



## NEWSLETTER

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Family Solidarity

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### **Family Solidarity's Annual General Meeting Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November.**

11.30 am (Mass) till approx 4 pm in ELY House,  
Finger food lunch at 1 o'clock, follow by short  
addresses from Petra Conroy (*about the Faith on Fire  
project*) and Niamh Uí Bhriain and others (*about GRIPT.ie*)  
(Please advise us by leaving a message on 01 6611113 or  
[familysolidarityireland@gmail.com](mailto:familysolidarityireland@gmail.com) if you wish to partake of the finger food  
lunch)

**The Family Solidarity Web page is now up and active** see <https://familysolidarity.org/> . The News and Events page is updated regularly.

**Family Solidarity Congress:** We hope to hold a congress with distinguished international and national speakers in June 2020 in the hope of attracting new members More details later.

## **Editorial**

Our efforts are now devoted to educating and informing so as to counteract the negative influences that misled the Irish Electorate to give us the unfortunate amendments to the Constitution of Ireland in the recent years. Family Solidarity will be doing what it can to support organisations at the forefront of this campaign which will take years, with the grace of God, to restore the true rights of the family and of all human beings from conception till death.

The Holy Father's Angelus Address of the 6<sup>th</sup> of this month emphasises the role of Faith in this campaign. The Irish Bishops on the same day (The Day of Life) issued a strong statement on the right to life, and concluded with the statement that ***“A truly compassionate society chooses life.”***

I have included an article from the Web by Patrick F. Fagan of the Marriage and Religion Research Initiative at The Catholic University of America on the importance of spending time on ones relationships particularly in the family.

By the time you read this Cardinal John Henry Newman will be declared a Saint. I have included his “Fragrance Prayer” which is the way the least of us can do evangelisation by allowing God to work through us.

Aware that many of our older members do not access the rich material that is available on the internet and indeed on our web site we have two articles on the Irish situation with regard to Child Care, and on the importance of the happiness of Mothers.

Finally some interesting reading on the Catholic motivation of Christopher Columbus in his crossing of the Atlantic and opening the New World.

**Thank you all who have paid their subscriptions and made donations to further our aims. We have put a return envelope with a subscription slip with all copies of the Newsletter as it is simpler than selecting those from whom we have not heard. If you have contributed in the last year ignore this. Please bear with us!**

## The Holy Father's Address at the Angelus 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Today's evangelical page (Cf. *Luke* 17:5-10) presents the subject of faith, introduced by the disciples' plea: "Increase our faith!" (v. 6). A beautiful prayer, which we should pray a lot during the day: "Lord, increase faith in me!" Jesus responds with two images: *the mustard seed* and *the available servant*. "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamore tree, 'Be uprooted, and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you" (v. 6). The sycamore is a robust tree, well-rooted in the earth and resistant to the winds. Therefore, Jesus wants to make it understood that the faith, even if little, can have the strength of uprooting even a sycamore; and then of transplanting it in the sea, which is something even more improbable: however, nothing is impossible for one who has faith, because he doesn't count on his own

strength but on God, who can do everything.



Faith, which is like a mustard seed, is a faith that isn't superb and self-confident, doesn't feign to be that of a great believer

doing foolish things at times! It's a faith that in its

humility feels a great need of God and in littleness abandons itself to Him with full trust. It's the faith that gives us the capacity to look with hope on the ups and downs of life, which helps us to accept even defeats and sufferings, in the awareness that evil never has the last word.

How can we know if we really have faith, that is, if our faith, though minuscule, is genuine, pure, frank? Jesus explains it by pointing out what the measure of faith is: *service*. And He does so with a parable that in the first instance seems somewhat disconcerting because He presents the figure of an arrogant and indifferent master. However, this way of behaving of the master highlights the true heart of the parable, namely, the servant's attitude of availability. Jesus wants to say that the man of faith behaves so in his relations with God: he gives himself completely to His will, without calculations or pretensions.

This attitude towards God is also reflected in the way of behaving in community: it's reflected in the joy of being at the service of one another, finding already in this one's recompense and not in the rewards and earnings that can derive from it. It's what Jesus teaches at the end of this account: "When you have done all that is commanded of you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'" (v. 10) — unworthy servants, namely, without pretensions to be thanked, without claims. "We are unworthy servants," is an expression of humility and

willingness that does so much good to the Church and calls for the right attitude to work in her: humble service, of which Jesus has given us the example, washing the disciples' feet (Cf. *John* 13:3-17).

May the Virgin Mary, Woman of faith, help us to go on this path. We turn to Her on the eve of the feast of our Lady of the Rosary, in communion with the faithful gathered at Pompeii for the traditional Prayer.

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Day of Life October 6, 2019

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## **A time for prayer and action for unborn life (Statement of the Irish Bishops)**

Human laws do not determine what is good or true. What was true in advance of the legalization of abortion in the Republic of Ireland, or its proposed imposition in Northern Ireland, remains true today. Every human life is a gift and a blessing and ought not be destroyed or disposed of at will. In Ireland, North and South, there are very specific threats to the respect and dignity that is due to every human life.

The Word of God neither ages nor ceases to be relevant, no matter what changes occur in our society and the voice of all who believe the 'Gospel of Life' needs to be heard. In season and out of season the Church proclaims that

God is the author of life as we read in Psalm 139, *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you”* and as Pope Benedict has said, *“Each one of us is the result of a thought of God”*.



Bishops echo the recent call of Church leaders in Northern Ireland, inviting the faithful to

devote time to private and public prayer for the protection of unborn life over the coming weeks. Bishops noted that October is dedicated to the Most Holy Rosary and invited people to make their prayer for life through the intercession of Mary, the mother of the Word of God “... who became flesh and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth” (Jn 1:14).

Lamenting the tragic rationale that renders an unborn child a commodity, devoid of any innate value, bishops expressed grave concern at the imposition of dramatic changes to abortion legislation in Northern Ireland, planned by the Westminster Parliament for 21 October, including a period of unregulated access to abortion in the case of unborn children up to 28 weeks of pregnancy. Alongside prayer, every Christian needs to be aware of

**WHEN CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIFE FLOURISHES, THE CIVILISED WORLD BENEFITS**



what is happening and know how he or she can help promote the culture of life from conception to natural death.

Mindful of the recent appeal of Pope Francis to politicians, bishops called on the Westminster Parliament to recognize and respect the right of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the citizens who voted for it, to have the primary role in legislating in this area. They also called on Northern Ireland politicians to do all in their power, including restoring the Assembly, to prevent the imposition of this legislation, so that the primary value of every human life would be protected and that a voice be given to those who to date have had no voice in this debate.

Every voter and every political representative should be very clear that abortion is a brutal violation of the precious gift of life. The freedom of conscience of healthcare professionals needs to be respected and they should not be required to lend their support to an action that conflicts with their commitment to uphold life. To describe abortion as either healthcare or a human right is to twist language and to misrepresent the true meaning of those terms. An unborn baby is every bit as human as a growing toddler, a teenager or a grandparent.

A truly compassionate society chooses life.



## Dollar rich but time (and relationship) poor Americans: a way out?

### *Ordering one's life relationally*

Patrick F. Fagan | Sep 19 2019 | 



Forming and developing relationships takes time not money. In the United States we are great at making money, running businesses and increasing productivity, and have 57 Nobel Laureates

in Economics to prove it. The rest of the world agrees and beats a path to our universities to learn how.

Though we are the richest nation in history, however, our people don't get much paid vacation, and more than half don't use the small amount they do get! Contrast this with western Europe where most workers take August off for family vacation time. As an immigrant from Ireland, I was struck by this difference and concluded that "Americans live to work while Europeans work to live."

Is there any connection here with the fact that relationships in America are in deep crisis? Only 46 percent of our children grow up in a family with both parents present all the time. For Black Americans the figure is only 17 percent. As a culture we excel at work and income but fail miserably in relationships, even as we are very generous with our money.

**WHEN CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIFE FLOURISHES, THE CIVILISED WORLD BENEFITS**

We lead in helping to pull the world's remaining half billion out of extreme poverty, yet are digging a cultural grave for ourselves, as the Senate's alarming report, Trends in Deaths of Despair (aka suicide) reveals. For us, Mother Teresa of Calcutta's remark holds true: "There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love."

Yet, there may be a way of harnessing our "work" strength to resolve our relationship weakness.

Recently I had an epiphany while trying to help a friend who had "screwed up" his marriage and family life. He was trying hard to put it back together, but in his anxiety was jumping all over the place and getting nowhere except into deeper trouble.

I was close to throwing in the towel, for nothing I did helped. Then a grace came: "What are the most important relationships in your life?" I asked. He answered, "God and my wife." Then I said, "Why not ask your wife, 'What is the one thing I can do for you today that will bring our relationship closer to what you want it to be?'" He liked that. He has been doing it every day and says his wife reports their relationship is the best it has been for years. By prioritizing the work he needed to do for their relationship, he sped ahead.

Then it occurred to him to go further; why not look at all the other relationships in his life and, mentally, ask and

answer the same question: for his children (one by one), his boss (i.e. his work), and so on. Soon he had all his tasks rank-ordered but in a way that fit both “US productivity standards” as well as his own need to have the people in his life happier with him.

He concluded: “There is no point in doing anything before ‘the single most needed thing’ in any of these relationships.” When he surveyed them all, he found he had his whole life covered, in order of importance and with peace in his soul.

I have been mulling this over and applying it. Here is what I have learned so far:

- All our tasks (productivity) can be looked at relationally.
- Simultaneously every important relationship has a task waiting to bring it to the next level.
- Relationships give us the most productive rank-ordering of what we should be doing. Everybody (wife, bosses, friends, God) will likely agree with the ordering.
- Our productivity will soar, for we will be at peace and able to concentrate.
- It is a fine way to love your neighbour.

The experiment is still ongoing for me and for my friend. I suspect that with constant practice it will have a profound re-orienting effect. I wish I had “discovered” it when I was

much younger. I would have lived my life differently — with better work and richer relationships.

*Pat Fagan is the director of the Marriage and Religion Research Initiative at The Catholic University of America. He is publisher and editor of Marripedia.org. Republished from the MARRI blog. (Dr Patrick Fagan was born in Dublin)*

### Where does the Three Hail Marys devotion come from?

Among the devotions to Our Lady, there is one that is very special: that of praying three Hail Marys every day. But, where did this devotion come from? Its origin dates back to the 13th century, and is connected to Saint Mechtilde of Hackeborn, a German Benedictine nun, to whom Our Lady revealed a way of lifting up a prayer of thanksgiving to the Holy Trinity for the privileges granted to the Virgin Mary.

Mechtilde was born in 1241 into a noble family. One day, while thinking about her own death, she fervently begged the Mother of God to help her during the last moments of her life.

She heard Our Lady say to her:

"Yes, I will; but I want you, on your part, to pray three Hail Marys to me each day. With the first, you will ask that, just as God the Father raised me up to a throne of glory without equal, making me the most powerful creature in heaven and on earth, so too I may assist you on earth to strengthen you and drive away from you every power of the enemy. With the second Hail Mary, you will ask that, just as the Son of God filled me with wisdom to such an extent that I have more knowledge of the Holy Trinity than all the Saints, so too may I help you during the last moments of your life, filling your soul with the light of faith and of true wisdom, so that the shadows of error and ignorance may not darken it. With the third, you will ask that, just as the Holy Spirit filled me with the sweetness of His love, and has made me so loving that, after God, I am the sweetest and most merciful, so also may I help you at the hour of your death, filling your soul with such gentleness of divine love that all the sorrow and bitterness of your death may be changed for you into delight."

The Virgin Mary promised Saint Mechtilde that whoever would pray three Hail Marys every day would receive her help during life and her special assistance at the moment of death—the Virgin Mary would appear to them with such brightness and beauty that the mere sight of her would bring consolation and the joys of heaven.

***Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman's Prayer (Saint Mother Teresa modified it slightly for her own and her congregation's use)***



Dear Jesus, help me to  
spread Your fragrance  
everywhere I go.  
Flood my soul with Your  
spirit and life.  
Penetrate and possess my  
whole being so utterly,  
That my life may only be a  
radiance of Yours.

Shine through me, and be so in me  
That every soul I come in contact with  
May feel Your presence in my soul.  
Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus!  
  
Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You shine,  
So to shine as to be a light to others;  
The light, O Jesus will be all from You; none of it will be  
mine;  
It will be you, shining on others through me.  
Let me thus praise You the way You love best, by shining  
on those around me.  
Let me preach You without preaching, not by words but

by my example,  
By the catching force of the sympathetic influence of what  
I do,  
The evident fullness of the love my heart bears to You.  
Amen.

radiating christ/fragrance prayer - john henry cardinal newman

## **MINISTER FOR CHILDREN USURPING PARENTAL RIGHTS**

*See this and similar articles about family related matters on our  
website <https://familysolidarity.org/latest-news/>*

*By Margaret Hickey*

New mother Ruth Davidson cited personal reasons as the primary reason for resigning as leader of the Scottish Conservative party. The care of a small baby and fulfilling a demanding public role didn't combine well for her.

But then every young parent knows that even ordinary, run of the mill jobs are challenging when there are young children to be cared for. In fact challenging is probably an understatement.

Small children ideally need the kind of care that is best delivered by familiar, loving adults who know them, and deepen rapport with them, day by day and week by week as they develop. Continuity, consistency, familiar surroundings, most of all unrushed, familiar, loving voices create the milieu in which small children learn how to relate to others in love and trust. It is how they develop a sense of security and a sense of self.

Is there any new research that points to different conclusions? We know children do not do well when left

for long hours in institutionalised care. Minister for Children, Katherine Zappone should be well aware of this. Parents know this. But the Irish State purports to believe otherwise. Katherine Zappone and the government are quite prepared to place babies as young as 24 weeks into full time crèche care. Full time crèche care for commuting parents can be from 8.00 in the morning to 6.00 in the evening. The few hours left in the waking day are swallowed up by travelling home and catching up on domestic chores. There is little, if any, time and energy for quality parent/child interaction during the working week. It is out of economic necessity that the majority of young parents both work. Most of them don't have careers that offer high levels of fulfillment and exciting prospects of promotion. The very least they might expect to get from the State is support for their choice of childcare.

Whatever happened to trusting parents? Why can't they chose the kind of care model they want for their own children with equal State support?

Given choice, many parents favour relatives, neighbours or family friends who may already have a relationship with their children. Given the shocking Prime Time revelations about the mistreatment of children in Dublin crèches, why does Minister Zappone want to extend even more oversight responsibilities to Tusla which has problems of its own? Are parents not better placed to vet



the people they trust with their own children ? Does the State have a right to abrogate that choice from them? Katherine Zappone now wishes to use subsidies to regulate informal child care in a way that will make it difficult if not impossible for the home based care many parents prefer. A childminder, who had cared for children in her home for fifteen years, spoke at the launch of the National Children's Scheme of the costly, onerous regulations and intrusion into her home by Tusla that led to her decision to de-register with the agency. She felt she was being forced into the crèche system with unrealistic demands to adapt and upgrade her home.

But is not that the whole point of the government's new policy? It is obviously impossible for Tusla to vet and monitor many thousands of home based childminders when they can't manage to do that effectively for crèches. So the informal, parent chosen options must be forced out. Priced out. Regulated out. And yes, prosecuted out. One compulsory system. No choice for parents because it suits the government.

Parents should be supported irrespective of what model of care they chose for their children. Whether they chose to care for them in their own homes, in the homes of relatives or others they consider suitable and trustworthy should be a matter for them to decide.

Of course this isn't about children at all. Nor their parents nor what benefits either of them. It's the economy stupid

once again. Home based minders are not in the tax net per se apart from the ninety or so who have registered with Tusla. So the status quo may be an unquantified, unapproved form of *de facto* subvention. But then, on the other hand, parents can't claim tax relief in these situations either. Re-setting the balance between taxation and benefits, between taxing childminders appropriately and enabling parents to pay them is both feasible and fair. But the government knows that. So it may not be only about the economy after all. With Katherine Zappone in charge, it's very likely to be about ideology too.

(originally published in The Examiner)

## **MOTHER'S HAPPINESS MAKES NEARLY TWICE AS MUCH DIFFERENCE TO FAMILY LIFE**

*See this and similar articles about family related matters on our website <https://familysolidarity.org/latest-news/>*

New research suggests [distinct but complementary roles for mothers and fathers in married and family life](#).

According to the research, a mother's happiness is nearly twice as important as a father's when it comes to family life and the chances of the couple staying together, according to a study by the UK's Marriage Foundation. The findings are based on the organisation's analysis of the Millennium Cohort Study, which tracked 13,000 married and cohabiting couples, starting nine months

after the birth of their child in 2000-1. They were interviewed again when the child was 14.

It found that if a mother was happy, she was more likely to have children who remained mentally well; more likely to remain close to her daughters when they were teenagers; and more likely to have a stable relationship with her partner. A father's happiness had no bearing on his offspring's mental health.

Sir Paul Coleridge, founder of the Marriage Foundation, which conducted the study with Lincoln University, said: "Despite all the social changes of the last 50 years, whether we like it or not, there is an ingredient for keeping the whole family happy, which is only available from the mother or mother figure." (Angelo Bottone, Iona Institute)

## The Catholic Spirit of Christopher Columbus

By [Ben Broussard](#)



As the sun set, the Salve Regina hymn rang out across the Atlantic. Ninety men stood on the decks of three boats, led in prayer by Christopher Columbus, the foreign captain they had come to trust. They had kept the same ritual of evening prayers since they left Spain months ago, but tonight was different. Tomorrow would be the Feast of Our Lady of the Pillar, Spain's great patroness.

Columbus had promised his men that had they not spotted land by her feast day, he would order the ships to turn back, a promise he intended to keep. He knew Our Lady would not abandon the enterprise he had worked so hard to bring about. The signs that they were near land were increasing by the day.

As Columbus climbed the steps to his cabin, his gaze fell instinctively to the western horizon. Off in the distance, he caught sight of a light, like a candle rising and falling on the waves. Quickly, he called another man, who confirmed the sighting. The crews on all three ships were alerted, each man was on deck, peering out for signs of land nearby. At 2 a.m., the cry came out, “Tierra!” Land! The excitement of the crew was such that they hardly noticed the many hours it took to navigate the treacherous reef that surrounded their new destination. As Columbus knelt on the beach to give thanks, the following prayer rose from his lips:



“O Lord, eternal and omnipotent God, Thou hast, by Thy holy word, created the heavens, the earth, and the sea; blessed and glorified be Thy name; praised be Thy majesty, who hast deigned that, by means of Thy unworthy servant, Thy sacred name should be

acknowledged and made known in this new quarter of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

## **San Salvador**

The above prayer, recited in Latin and the first spoken in the Americas, was followed by the chanting of the Credo, the Te Deum, and many other prayers in thanksgiving. As the banners were unfurled, the admiral solemnly proclaimed, “In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ...” He proceeded to claim the new land for his sovereigns, but not before first claiming it for his Divine Master, giving it the name San Salvador (Holy Saviour).

The details in the above account of the first landfall of Europeans in the Americas are rather unknown in modern times. Historians have typically shied away from the Catholic aspects of Columbus’ journeys, either making passing mention or ignoring them entirely. Yet a reading of the writings of Columbus himself, along with the testimonies of his contemporaries, shows that the Catholic spirit permeated all aspects of life and was central to the mission of exploration.

While a detailed retelling of the events of 1492 and afterward is far beyond the scope of this article, we will examine the Catholic inspirations for the discovery, which are essential to understanding Columbus himself.

Contrary to the opinion of many modern historians, and far from being a minor aberration, Columbus’ militant Catholic faith was the source of his greatness and

influenced his every action.

## Catholic Piety

All evidence shows Columbus was a man of deep devotion who took his faith extremely seriously. One of his contemporaries, Bartolome de las Casas, described him as a man of righteousness and deep piety:

“He observed the fasts of the church most faithfully, confessed and made communion often, read the Divine Office like a churchman, hated blasphemy and profane swearing, and was most devoted to Our Lady and to the seraphic father St. Francis. . .”<sup>2</sup>

These two devotions had many manifestations. The full name of Columbus’ flagship on the first voyage was Santa Maria de la Inmaculada Concepción (Holy Mary of the Immaculate Conception). During the return of the first voyage, when the ships were in danger of sinking, Columbus and his men vowed a pilgrimage to the first Marian church they came to, which they fulfilled in the



As a Third Order Franciscan, Columbus was often seen wearing the Franciscan habit.

Azores two weeks later. Upon his return to Spain, Columbus made a pilgrimage to the monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Extremadura as a solemn act of thanksgiving.

As a Third Order Franciscan, Columbus was often seen wearing the Franciscan habit, particularly when in the presence of



clergy or nobility. His close personal association with the Franciscans was instrumental in securing contacts in the royal court, and provided much needed encouragement when it seemed the enterprise would never get the support it required. His son Diego remained in the care of the Franciscans at the monastery of La Rabida near Palos during the first voyage, where the friars took charge of his education. Upon his return to Spain, Columbus spent the summer of 1493 at La Rabida, preparing spiritually for the second voyage later that year.

After Columbus' death, his second son Fernando would write of his father's piety:

"In matters of religion he was so strict that for fasting and saying all the canonical offices he might have been taken for a member of a religious order. And when he had to write anything, he would not try the pen without first writing these words, 'Jesus cum Maria sit nobis in via.'"<sup>3</sup>

This inscription is found in the majority of Columbus' letters still extant. The literal meaning, "May Jesus with Mary be with us on the way" is a fitting prayer for an explorer, and could rightly be considered his motto.

### **Missionary Zeal**

Scholars have been quick to point to the influence of Marco Polo's Book of the Marvels of the World upon Columbus and his contemporaries, and rightly so. Yet the chapter which most influenced Columbus himself was the introduction. In it, we read of Polo's father and uncle,



Niccolò and Maffeo Polo, travelling to the Orient while Marco was still an infant. Their extensive travels eventually put them into contact with Kublai Khan, referred to in the book as the Great Khan. The Great Khan questioned them about life in Western Europe and the Catholic Faith, in which he took an interest. Upon their departure, he entrusted them with a letter to the Pope requesting 100 missionaries to instruct his kingdom in the Catholic faith, along with oil from the lamp at the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. On the return of the Polos to the West in 1268, they discovered Pope Clement IV had died, and the long interregnum which followed prevented the Khan's requests from being fulfilled.<sup>4</sup>

In his petitions to Ferdinand and Isabella over a period of 7 years, it was Columbus' desire to fulfill the Great Khan's request which finally persuaded the sovereigns to approve the journey. Aboard his flagship was a letter to the Great Khan from the king and queen, and Columbus went to great lengths in order to deliver it. In the prologue to the report on the first voyage, Columbus directly addresses this evangelistic mission:

"I had given [a report] to Your Highnesses about the lands of India and about a prince who is called 'Grand Khan,' . . . how he had sent to Rome to ask for men learned in our Holy Faith in order that they might instruct him in it, yet the Holy Father had never granted his request, and thus so many people were lost, falling into idolatry and

accepting false and harmful religions; and Your Highnesses, as Catholic Christians and Princes, lovers and promoters of the Holy Christian Faith. . . thought of sending me, Cristobal Colon. . . to see how their conversion to our Holy Faith might be undertaken.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet the mission to complete the Khan’s request for missionaries was but one aspect of Columbus’ desire to spread the Gospel. As

Bartolome de las Casas wrote, “He was extremely zealous for the honour and

glory of God; he deeply yearned for the evangelization of these peoples and for the planting and flourishing everywhere of people’s faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup> Upon his first encounter with the natives on San Salvador, Columbus concludes, “I recognized that they were people who would be better freed [from error] and converted to our Holy Faith by love than by force.”<sup>7</sup>

On six separate occasions, Columbus wrote to the Holy Father requesting missionaries be sent to the recently discovered islands, a request which was fulfilled. On January 6, 1494, the Feast of the Epiphany, the first Mass



“He was extremely zealous for the honor and glory of God; he deeply yearned for the evangelization of these peoples and for the planting and flourishing everywhere of people’s faith in Jesus Christ.”

in the Americas was offered by a Benedictine who had accompanied the second voyage.

Five centuries after the fact, American Jesuit Fr. John Hardon would remark, “It is one thing to say that Columbus discovered America. It is something else to realize that he opened the door to the most phenomenal spread of Christianity since the time of St. Paul.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Crusader Spirit**

A question arises from the modern reader: “What about the quest for gold?” As Columbus makes clear in his log, the finding of gold, spices, and other valuables is central to his mission, but not for the reason most are taught. On December 26, 1492, Columbus had established a makeshift settlement named La Navidad on the north end of the island of Hispaniola from the wreckage of the Santa Maria, run aground on a reef. Seeing the hand of Divine Providence, he then proceeded to write of his desired result:

“I hope to God that when I come back here from Castile. . . I will find a barrel of gold, for which these people have traded, and that they will have found the gold mine, and the spices, and in such quantities that within three years the Sovereigns will prepare for and undertake the reconquest of the Holy Land. I have already petitioned Your Highnesses to see that all the profits of my enterprise should be spent on the conquest of Jerusalem, and Your Highnesses smiled and said that. . . even without

the expedition they had the inclination to do it.”<sup>9</sup>

Now that Spain was finally free from Muslim domination (Jan. 2, 1492), the great desire to take the fight to the enemy and complete the liberation of the Holy Land could finally be completed. By sailing west, Columbus was aiming to outflank Islam, gaining access to the riches of the East so as to finance the retaking of Jerusalem. Since the fall of Constantinople in 1453, while Columbus was still a child, calls had come from all corners of Europe to renew the Crusade. Columbus saw himself as the instrument to fulfill the longed-for end.

In a letter to Pope Alexander VI, Columbus reiterates the seriousness of his intentions:

“The enterprise must be undertaken in order to spend any profits therein for the redemption of the Sepulchre and the Temple Mount unto Holy Church.”<sup>10</sup>

Historian George Grant succinctly concludes, “Clearly, the motivations of Columbus were shaped by the eons long conflict between Christendom and Islam. The evidence is inescapable. He sailed, not to discover a new world, but to find a way to recover the old one.”<sup>11</sup>

## **Our Great Debt to Columbus**

The events of 1492 and afterward could have transpired far differently. The richest nation in the world at the time was China, followed by the Islamic caliphates which stretched from Morocco to the edges of the Far East. Why didn't the Chinese expand their empire to the east across

the Pacific? Why was it not a Muslim who established lasting contact between the continents? For that matter, why was it not an Indian who discovered Europe? Modern historians are at a loss to answer these questions, and conclude that it was simply by chance that events unfolded as they did. This hardly explains the fact that Spain was the poorest nation in Western Europe at the time, bankrupt from its completion of the Reconquista. Yet not only did Spain successfully go about colonizing and evangelizing the Americas, it also kept the Muslims out of the Americas. Had Islam spread to the Americas in place of Christianity, what we know today as the United States could very well have been the United Emirates. Columbus believed he was specially



chosen by God to bring the Gospel to a people who were living in darkness and the shadow of death. He believed his given name, Christopher, signified the mission he was destined to carry out, as his son Fernando would later explain: "Just as Saint Christopher bore Christ over the waters, so too was he to bear the light of the Gospel over the vast oceans."<sup>12</sup>

In conclusion, spreading the Catholic faith and acquiring riches so as to finance the retaking of Jerusalem from the Muslims were at the heart of Columbus' mission. Any hopes of personal rewards or honours were secondary. In writing the royal treasurer of Spain at the completion of the first journey, he gives the reason all people, present and future, should celebrate what would come to be known as Columbus Day:

“And now ought the King, Queen, Princes, and all their dominions, as well as the whole of Christians, to give thanks to our Savior Jesus Christ who has granted us such a victory and great success. Let processions be ordered, let solemn festivals be celebrated, let the temples be filled with boughs and flowers. Let Christ rejoice upon earth as he does in heaven, to witness the coming salvation of so many people, heretofore given over to perdition. Let us rejoice for the exaltation of our faith, as well as for the augmentation of our temporal prosperity, in which not only Spain but all Christendom shall participate.”<sup>13</sup>

On May 20, 1506, the Vigil of the Ascension, Christopher Columbus lay on his deathbed in his apartment at Valladolid, surrounded by his fellow Franciscans and his sons. As the friars chanted Compline, his last words echoed those of Christ on the cross: In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum. (Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.)