 2011, and now eight billion, according to the latest UN estimates, which means, almost one billion more per decade: population growth is dizzying. Humanity is expected to pass the ten billion

mark in 2060, before peaking at around eleven billion by the end of the century.

Such prospects raise serious concerns about our planet's ability to feed itself. For Malthus (in the year 1798), a population that grows faster than the means of subsistence, inevitably leads to famine, in the absence of voluntary birth control.

At the turn of the 1960s and the 1970s, neo-Malthusian prophets, like Paul Ehrlich, haunted by 'the food apocalypse', predicted hundreds of millions of deaths. Several other American essayists (Lester Brown, the Worldwatch Institute, etc.) still defend these alarmist ideas, whose most obvious echo can be found in the refusal of couples in industrial countries to have children, and who have embraced the theories of the childfree activist movement [voluntary childlessness].

Fear of the future is now reinforced by the challenge of climate change, which has led some observers to calculate (and denounce) the greenhouse-gas emissions that each new baby will cause, which they see as another reason for limiting the number of babies.

It is clear that those catastrophic forecasts have been contradicted by the facts, thanks to considerable progress in agriculture. To feed the expected 10.5 billion people by the year 2070, we will need 2.2 tonnes of dry matter per hectare. However, the production observed in the years 2017 to 2019, was 4.6 tonnes, which means that the planet can feed 13 to 16 billion people, provided that climate change does not reduce yields too much (they have fallen by 3 to 4% in the last 40 years).

Hunger is the result of inequality

Since the 1960s, famines have always been caused by armed conflicts, which led to disruptions of supplies, and speculation on food prices, at the expense of the poorest, which is proof that hunger results from social inequalities and not from widespread scarcity, as has been demonstrated by [the Indian economist, scholar, author and philosopher] Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize winner in economic sciences. The 2.3 billion people who are overfed today, even in less-developed countries, confirm this.

In reality, the worldwide-population growth matters less than changes in our lifestyle. Meat consumption has doubled in the last 20 years as a result of population growth and rising living standards. China now accounts for a third of the market. One hectare of cereals [grain crops] feeds 120 people, but only two people when it is used for beef production. As the American sociologist Christopher Chase-Dunn humorously put it: 'If the Chinese try to eat as much meat and eggs, and drive as many cars (per capita) as the Americans, the biosphere will fry.'

The same applies to the impact of the population on the climate: annual, per capita, carbon-dioxide (CO₂) emissions exceed 15 tonnes in half a dozen Arab-oil countries, compared to 0.4 tonnes in neighbouring Yemen. It is approaching 15 tonnes in North America, and 10 tonnes in the rich countries, compared to 0.3 tonnes in the least-developed countries.

When 1 Qatari emits as much greenhouse gas as 325 Somalis, can you blame the latter for having too many children? And when a third of the corn in the United States is used to produce biofuel, is it because there are too many Americans?"

The above report comes from a reasonable person and shows us truths that no one can deny: there is enough to eat for everyone on our Earth. Poverty in several regions of the globe is not due to overpopulation, but to the greed of some who consume too much and too badly, to their own harm. It is also true that climatic disturbances — such as droughts, floods, storms, etc. — can reduce harvests and lead to shortages. However, it is also known that in industrialized countries, many people die because they eat too much, while in disadvantaged countries, people die of hunger.

The numbers speak for themselves: "One hectare of cereals [grain crops] feeds 120 people, but only two people when it is used for beef production," says Guy Baudelle. It would therefore be reasonable to reduce our meat consumption, already out of solidarity with those who are less well off than us. This adjustment to our menu would furthermore be a great blessing for our health. Moreover, this report tells us that the "annual, per capita, carbon-dioxide (CO₂) emissions exceed 15 tonnes in half a dozen Arab-oil countries, compared to 0.4 tonnes in neighbouring Yemen". This poses the questions: "Do we have to produce so much pollution to live? Can we not go without some pleasures, which are not essential needs, and which are often futile satisfactions?"

Also, the financial speculation of basic food, such as wheat, leads to famine in some parts of the world. Here also, we should give up this financial operation that enriches a few people, but that makes a lot of people poor and sometimes pushes them into abject poverty.

The result of this short analysis shows that the cause of poverty in some population groups, is not an inevitable fate, but depends on factors that we can influence. Moreover, recession is also gradually reaching our countries. We will experience difficult times, which the Bible has announced as an unprecedented Tribulation, and which will put an end to "the present evil world". Then, the doors to the new, fair, impartial and benevolent world will be opened, where there will be no more poor people, or rich people for that matter.

That is the Restoration of All Things, which has already begun. It will be deliverance for many people. For some, it naturally means the end of privilege. One will have to learn to share with others and to love them as oneself. They are the conditions that allow us to exist in the New World, if we put them into practice. To achieve this, it will be necessary to consider the change of character, which has been made possible by the Sacrifice of our dear Saviour, Jesus Christ. By virtue of his precious merits, which he acquired on the Cross, everyone will be able to reach the condition of a child of God, and to live eternally on the restored Earth, where there will be no more distress and finally no more death.

The drama of the Permission of Evil, which is currently raging on Earth, will serve as an instruction for the citizens of the New World. Then, all people will know God and praise Him for his love and his ineffable Work of the Ransom, which He had planned even before the foundation (creation) of the world, which our dear Saviour accomplished. In the blessed ages to come, there will be no more wrong done anywhere on Earth. Everyone will enjoy happiness and bliss because they will have learnt to live the wonderful Universal Law, which says that all people exist for the good of others.

The difficult question of the end of life

The end of life is a subject that must be seriously considered in our society, because it raises a number of ethical, economic, medical, psychological, etc. questions. This what François Bouthors explains to us in an article published in the French newspaper *Ouest-France*, on the 15th of November 2022, in the column "Point de vue":

The ignored facts about the end of life

Assisted dying versus palliative care; human dignity versus a fundamental ban on killing. They seem to be the broad terms of the debate on the end of life. As if the question of the conditions of life, at the end of life, should be answered by what happens at the end. But the debate leaves, in the dark, many questions that condition the way we live and think about our existence.

"Whatever's the matter, why is your little girl crying her heart out?"

"Mummy won't look at me...she won't look at me...I'm not wanted...!" the little girl sobbed from a corner of the kitchen.

"No, I didn't want you, I'm sure. I didn't want you at all!" said mother.

"Then you should have left me where I was, I didn't ask to come. I'll go and drown myself," said Mathilda

"That's not the way to talk to the child, and you've no right to make a difference between the children," the neighbour remarked. "You never know, one day she might be the only one at your deathbed..."

Next morning, father accompanied his little girl to school to tell the teacher what had happened: "You see, Miss X, my wife never wanted this child..."

There was no change when mother fell ill, and when she received anything, she would share it with the elder sister. Mathilda felt this

pettiness keenly, and ever since the shock of what had happened at school, she felt quite unable to forgive her mother's treatment, there was an impassable barrier between them. Mother's sickness lingered on: it was one that did not forgive either, and she was visibly declining.

To humour his wife, the blacksmith went to get the priest. At the same time, he warned him: "Since I don't believe in what you say, it's for my wife's sake I'm calling you in, and you can do your stuff for the love of God, but don't expect any payment. I don't believe in your Heaven, and even if it did exist, it'd be too expensive for us poor folk."

Mathilda was 9 when she saw her mother on her deathbed with a crucifix in her hands.

"Do you forgive me?" the dying woman whispered to her husband.

But her husband felt no inclination at all for generous feelings: "No...no...such things are unforgivable!"

The little girl had to leave the room, and go and cry in a corner over the tragedy which upset her all over again. In afteryears, when father happened again to talk about his wife, the girl would always remind him of that sad scene, for she did not forget either...

The great facility she possessed for assimilating knowledge, together with great willingness to persevere, took her to the top of her classes, and Mathilda consoled herself with the thought that there was at least one thing in life in which she was successful at. However, this did not last, for the blacksmith was in greater need of arms than of brains, and did not intend to allow his girl to become an intellectual, not even a seamstress. So, at the age of 12, she had to leave school and do farm work with horses and cows, and also do the housework.

Year followed year, and the monotonous round of their existence lay heavy on them. Father made their bread, and they lived

without money. The little money he earned from their small farmland was just sufficient to supply him with wine and tobacco. War broke out and made things even more difficult for them.

Mathilda, who was tired of wearing the clothes the others no longer wanted, went looking for work. She was 16 when she was taken on by some farmer cousins, and she had to work very hard for little pay. Her health failed after 2 years of hard labour.

There was no lack of jobs in town, however. One day, Mathilda went to the market with her father, and a woman seeing her there, asked them: "Wouldn't this lass like to work?"

"No, certainly not!" the blacksmith declared firmly.

"Oh yes, I would!" the girl, who was now 18, protested.

Mathilda was 20 when she again met a boy with whom she used to go to school.

They had gone out together and had even

In our society, individuals are defined, in practice, by what they own, earn and consume, as well as by what they say and do. The formation they receive from childhood onwards is shaped by these utilitarian dimensions, so that they can cope in the different "markets" in which they will evolve.

The other dimensions of existence — relationships, aesthetic sensibility, artistic education, poetic and creative capacity, historical awareness, philosophical questioning, understanding of myths and religions, etc. — are regarded as minor or considered primarily in terms of technology or consumption. This is particularly true of culture, which is often thought of in economic or GDP terms, based on leisure or tourism. Under these conditions, when a person leaves a field of productivity or the market, their life loses the meaning in which this life was daily involved.

Give dignity

How can we recognize and give dignity to this life, beyond the declaration of principles? Without a concrete dimension, inscribed in social practices, we are often left with wishful thinking. When we regularly visit elderly or disabled people in retirement homes and see that, despite the activities on offer, their lives tend to be reduced to a long and rarely happy wait, we should ask ourselves how we organize "the end".

On the other hand, our productivity ideal assigns medicine an impossible goal: that of defeating death, at almost any cost. Life is priceless, they say. And the remarkable advances in technology are pushing back the limits... But at an increasingly high cost that is paid for socially by multiple shortcomings (in housing, education, and medical prevention).

This produces suffering and death elsewhere in a delayed and staggered way, because it is impossible to mobilize the necessary resources, as national budgets cannot be extended indefinitely. We generally pretend to ignore this, because it raises terribly difficult questions of choice.

While life should be thought of as giving and sharing, in our consumer societies, it is hyper-individualized and increasingly detached from any collective responsibility. The example of the mobilization of Ukrainian society to defend a common democratic identity, shows, however, that there can be something greater than the value or dignity of an existence considered in isolation.

When the debate on "the last moments" forgets that the inclusion of the individual is part of a collective responsibility, there is a risk of making death the culmination of a concept, according to which, the individual exists only through themselves and for themselves. Collectively facing up to questions that do not have simple answers and giving ourselves the means to explore them in greater detail, should help us to loosen the grip of the trap in which our lifestyles enclose the way in which we experience "the end".

There is no doubt that "the end of life" is a subject that raises many questions, many of which remain unanswered. As François Bouthors puts it, we need to start by looking at how our lives are organized: education, training, employment, leisure. And we have to recognize that priority is given to the economic aspect in the broadest sense of the term, rather than to the sensitivity of individuals. The importance of money in our society, is not unknown to this.

In that context, we should not be surprised by the ethical, philosophical and other problems that we might encounter when faced with death. It's worth noting, in passing, that the generations who preceded us did not have the same approach to this problem as we do. Morality was taught in schools, religion had more of a place in society, we lived shorter lives on average, and death was generally better accepted.

Advances in medicine and hygiene have made it possible to postpone the fatal deadline. But we have

relegated religion to the private sphere, it is no longer accepted in public. Morality has given way to ethics. The latter, however, does not help us in the face of the reality of the end of existence. We have given priority to technology. It has rewarded us with achievements that dazzle us, but we have to recognize that our society has serious moral shortcomings.

If humankind find it so difficult to solve their problems, it is because they have simply pushed God out of their lives. We cannot hope to solve everything with artificial intelligence (AI) or computers. Human beings are not machines that can be repaired in a workshop. If they are called to fulfil a function in society, they must, first and foremost, be a benefactor to their fellow people. A human being is a living soul, and in our society, this soul is ignored, it is not nourished, and it cannot flourish. But the food of the soul is the Spirit of God, whether we like it or not, and what connects us to God is faith.

But let us be reassured! If humankind has abandoned God, the Almighty has not abandoned us. Ever since sin first appeared on Earth, He has been working on the Restoration of All Things, and even gave his beloved Son as the Sacrifice to pay our debt to justice. A class of people has joined this Work of Redemption, by giving its life for its neighbour.

That sacrifice is about to be completed. We can, if we wish to, now benefit from the effects of that Sacrifice, through justification by faith. The Lord God has provided for this marvellous destiny. This is assured to us, in order to change our sentiments and for us to collaborate on the establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth, and to become viable.

As we can see, all of our problems find their solutions in a masterly way in the Work of God, Who welcomes all those who wish to join the wonderful Work of restoring the Earth and the human race. Then, there will be no need for hospitals or nursing homes. Humankind will become God's children, capable of loving each other and of living the Universal Law. They will live forever.

"There will be famines... in various places" (Matthew 24: 7)

The Swiss French-language newspaper *Tribune de Genève*, on the 14th of November 2022, published an article by Bettina Junker, the executive director of UNICEF Switzerland, which reveals the concerning situation in East Africa, which is suffering from a severe drought. We quote the article in its entirety:

Threat of famine in East Africa

Perhaps you remember the terrible images of emaciated children in Somalia 11 years ago? There is a risk that such scenes will be repeated on an unprecedented scale. East Africa is facing its worst drought in decades...

Thousands of people are being forced to leave their region. Rising food prices and the unstable political situation, are aggravating the nutritional situation. A state of famine has already been declared in two regions of Somalia. Between October and December 2022, an estimated 6.7 million people will be affected by acute food insecurity. Every day, young Somali children are being hospitalized to treat life-threatening malnutrition.

Our UNICEF colleagues on the ground explain that mothers suffering from hunger are travelling dozens of kilometres with their young children, and are exhausted. Our colleagues describe the arrival of these women at public health centres supported by UNICEF, hoping to find water, food and treatment for their children. Our colleagues also report families selling their daughters into early marriage, in the hope that they will not starve to death.

The images and stories that come to us from East Africa are reminiscent of those of 2011, when more than

260,000 people lost their lives in Somalia. In reality, such a food crisis can be avoided because it is predictable. Within the international community, it was argued that collective suffering on such a scale should never happen again, and that action should be taken earlier in the future. Despite the global commitment made at the time to prevent such crises, calls for help from local authorities, UN organizations and NGOs, have so far been largely ineffective...

Conclusion: Time is running out for the people suffering from hunger in East Africa. It is therefore more urgent than ever to provide emergency aid for children and their families, in order to save lives at risk. This help might be enough to extinguish a single blaze, but it will not be enough to extinguish a large-scale fire. Without greater and sustained action and investment, children are likely to die in proportions not seen in half a century. ... A system change is needed.

We must support innovative programmes that protect families from the effects of climate change. We need to join forces to act: governments, local authorities and the international community, as well as the private sector, and humanitarian and development organizations. These children need our support now.

We are not indifferent to the situation of the inhabitants of those regions of Africa, who are already poor and the victims of the climate that leads to famine. What distress for thousands of people who are forced to leave their homes to go far away in the hope of finding help! Some families are forced into "selling their daughters into early marriage, in the hope that they will not starve to death".

Even though those things are happening far from our own countries, we nevertheless feel affected by the misery of those poor people. Some organizations are trying to do everything within their power to help these unfortunate people, but we know that the true help will come through the establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth. That is the "system change" that Bettina Junker talks about, and only that way will tears be dried and there not even be any more death. Selfishness, which currently rules as the master on Earth, will make room for altruism, which will be the share of all people. Everyone will learn to love their neighbour.

Unfortunately, as we know, that new dispensation will be preceded by a "tribulation" that will produce many victims. Our dear Saviour himself announced it. It will be the equivalent of our bad line of conduct. Therefore, on the ruins of "the present wicked world", Christ's Kingdom will be introduced on Earth.

There will be no more famine. Everyone will have enough to eat. Humankind will regain their destiny as the earthly children of God. These prospects console our heart, and we can say to those who are currently affected by misfortune: "Hope, because your deliverance is approaching!" It is the Almighty Who has prepared it by giving his beloved Son as the Sacrifice. Those who have followed him since his coming to Earth, until these times, are the elite who will form the New Heaven and bless the New Earth for eternity.

"Warm" assistance

From a Swiss newspaper — whose name is not mentioned to us, but which is published in the Lausanne region — we publish the following story, titled:

The warmth of bitches.

They saved the life of a victim of a heart attack

There are thousands of dog stories. They are either funny, sad or heart-wrenching, like the one about Sheeva: a seven-year-old female Bernese Mountain Dog, and Bonnie: a three-year-old Dalmatian. More than just a news item, what these two animals did, on one particular day, borders on the extraordinary. More than a simple animal story, it is a superb testimony of loyalty and ex-

thought of getting married in spite of there being some great differences in their characters. Hector did not smoke, did not drink and did not go out in the evening, but only thought about the money he could lay aside in the course of his life. Mathilda, on the contrary, had no intention of allowing hers to wither from the stultifying effects of the myth. To her mind, money was a means to an end, and the idea of it being an end in itself, revolted her generous nature. Hector's parents begged her to marry their son, and so the marriage took place. Even as early as that, Mathilda had a foreboding that the course of things would not run smoothly. It did not take long for her premonition to be borne out by events.

Hector's ideals were a source of fear to Mathilda. When he talked about his plans for becoming an owner of property, she would feel a profound oppression come over her. And when, for her part, she proposed giv-

ing something away generously, he would feel the ground slipping from under his feet.

Although Mathilda was fairly strong-willed, in this atmosphere, she had some trouble to keep cheerful. The feeling that had haunted her in previous years, returned and thrust itself upon her mind.

She felt there was nothing left in life to hope for. In the past, no one had wanted her, and now no one understood her. She was not made for marriage, and was perceiving it too late, after having always done work that was above her strength.

The animosity she felt towards her husband reinforced, to a terrible degree, the influence which was driving her towards suicide. Like all people in despair, she could not talk about it to anyone, and she was just about at the end of her tether when, one day, somebody knocked on her the door. The smile on his face, when she answered, placed him apart from the general run of hawkers, and the

light of peacefulness and understanding that shone in his eyes, bore out the truth of the message he delivered. Mathilda asked him in and bought a brochure, titled *The Triumph of Good over Evil*, for this title gave rise to a beginning of fresh hope in her heart. She immediately took out a subscription to *The Monitor of the Reign of Justice*, and, of course, her husband immediately attempted to veto it. He wanted to instil his way of looking at things into his wife, and to oppose her plans. However, an aunt of his stood up for Mathilda, saying: "Let her have that paper if she wants it. She's got a right to it if it'll do her good."

Mathilda, in search of hope and consolation, buried herself in these publications; she was unable to tear herself away from them till she had read them through. The fresh clear water of Truth infused new life into her veins with the magnificent assurance that Christ's everlasting Reign of brotherliness had begun on Earth.

That seed, which fell into the furrows of her heart, sprang up as a wave of joy under the warm rays of "the sun of righteousness". The brothers and sisters who busied themselves with visiting and encouraging the new friends, often came and fed these new feelings with their affection, cheering Mathilda up and giving her fresh courage. She was able to pour her troubles into sympathetic ears, and the brethren would listen to her, advise her and guide her steps into the narrow way along which she knew that henceforth she would be able to find a new destiny. They informed her husband of an available job, which would have been most advantageous, but he did not have the humility to accept it. He thought himself wise to refuse it. Everything had gone wrong on the small farmland that he had used for a type of sharecropping, by the end of the first year, and everything he had undertaken elsewhere failed too.

For the 14th of July, Mathilda wished to

emplary devotion. Without them, the night of anguish of Mr André Séchaud — who is Sheeva's master and Bonnie's guardian — would probably have turned into a tragedy. It was supposed to be a simple Sunday stroll.

On Sunday the 6th of August, around 10 a.m., this retired man, from the suburb of Pully, went for a walk with Sheeva and Bonnie. He wanted to enjoy two hours of strolling in the forest, between the suburbs of Gryon and Barboleusaz. His wife was waiting for him for lunch at noon, at the chalet. But at the arranged time, no André. Half an hour later, the hiker still wasn't there. Late in the afternoon, his wife informed the police. Around 7 p.m., policemen, three dogs and a professional guide, began a search. In vain. At 1 a.m., the search was suspended, and resumed later on Monday morning. Around 8 a.m., a car stopped in front of the chalet. André got out, very weak, and exhausted. Sheeva and Bonnie were hot on his heels. A moment forever engraved in Mrs Séchaud's memory: "The first thing he said to me when he arrived was: 'Look after the bitches, it was a hard night for them.'"

Dogs licking

Hard for André, too. "An hour after leaving the chalet, when I got lost in the forest, I fell. To get back to the village, I followed the Gryonne River. Exhausted, I had a heart attack and lost consciousness. And that's

when the bitches performed their first act of bravery: they licked my face until I opened my eyes. Around 5 o'clock in the afternoon, I started walking again, thinking I would find an easy path. But the further I went, the deeper the riverbed became. I tried to climb some stones, but I was too weak. So, with ferns and branches, I made a bed and laid down." All night long, his two companions "assisted" him. Lying on either side of his body, Sheeva and Bonnie gave him warmth and comfort. "They were worried about me. And I about them. In the morning, I found a way out, and then a road. A motorist took all three of us."

Shock...death

Seven months later, the Séchauds were in mourning. On the 13th of March, Sheeva left them forever. "From a very young age, she had big problems with her nose. The vets never said anything about the disease. This did not affect her liveliness, her joy of living or her kindness. But I could feel her anguish during that night under the stars. She even threw up. And since this mishap, she seemed more tired every day. I think she never fully recovered from the shock of August the 6th."

Without Sheeva, the house in Pully seemed quite empty. A void that was filled on the 9th of April by little Maya, a two-month-old Bernese Mountain Dog. And the couple said: "For us, living without a dog is

like living without oxygen. It's impossible. They are our life." The story proves it...

A large, sympathetic photo — in which the master and guardian of the two dogs, crouching, and holding one tenderly on the left and the other one on the right, under his armpits — further emphasizes this extraordinary fact, reported by J.-F. Aubert. An experience that this inhabitant of Pully is not likely to forget, for it is obvious that without the presence of these two brave animals and their affectionate assistance, his life was at risk.

He is certainly not the first to benefit from the devotion and protection of our faithful four-legged friends. There are numerous stories of their rescues and even their heroic deeds. We are always happy to share with our animal-loving readers every new story of this kind that comes to our attention. There are so many sad and unfortunate events, of human origin, that fill newspaper columns every day, and that only bring us negative and painful impressions, which greatly contrast with what comes to us from our "lesser siblings"!

On the other hand, the smile of Sheeva and Bonnie's "protégé", full of tenderness and gratitude, and the visible satisfaction of the two bitches, show us the true meaning of life. It gives off "spiritual oxygen" that invigorates the heart and mind.

accept the invitation she had received to a congress of the Kingdom of God, which will be set up on Earth. To the worldly minded, it was sheer madness to entertain such a utopian project. It was all delusion, because, ever since our ancestors died, nothing under the Sun had changed... However, while the nation was dancing around a few heroic memories, Mathilda set out on her bike for the 24 kilometres to the place where the congress was being held.

On reaching the address she had been given, she found nothing of what she was looking for. There was nothing in the neighbourhood or at the other end of the town where some of the friends lived. She returned to the original address, and — feeling worn out, for it was a blazing hot day — she sat down on some stairs to rest. Suddenly, there came a sound, to her ears, from somewhere higher up. Her heart leapt with joy, for it was a hymn, and it indicated the door she was looking for.

The meeting was closing for the day, but the warm atmosphere of affection, which greeted Mathilda, gave her all the information she wanted. Her heart opened to it like a flower opens to the first rays of the dawn.

Once she had taken refreshment, they accompanied her part of the way home, and everyone was still having their fun and games when she got back to the village.

Mathilda was well aware that it was not always going to be easy, that she was going to have some big fights to wage to root out all bad feelings from her heart, but she was also able to sing:

*The Almighty is my Shepherd,
I shall never be in need.
His rod and his staff, they comfort,
Yes, they comfort me indeed.*

The following evening, contrary to habit, they had to pay a visit to Hector's parents, who were beginning to get a bit anxious. They loved Mathilda and wished to warn her, for her good, according to their view. Why should they be anxious, and whence came the wind of fear that troubled their hearts? Did they not realise that the joy which had come into their daughter-in-law's heart was the joy of the Kingdom of God? Being so close to her, could they not see with their eyes, hear with their ears, or sense from the vibrations of thought, that Mathilda had found the very thing that all people lacked for? Could they not understand that — after having suffered so much from "the spirit of the world", like the Prodigal Son — she had now found real happiness?

"If you are not convinced by what I have been telling you," Mathilda went on, "come along with me, all of you. You will be very welcome, but you can take it from me that no one is going to prevent me from following the dictates of my conscience, and seeking the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

So far-reaching was the programme, and so few were the workmen, that this new recruit was grieved at not being free to say to the Master: "Here I am, employ me." However, she discovered some bonds which she had, till then, been ignorant of and which needed burning away in the fire of trial. Above all,

there was this hateful resentment against her husband. At the meetings, she learnt to mount the first rung of the ladder to freedom, by denying self, and therefore realised that she must wait, for it would be very easy for the Lord to grant her wish when He thought fit, according to these words of a hymn:

*Wings of the wind, He doth provide you:
Your heart on his heart doth repose.
If, to an open door, He guides you,
Who then that door may close?*

So, she went on steadfastly in the Good Fight of Faith, winning a few degrees in freedom from evil, under her Saviour's guidance, while her husband was also persisting in seeking his own personal aims, meeting with all kinds of trouble in his struggle to gather in the dollars. After years of fruitless endeavour, after meeting with numberless checks and many humiliations, he finally accepted the proposal of the friends of the association. This new job brought them closer to town. Mathilda had a flock of sheep, and worked a great deal. Much more than she should, of course, for her health failed her once more. Her eyesight was affected, and she lost the use of one eye, in spite of having had an operation. Her nerves were strained, and meanwhile she felt that there were changes going on around her, particularly in her husband, although he never spoke about it. He was looking more and more preoccupied, like someone contemplating some fresh decision, but not knowing how to go about it. However, one day, he decided to come out with it.

He couldn't go on with married life. Besides, their marriage had no meaning, since the ideas of one always went contrary to the projects of the other. He wanted to regain his freedom and to start life afresh.

So, the time had come, after so many years, and just when Mathilda was feeling so weak. Things were not as bad as they looked, for she had the support of her faith, which was able to remind her of these words of a hymn:

*If, to an open door, He guides you,
Who then that door may close?*

Her nerves gave way, and the doctor prescribed a month's rest by the seaside, for, as he told her, what she needed, no medicine could give her. Meanwhile, Hector instituted divorce proceedings.

When Mathilda returned, and the judge heard what each of them had to say, he turned to Hector and said: "You should go with your wife to see what those meetings are all about. That would certainly do you a deal of good."

However, Hector was not ready yet, and the time had not come for him to rally with those idealists for whom the denial of self was the only source of health and wealth, and who agreed with the teaching of our Lord, that it is better to give than to receive.

Now, along the road of Mathilda's life, a door was closing behind her on the past, and another door was opening ahead of her. Who indeed could possibly close that one? Here, she was starting out on another stage, for, in the Work of the Truth, there was a big harvest to look forward to, and big also was Mathilda's willingness to give all she could to God, as justice would have it.

Along the road lit by divine grace, the divine light effaced the sorrows of the past. New impressions, in accordance with the Law of Equivalents, flooded into her heart, and the consequence was a more detailed outlook on the prospects of the Restoration of All Things. Fully comforted and filled with joy beyond anything she could have hoped for, today she is able to fearlessly look forward to the day of the great reunion when all those she has known will return on to the restored Earth, and to learn of the great Work of forgiveness, accomplished by God's dearly beloved Son.

News in brief of the Reign of Justice

The time to renew our vows is approaching, and we happily recall here some thoughts of the dear Messenger relating to the Lord's Supper (the Last Supper, Holy Communion):

To partake of the Lord's Supper

The Lord said: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me." These words are appropriate, not only now, but throughout the entire Gospel Age. They show the marvellous dispositions of the Lord for the benefit of his Little Flock, chosen from among humanity.

The Lord addresses his disciples with so much benevolence, tenderness and grace. He addresses them in a way that only he is capable of doing and that only the disciples know how to understand and appreciate. During the Gospel Age, all the disciples heard that voice, not just once a year, when taking the Lord's Supper, but continually. Day after day, the Lord wants to have this memorable supper with us, which shows us the communion we have with our dear Saviour by means of the Body of Christ.

The Lord accepts a body, which is why it is said in the Scriptures (and this was repeated by Apostle Paul to the Hebrews): "You have prepared a body for me." The Body of Christ is composed of members who are his disciples and who should hear what the Spirit says to the churches. They should see, with the eyes of faith, what is happening in the Kingdom of the Son of his love, and live the conduct that should be required in the House of God.

Above all, the disciples must have a very soft heart to keep the impressions that only the Spirit of God can make in well-prepared soil, which is not found on the side of the road, or among stones or thorns. It takes a heart overflowing with affection for him, of whom it is said, when mentioning the disciples: "Having loved his own...he loved them to the end." We feel the unity that should exist between the Head and the members of the Body of Christ, through the power of God's Spirit, which leads in all the Truth.

The Lord promised to send his disciples the Spirit of consolation in order to console them, to bless them and to encourage them to form, in themselves, the character that is capable of sharing in "the inheritance of the saints in light". For the disciples who have this attitude, it is joy and happiness to take the Lord's cup and to share his bread. The

power of baptism comes true for them. The same baptism that our dear Saviour fulfilled, we must fulfil with him to form a single body, as it is written: "By one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body." 1 Corinthians 12: 13.

We want to rejoice from the bottom of our soul. We will have no trouble to take Lord's cup, not only symbolically, but also literally, every day of our lives that we still have to live on this Earth, during which, we will have the joy of receiving, from the Lord's blessed hand, the cup that he holds out to us, and the bread that he shares between us and him.

When we understand, through daily trials, what it means to take the bread and the cup every day and share them with the Lord, then we can easily perceive every time when Jesus is standing at the door of our heart, and knocking. This is why we are happy to receive all of his instructions. And this year especially, we will take, in a worthy manner, also symbolically, the bread and the cup from the hand of our dear Master. We will take them with all our heart. We will implore the blessing by bearing the pains of Christ for all the inhabitants of Earth, the groaning and dying creation. We will say, with Apostle John, for the benefit of poor humankind: "Come, Lord Jesus."

★

The members of the Host of the Lord, also celebrate the Lord's Supper. They do not take the cup, but the bread, which symbolizes their desire to join the Work of introducing the Kingdom of God on Earth. They deny themselves in order to do God's will and to support the last members of the Body of Christ, in their ministry.

We want to prepare our hearts well and ask the Lord for help, so that He can make us aware of the value of the symbol of the Passover that we have the honour of renewing alongside the last Consecrated, by reminding us of this exhortation from Apostle Paul, who said that whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup unworthily, will be guilty towards the body and blood of the Lord. One who eats and drinks without discerning the body of the Lord, eats and drinks a judgment against oneself. 1 Corinthians 11: 27 and 29.

Our thoughts and hearts will be with all the Passover ceremonies that will take place in the groups and on the dear Test Stations. Our hearts' wish is that the Lord may grant us his grace to give a convincing testimony that the world will be able receive.

We wish everyone the Lord's blessing on the efforts to be made, so that the "new creature" triumphs over the "old man", and so that evil may thus be definitively overcome by good, to the glory of God.

We mention the next congresses that will take place, God willing, in:

Sternberg Castle (Germany): 6th and 7th of April

Turin (Italy): 13th to 15th of July

Lyon (France): 7th to 9th of September

Sternberg Castle: 28th and 29th September.

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