

INTRODUCTION: LOVE AS A FORM OF LIFE



The Fall 2020 edition of *Communio* is dedicated to the theme “Love as a Form of Life.” Though it is common to confuse intense affection for love, we still fail to get at the truth if we only counter that love is instead a decisive deed. As *vis unitiva et concretiva*, a power that unites and holds together, love transcends even our discrete acts of willing, for it orders and takes expression in a whole life and indeed in the life of the community within which one belongs. It is in this spirit that we can understand Hans Urs von Balthasar’s celebrated statement in *The Christian State of Life* that “every true love has the inner form of a vow.” It is by freely resting in the vocation into which I have been welcomed that my loving affections and deeds can flourish in finding their rightful place. In addition to exploring this important theme, we are mindful that we lost several friends of the journal in 2020, including Ferdinand Ulrich, Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy, and Fr. Val J. Peter. Articles in this issue remember Ulrich and Farkasfalvy, two witnesses to how love is confessed through a way of being that is born of lifelong fidelity to the triune God.

In “The Pandemic: A Sacramental Reading,” **José Granados** considers the widespread isolation with which our society has responded to the coronavirus pandemic. This experience provokes us, he contends, to remember our fundamental need to exist in concrete fellowship with our neighbor. The poverty of a secluded life, above all of separation from the Church’s liturgy and sacraments, thus calls us to a more essential understanding of health as the personal wholeness that comes with integration in a

social body. “To live is, actually, to be always outside of oneself so that, in this way, life may be magnified and multiplied.”

Jean-Louis Chrétien meditates on two ways of being attentive in “Martha and Mary: The Double Hospitality.” He inquires into the relationship between these forms of welcoming and responding to God’s Word—do Martha and Mary represent two distinct callings within the Church? Or should every Christian commit himself equally both to serving *and* to listening in his love for the Lord? Reviewing classic interpretations of Luke’s account from Origen to Teresa of Ávila, Chrétien brings into focus the interplay, complementarity, and even vital cooperation of labor and leisure in the hospitality that is proper to Christian existence. “This is Christian liberty, where action and contemplation, duty and flexibility unite intimately.”

Antonio López, in “Without Beginning: Human Freedom and Divine Omnipotence,” reflects on how modern culture primarily, though often unconsciously, conceives of both God and man in terms of power. In answer to this idolatrous account of the divine Origin and of the originality of human freedom, López turns to a theological notion of glory, in light of which we discover that the first principle of reality is, in the Trinity, an eternally-giving and eternally-receiving exchange of charity. This offers the foundation for a true interpretation of how man most perfectly lives out his freedom. “In contrast to the technological perception of power—that is, the ever-renewing and never really existing growth of power that ends up folding the other into oneself to satisfy one’s own impulses—the triune God reveals power to be the communication of all one’s being to another person who remains irreducible to oneself, even as he remains totally united with the one who gives.”

In “*Et verbum caro factum est*: An Intro-duction to the Philosophical Life,” **Andrew J. Jaeger** argues that the philosophical vocation, characterized as it is by being in love with the logos, comes upon one as “*the fruit of an unmerited gift*.” Jaeger presents the meaning and goodness of this vocation through its performance in the exemplary life of Socrates, above all through his encapsulation of Socrates’s teaching in his death, which can itself serve to awaken us to wonder before reality. “It is only by the con-descension of another that one can, with surprise, find oneself *already* living a life in union with its logos.”

In his funeral homily for Ferdinand Ulrich, “Of the Love That is ‘For Nothing’: In Honor of Ferdinand Ulrich,” **Stefan Oster** recalls how Ulrich’s central task as a thinker and a man was to illuminate the meaning of love as free gift. Ulrich manifested this truth in his own inward poverty, itself a fruit of joyfully consenting to the perfect generosity of the divine Giver. Oster testifies to how Ulrich’s reflections on and practice of love were open from within to the charity revealed in Christ. “By virtue of his immense philosophical intuition and gift it was also granted him as a philosopher to show that the crucified Love unfolds not only the deepest revelation of God, but, at the same time, the deepest insight into the reality of the world and of man.”

In “Denis Farkasfalvy on the Theology of the Bible,” **Roch Keretzsky** celebrates the life of the late Cistercian monk, abbot, and teacher, and elucidates his contribution to the thought of the Church. In his mission as a theologian, Farkasfalvy shared in the renewal of Scriptural exegesis commended in the conciliar document *Dei verbum*. Receiving the genuine fruits of modern biblical scholarship, Farkasfalvy remained faithfully attentive to the inspired text’s origin in the event of God’s revelation and, on this basis, to its power to transform the life of one who savors it in the Spirit. “When the Scriptures are proclaimed or read in faith, the Word of God becomes actualized, or ‘living and effective.’”

In “*Why We Need. . .*,” **Jeremiah Barker** presents Julian of Norwich as a theologian of ecclesial existence—that is, of individual life as membership in Christ. Indeed, Barker portrays Julian as a saint who embodied this anthropology. “Her individual identity as a mystic was integrally connected with her conception of herself as a part of corporate humanity.” The mystical solidarity which Julian contemplated and lived, Barker shows, informed her understanding of Adam’s salvation in Christ, an event her writings invite us to take part in from within.

In *Retrieving the Tradition* we feature a translation of **Jean Daniélou**’s “Catechesis in the Patristic Tradition.” Daniélou characterizes the early Church’s practice of catechetical instruction as a mode of initiation into both the mind and the acts of the Bride of Christ. In forming catechumens in the fundamental tenets of the faith, this transmission of what the Church confesses is oriented toward preparing the initiate to live within the

mysteries of Christ made present in Scripture and in the liturgy. “The goal of the catechist,” Daniélou writes, “is to provide an education for the future baptizands that . . . introduces them into Christian existence.” In this way, the pastoral dimension of catechesis flows from and returns to the truth of Christ, just as its doctrinal dimension is animated by and serves to communicate the Spirit of charity.

Finally, we include **Stefano Fontana**’s “Forgetting the Social Doctrine of the Church in the Epoch of the Coronavirus” in *Notes & Comments*. Fontana sheds light on a large-scale failure to interpret the event of the coronavirus pandemic in relation to God’s permissive will, the need for religious conversion, and the Easter hope in salvation beyond death. As Fontana points out, excessive concession to political approaches to curtailing the pandemic’s spread amount to the Church’s relinquishment of her rightful public role in witnessing to the saving truth. In the end, he warns, this failure is symptomatic of a theological position that forgets the Church’s indispensable mission to care for souls. “The ‘useless God’ and ‘useless religion’ brought to light by the pandemic collapsed the Church into the world.” □

—The Editors