

True Heroes for the Young and Young of Heart!

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them. (Mark 10: 13-17.)

Here we see the great love of Jesus for children. Not only does He call them to Himself and embrace them but He blesses them and lays His hands on them, as if to anoint them for ministry in the simplicity of their childhood. Like the lilies of the field which do not toil nor labor but give great glory to God by simply being, so the little ones, without any great deeds, live simply in praise of His glory. God, however, so often uses the little ones to do great things for Him precisely because they know it is He who works within and through them for His own glory, for they know they are too small to claim any great deeds or glory for themselves. The little ones so readily believe and so purely and totally surrender to the Lord when He speaks to their hearts. Oh how God loves to use the poor, the lowly, the humble, the children, the powerless to confound the wise and the powerful of this world. St. Paul addressed his faith community at Corinth with that same message.

Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. (New American Bible, 1Cor 1:26-30)

The Hebrew Scriptures give us the stories of **Samuel, Jeremiah and David**, all called while very young to priestly, prophetic and royal destinies. **Samuel**, the answer to Hannah's prayer for a child, was consecrated to God as promised when he was weaned. 1 Samuel 3:1-20 recounts how the boy, sleeping in the sanctuary, was awakened three times during the night and ran to the priest Eli, saying "**Here I am.**" When Eli realized it was the Lord calling the child, he advised Samuel to respond, "**Speak, Lord, your servant is listening!**" the same response each of us ought to make when the Lord calls us, day or night. Samuel was then given a prophecy against the house of Israel and the priestly family of Eli. **A little child shall lead them!**

In Jeremiah 1:6-9 we read that the Lord called **Jeremiah** to be a prophet to the nations even before he was born. Young Jeremiah protested when the Lord presented him with his mission, as we so often do, too:

"I do not know how to speak: I am a child." Yahweh replied, "Do not say, 'I am a child.' Go now to those to whom I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you--it is Yahweh who speaks." Again, a little child shall lead them!

When God sent Samuel to the house of Jesse to anoint the next king, all the sons were presented to Samuel except David, who was excluded because he was so young. Samuel, led by the Spirit of God, called for **David** and then quietly anointed him, the shepherd boy who would later become the Shepherd King and a man after God's own heart. When the giant Goliath, fighting for the Philistines, threatened to destroy Israel, young David entered the battle without armor and with only a sling shot for a weapon, sending laughter roaring throughout the enemy camp. The Lord guides those whom He chooses; the hand of the Lord guided the stone straight into the brow of the giant, killing him and bringing victory to Israel. **Again, a little child shall lead them!**

In these three young heroes of the Hebrew Bible we see the priestly, prophetic and kingly roles that would be fulfilled in **Jesus, the Eternal High Priest, the Prophet of all Prophets, and the King of kings and Lord of heaven and earth.** These are the same roles each of us **share in from our youth** when baptized into Christ's death and Resurrection, sharing in His redemptive work for the salvation of souls.

God does not always use those with the most eloquent speech or pleasing appearance to bear His message to the world. The recent movie *"The King's Speech"* can help us understand the difficult call of **Moses**, a stutterer, commanded to confront the Pharaoh and lead God's chosen people out of slavery and on to the Promised Land. **John the Baptist** was probably not a pretty sight, living so long in the desert and the wilderness, but his appearance commanded a sense of repentance, respect and the recognition of holiness and the call to grace. **St. Anthony of Padua**, however, a disciple of St. Francis of Assisi known as the "Wonder Worker," preached so eloquently the Word of God that, even in death, his tongue was preserved. **Mother Teresa of Calcutta** preached far more eloquently with the gospel of her life than ever with her few simple words, but she understood the Divine Indwelling in every person, especially the poorest of the poor. **"Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto Me."** Though these four were not young in age, they certainly accepted the kingdom of God like a child and lived as children of God, formed as such in God's Spirit of Eternal Youth.

The Church that Jesus built on the rock of Peter that has been handed on to us throughout the ages in apostolic succession has enjoyed a host of saints among the young. Tarcisius was an acolyte during the Roman persecutions when Christians met in the catacombs. One day when there was no deacon to take the Eucharist to those in prison soon to die, Tarcisius was sent, but on the way he was attacked by a mob of pagan boys, curious about the "Christian Mystery" Tarcisius was carrying. **St. Tarcisius** refused to release the Eucharist into their vile hands and was beaten so

badly he died from the wounds; he was only 12. He is called a “**patron saint of altar boys,**” and a “**martyr of the Eucharist.**” **St. Agnes**, a Roman girl of 13 who was very beautiful and had many suitors, scorned them all as she had **chosen Jesus Christ as her Spouse and promised never to stain her purity.** The governor’s son, angered by her rebuffs, reported her to the governor as a Christian. She was imprisoned and then sentenced to death when she refused to deny her God. **She feared sin more than she feared death.** And there is **St. Philomena**, a young Greek princess of the 4th century. Little is known of her life except from visions of a nun, but her remains were discovered in the 19th century. Stones on the tomb indicate she was a virgin-martyr. She is the only person recognized as a **saint solely on the basis of miraculous intercession** as nothing historical is known of her martyrdom. St. John Vianney attributes many miraculous cures attributed to him as really due to her intercession.

Dominic Savio (1842-1857), a student of St. John Bosco studying for the priesthood, became ill and died at age 14. Dominic was canonized in 1954 by Pope Pius XII, one of only a few teen saints canonized as non-martyrs. He was described “**as small in size, but a towering giant in spirit**” because of the exemplary holiness of his short life. **Maria Goretti** (1890-1902), was an Italian virgin-martyr who preserved her purity, choosing **death rather than submit to rape** by a 20 year old farmhand. She died from multiple stab wounds after forgiving the man and praying she would see him in heaven. She is one of the youngest canonized saints. And who of us is not familiar with the **three children of Fatima** and all that they endured to defend “the beautiful lady” who had given them a message from heaven in 1917? Although illiterate and barely old enough to comprehend the meaning of life, they had no problem understanding the importance of **prayer and sacrifice**, no matter how small, in sharing in Christ’s redemption and salvation of souls, and in understanding the importance of the **rosary** in achieving the conversion of Russia and bringing peace to our world. **Jacinta and Francisco Marto**, who died in 1920 and 1919 at ages 9 and 10, were beatified on May 13, 2000 by Pope John Paul II. **Lucia dos Santo**, the third of the children, died in 2005. And isn’t the whole world aware of **St. Therese, the Little Flower of Jesus**, who died of tuberculosis at the age of 24? Her writings, her biography **THE STORY OF A SOUL**, and her doctrine of the “**Little Way of Holiness,**” doing small things and the duties of life with great love, has merited for her the title of **doctor of the Church**. Because of her intense prayers for the missions from behind her convent walls she has become known as “**Patroness of the Missions.**” She has promised to shower roses of blessing from heaven, **spending her heaven doing good upon earth. And the little ones will lead them!**

In a very contemporary vein, what could be more chilling and edifying than the witness of 17 year old **Rachel Joy Scott**, the first person killed in the 1999 Columbine High School shootings. According to video tapes, she was targeted precisely because of her Christian beliefs. And in the Santa Croce Church in

Gerusalemme, Rome which houses the Shroud of Turin and relics of Christ's passion brought there from the Holy Land by St. Helena, lie the remains of **Antonietta Meo** (1930-1937), nicknamed Nennolina. The little girl suffered the amputation of her left leg and died of bone cancer at age 6. She had visions, wrote mystical prayers and dedicated her sufferings to Jesus. At least one healing has been attributed to her intercession and she is on her way to canonization and will be the youngest canonized saint who did not die a martyr's death. Last September 2010 an 18 year old, **Chiara "Luce" Badano** from Italy (1971-1990), a member of the Focolare Movement, was beatified. Previously, in 1988 at a Gen 4 meeting in Rome Chiara had made the decision to take **Jesus-Forsaken as her spouse** and added a new name to her own, "Luce," meaning "light." The bishop promoting her cause said she was an **"incredible witness of faith and strength for the youth of today."** **The children will lead them!**

The Church's life is richly blessed with young saints and saints who understood the way of spiritual childhood, but who can be more suited to our reflection than the three who have given us this awesome message of Our Lady of America® and the Divine Indwelling in every human person: **Our Lady herself, Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, and Archbishop Paul F. Leibold.** This message, like Fatima, gives great favor to America and to those who heed its call, while bearing similar warnings that speak to the Church's eschatological dimension. If ever a mission was ordained before the person was born, it was **Mary's**. Hers was fashioned in the Eternal Mind of God and presented to her when she, like the saints just mentioned, was but a teenager about 14 or 15 years old. Her mission was the greatest on earth, next to that of her Divine Son, for she was called to give the very Word of God her own flesh and to mother the Son until His appointed time when she would walk with Him to Calvary and feel every wound that was laid upon His Sacred Body in an agony none but He can fully understand. **She was a martyr of love!** There at the foot of His cross she would become Mother of us all. Her purity would be unparalleled. She would be the epitome of the mystery of the Divine Indwelling in every soul and would show us the splendor of that truth as **"Our Lady of the Divine Indwelling, handmaid of Him Who dwells within.®"** She would be the morning star for the Dawn of our salvation, the new Eve, the Woman of Genesis at the beginning of salvation history in the promise of victory over Satan, and the Woman of Revelation at the end of salvation history with the final triumph of her Immaculate Heart and the everlasting reign of her Divine Son over heaven and earth. Mary's mission is simple; she is Queen and Mother, but more Mother than Queen!

"I am the Mother of the sacred humanity, and it is my special work as co-redemptrix of the human race to help souls reach the sanctity of the Father in eternal union by showing them how to put on Christ, imbibe His Spirit, and thus become one with Him."

“My heart, my Immaculate Heart, is the channel through which the graces of the Sacred Heart are given to men.”

“O child of my Pure Heart, tell my children to come to me and learn this true love of my Son, which is so necessary for their peace of soul. ...But to make your hearts grow more and more like to the Heart of the Son, you must go to the Mother, whose heart is most like His. From this Pure and Immaculate Heart you will learn all that will make you more pleasing to the Divine Heart of the Son of God. The Holy Trinity looks down with infinite delight upon such souls and makes them Its heaven upon earth. Come to me, my children, come to me and learn. There is much I would teach you. It is for your own happiness and eternal salvation. Do not disregard the voice of your Mother. It is the voice of love trying to save you from eternal ruin.”

“My child, God works often through little and humble things and such instruments should never be despised but accepted and used with love and gratitude.” (Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Fostoria, Ohio, Pgs. 24, 18, 16, and 35.)

While Our Lady spoke these last words specifically in regard to the Medallion she gave us with this message, the message itself immerses us in the call to be little and humble before God as were Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil and Archbishop Paul F. Leibold. Our Lady constantly addressed **Sister Mildred** as a **“little one”** and told her she was not being accepted because she was a **“small one”** but in the end all would come about as she, Our Lady, desired. St. Joseph, too, addressed Sister Mildred as a **“small one.”**

“Through you, small one, the Trinity desires to make known to souls Its desire to be adored, honored, and loved within the kingdom, the interior kingdom of their hearts.” (Diary, Pg. 27.)

In a letter to her spiritual director, Father (later Archbishop) Paul F. Leibold, dated August 16, 1956, Sister Mildred wrote these magnificent words:

Pride must be the great sin of our times, or at least one of the great ones, for Our Lord speaks so often about humility.

“My Heart speaks to the humble. It is they who hear My Voice. Be humble My children, be humble and pure of heart. Then will I come and dwell with you.

My little white dove, how humility and simplicity are despised by the proud of this world. Oh what a loss they suffer. For despising the humble Christ will judge them.

By my humility and simplicity of Heart I glorify My Father more than all the Angels and Saints together. So it is that the humble soul glorifies God more than all the great of the world.”

We get a glimpse into the humility of **Father Leibold** in his November 13, 1962 letter to Sister Mildred regarding his attendance at Vatican II.

The Roman experience was of course exceptional—but I do not know when I was ever so glad to get home; you can imagine this little nothing Bishop sitting in the bleachers like a church mouse amazed at the knowledge and erudition of all those mental giants gathered there as they orate day in and day out in Latin. So I was about as useless there as the dust on the rug; I can do the council a lot more good here at home praying for it and doing the ordinary priestly work of which I am somewhat capable.

In a May 16, 1966 letter he spoke of not feeling fitted for his new position as Bishop of Evansville, Indiana.

...but really it does not frighten me, for who can be afraid when they have prayers like yours behind them and have as certain a knowledge as is possible here on earth, that he is doing what God wants him to do. ... I have purchased a little house next to Christ the King Rectory in Evansville, so I will be part of a parish set up and not isolated in some ivory tower. I will live there and help in the parish, every day I will go downtown to the Chancery to work in the office there. ...After I live in the house a while I can remodel it a bit for a chapel and other things; but it will be humble and simple.

When we read Sister Mildred's letters, we are touched with the times Our Lady smiled and waited for Sister to finish the duties of her life, for therein lies **the will of God which must be dearer to us than life itself**. On this point we offer the wisdom of Father Leibold as recounted in a November 8, 1963 letter to Sister.

...how prone those who CLAIM to be seeking perfection are to looking for the extraordinary to do and at the same time complaining about and not accepting the ordinary. The basic principle is: perfection is in doing God's will; God's will is clearly expressed with no doubt in the ordinary things of daily life; when it comes to choosing the extraordinary one is always faced with the doubt, is this God's or my will acting. That is such a simple and basic principle, yet it seems impossible to get it over to souls—we have all kinds of phoney saints who say all sorts of prayers (because THEY like to do it) and then gripe because the gal next to them blows her nose loudly, etc. etc. which is very clearly God's will. Forget the hair shirts and keep the rule, forget the sensational and do the ordinary sensationally well, stop looking for the extraordinary and accept the ordinary—this is God's plan of sanctity!

There are no finer words than those of Our Lord to Sister Mildred that speak to this same exhortation to humility and simplicity of life and that addresses **the mission**

of these two small ones in bringing the awesome message of Our Lady of America® to our Church and to our world for the salvation of souls.

“My little white dove, tell your spiritual Father, him whom I have placed over you, to guide and direct you, tell him that My Heart is pleased with his efforts to make Me loved. I will bless him and make his work fruitful on behalf of all the souls entrusted to his care and priestly ministrations. Tell him if he would please Me more, to double his efforts in making known the love of My Heart for poor sinners. I ask of him what I continue to ask of you, oh bride of My Heart—prayers and penance. As a priest after My own Heart, I will be with him in all his trials and sorrows. Tell him not to become discouraged at the crosses awaiting him for I, the great High Priest, go before him carrying the heaviest part of his cross.



*Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil
2 Aug 1916 - 10 Jan 2000*



I seek always the humble and lowly of heart and since I have found two such, so I have entrusted to them a great mission, **but become not vain, for I have chosen him and you only because of your unworthiness and lack of virtue. Let this thought be with you always, that you may remember that it is I working through you, Who sanctify you for His [the Father's] glory and the salvation of your souls. You are poor instruments in My hands, but through you a Great Work will be accomplished. I am the Great Sculptor of souls. With hammer and chisel I form them that they may glorify My Father by their beauty and perfection. Be pliant in My Hands, oh My two lowly ones, My chosen priest and My little white dove, and then will you be formed into My likeness and through you I will be formed in souls.”**

**“... the humble soul glorifies God more than all the great of the world.”
His two lowly ones, His chosen priest and His little white dove, shall lead us!**

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