



The Armor of Faith
Topic Summary: Saints of Inspiration
Part VII: Saint of Babies, Infants, and Youth



Saint Philomena
Public Domain

Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Helen is a lay-Dominican with a love for music ministry. The Dominicans, I always mention, are also known as the Order of Preachers. Sharon, in addition to being my lovely wife as well as a wonderful blessing in my life, is a youth and adult formation catechist. We are also blessed to have on our panel, Donna Mae, who is the artist who sculpted the statue of Our Lady of America which was carried by our youth and blessed by Saint John Paul II at the 1993 World Youth Day.

Of course, as everyone knows by now, I am simply here to ask questions because what would a discussion be without questions? I'm sure our panelists have some snappy answers to that one, so I'm thinking we better move on quickly here. Anyway, the hard part we leave to our panelists, which is to answer my questions, correct my pronunciation, and make sure I know which century I am talking about, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

Dear Lord, we also lift up the prayers in our prayer basket. You know what is written on each one and you know the hearts of those who offer their thanks and praise as well as their petitions for the blessings of Your great mercy.

We pray especially today for our good shepherds. Dear Lord, we are in such desperate need of them and they are so few. We pray You will protect them and increase their number so that more hearts may be opened towards You.

We pray also, dear Lord, for all our children. Guide us in the ways we may protect their innocence as well as keep them from harm, whether they are in the womb, in our arms, or walking the journey of faith with us.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

If you would like to add your prayers to our prayer basket, all you need to do is send us an email at armoroffaithradio@gmail.com. We ask that you include the word “prayer” in the subject line so that we will give it priority and ensure we place it in our prayer basket. Just so you know, Sharon and I lift up our prayers with those in the Armor of Faith Radio prayer basket during the course of our daily prayers.

We would also like to ask you to assist Armor of Faith Radio in our evangelization. By sharing the URL for our show, you can help us spread knowledge of our faith. All you need to do is share the URL, wcatradio.com/armoroffaith via email or social media and tell family and friends as well. Several of the streaming services through which we are available on demand also have share options, so we invite you to join the evangelization and help us spread the good news of the Gospel and our trust in Jesus Christ. You can also help us by selecting the follow or subscribe option associated with the service through which you listen to our show.

Current Day Commentary:

The Spiritual Weapons of Humility, Civility, Dignity, and Respect

During our series on Spiritual Warfare, episodes 157 – 172, we talked about the spiritual weapon of prayer. I also mentioned the spiritual weapons of humility, civility, dignity, and respect. Of course, some may ask, how can these behaviors be weapons?

According to our friends Merriam-Webster the definition of a weapon is:

- 1 : something (such as a club, knife, or gun) used to injure, defeat, or destroy
 - 2 : a means of contending against another
- (Merriam-Webster)

The spiritual weapons of humility, civility, dignity, and respect fit in the category of, “a means of contending against another.” In this contention, we are not seeking the destruction of our adversaries, rather, we are called to pray for them.

(Matthew 5:43-48)

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, **love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,** 45 that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. 46 For **if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same?** 47 And **if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same?** 48 So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

In Luke 6:27-28 we are told:

(Luke 6:27-28)

27 “But to you who hear I say, **love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.**

Humility is often confused with weakness, but the humble are not weak. It requires more strength and courage of those who exercise humility than those who rely on force and intimidation to enforce their arrogance or self-perception of superiority. The humble do not assume superiority over others, but that does not mean that they must be silent in word and deed. There is a difference between raising awareness of what is right and just, and imposing belief, especially belief in falsehoods. We are called to share the good news of the Gospel, but when we impose a belief, we decide for another. What purpose is faith if it is not of our own decision? The nature of freewill is that each individual must discern for themselves. Still, we are called to help others find the path of truth from our own experiences and testimonies. We cannot remain silent.

There is a difference between imposition of belief and encouragement to believe. To “impose,” the full range of violence, hostility, and deception is within the arsenal. To encourage requires approaching another with something different; humility, civility, dignity, and respect. This form of engagement is clearly more difficult and requires far more effort, but as we engage, our demeanor speaks as loud as our words. For this reason, we must be careful that we do not give into the temptation to employ the same tactics as the propagandists or the agitators.

It is for this reason why we are reminded in 1 Peter 3:8-17 as to the Christian conduct to which we are called. If we answer insult with insult and return evil for evil, we simply become a different shade of our adversary. If we remain ready to give an explanation of our hope and minister to those who surround us, we present ourselves as an example of our faith.

Let us not fall to the temptation of the propagandists and agitators and resort to insults and angry retorts, for this is the ground where the evil one loves to play. He loves for emotions to be stirred, which is not always bad, but when emotions are running high, the quality of communication, analysis, problems solving, and decision making suffer. Still, this does not mean that we do not confront lies or leave truth silent. Perhaps the best example of the call to this responsibility is Saint Paul's charge to Timothy.

(Timothy 4:1-5)

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and

the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: 2 proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. 3 For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers 4 and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. 5 But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry.

Let us, then, heed these words and allow them to lead us. Let us consider the responsibility to which our Lord calls us. Let us endeavor to share the sanctity of life, marriage, and family. Let us point out and share the beauty of God's design. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in our decisions and our endeavors so that we may help accomplish the will of God, which a certain saint reminds us is love and mercy itself.

Why Catholics Do What We Do:

Catholic Definitions – Part XX: Triduum

We are quickly coming to the end of the Lenten Season. This coming Sunday is Palm Sunday and that is the beginning of Holy Week. So let us take a look at Easter and what this means to the Catholic Church.

Easter is the most important day of the entire year for the Catholic Church. On this day we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. It was on this day He opened the gates of Heaven so that all who are children of God and living according to His desire may enter and enjoy eternal living.

During the next two weeks, much will be going on in every Catholic Church around the world. We begin with Palm Sunday on which we recall the day Jesus rode a donkey into town and was greeted by hundreds of followers who waved palm branches at him as a sign of respect and welcome. In our churches, we too will receive palm branches to remind us of His coming passion.

On Holy Thursday we begin what is called the *Triduum*. *Triduum* is Latin and means three days. Beginning at sundown on the Thursday before Easter, until sundown on Saturday, we recall the events in the passion of Jesus. Oh yes, this also marks the official end of Lent.

On Thursday we recall the last supper, which is also known as the Passover Feast. During this feast, Jesus washed the feet of the Apostles and instituted the priesthood. During the meal He established the sacrament of Holy Communion when He broke bread and told the Apostles to do this in His memory.

Friday as we know it is Good Friday. This day is known around the world by other names such as Holy Friday, Great Friday, Great and Holy Friday, and Black Friday. On this day we remember how Jesus was scourged, crowned with thorns, carried His cross, was crucified and died.

OK, so if this was a day of torture and death, why is it called “Good Friday” when such a horrible thing was done? Well, it is called “good” because on this day we learned how much our Good God loves us. On this day Jesus took on all the sins of the world in order that we might be allowed into Heaven. His Good actions, allowed us to receive His Good love.

And then we come to Holy Saturday. During the morning and afternoon of this day, the people of the churches around the world will be decorating for the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Masses. These are the most powerful and faith filled days of the year.

At sundown on Saturday, those who have been learning about the Catholic faith will be brought into the Church by receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Communion. This night is very long and very ceremonial. If you have never participated in an Easter Vigil Mass, please do so. Yes, it is long, but it is also the most spirit filled Mass you will ever experience. If you are in need of uplifting after all the COVID-19 lock downs, this is the time to get renewed.

On Sunday morning, we find ourselves in glorious emotions as we celebrate in a very awesome way, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lent has now passed, the passion has been remembered, the death and descent into hell has happened, the resurrection has been completed and Jesus is now back in Heaven in eternal glory with His Father.

Next time we will talk further about the Easter Vigil and moving into the Easter Season.

Have a wonderful week and as Lent is coming to an end, may we all try to spend a little more time with Jesus and recall all that He did for our salvation. Without Him, without His suffering and dying, we would not have the ability to make it to Heaven. May His passion be ours and may we all strive to do His will.

Have a blessed week All. Remember, you are loved dearly by God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and yes, by us as well.

If you would like to learn more about the Catholic meaning of “*Triduum*” we invite you to follow the links in the reference section of the topic summary for this episode. You can obtain the topic summary by visiting <https://wcatradio.com/armoroffaithstudyguides/> and select episode 191.

Discussion:

As we concluded our last discussion, I mentioned that during episodes 152 and 155, we discussed the example Saint Joseph provides to the vocation of fatherhood. We were also blessed during episode 155 to be joined by Father Donald Calloway who wrote a very extensive examination of this saint of fathers. The title of the book is Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father. It is available for purchase through the website, www.consecrationtostjoseph.org or you can also visit www.fathercalloway.com It is a very worthwhile read, especially during this proclaimed year of Saint Joseph.

The focus of our discussion was about the example Saint Joseph set for fathers as providers and protectors of the family. I confessed that as I prepared for the last episode, I suddenly came to the realization that God chose Saint Joseph, not just to be a foster father to His only begotten Son, but His protector when the child was the most vulnerable in human form. We must think of this for a moment, what our Heavenly Father entrusted to Joseph was the treasure of our salvation; Jesus Christ. As we discussed during the last episode, Jesus was obedient to Mary and Joseph, but He could not be so if they were not first obedient to our Heavenly Father.

As we reflect on this, especially for those of us in the vocation of fatherhood, we must ask ourselves, what has God entrusted to our hands? The souls who are our children are depending upon us to raise them, just as we depended upon our parents. We must ask ourselves, what are we going to do to protect the salvation of our children? How will we prepare them to stand firm against the tactics of the devil? If we are in doubt as to the responsibility God has placed in our hands, then, let us ask Saint Joseph to touch our hearts. Let us look over our children, these precious gifts of God, and commit ourselves to provide for them, to protect them, love them, and prepare them with the blessings of the fullness of our faith so that as our children prepare to assume their vocation, they are also prepared to assume their role to help accomplish the will of God, which, I think I mentioned last time, a certain saint reminds us is love and mercy itself.

Today, our discussion turns to the saint of babies, infants, and youth; Saint Philomena. We have a bit of a challenge here, in that little is known about Saint Philomena. Her remains indicate she was about 12 to 14 years of age when she was martyred. The reason she was identified as a martyr is the inscriptions and symbols found on the tiles sealing the sarcophagus in the catacombs where her remains were found and where they had rested for up to 1,700 years. Considering her remains were discovered on 24 May 1802, the subsequent dating would place her as a member of the early church. (O'Sullivan)

In most cases, we look to the lives of the saints as examples for us. The discovery of this saint did not come from the accounts of her life, rather from the miracles associated with her relics after discovery of her sarcophagus in the Catacombs. The miracles attributed to association with the relics are far too numerous to address here, but we should note there were a number of healings and conversions.

(Question 1: This raises an interesting question. How can we draw inspiration from a saint when we have no historical account of their life?)

- When we experience a miracle or hear testimony of a miracle, we must ask, to what is God drawing our attention?
- Miracles offer examples of hope
 - ➔ Conversion
 - ➔ Healing
 - ➔ Answers to prayer
 - ➔ Lifting of suffering
- Miracles reveal the fingerprints of God
- No miracle is possible unless allowed by God

The only historical record we really have of Saint Philomena are her bones and the clay tiles which were used to seal her sarcophagus. The symbols on the tiles include an anchor, often seen as a symbol of martyrdom as anchors were tied to the necks of confessors to drown them. It also includes two arrows, which perhaps indicate the method of a martyr's death. There was a lance, which may have a similar indication as the arrows. There was also a palm branch, interpreted as a symbol of a martyr's triumph as well as a lily, a symbol of purity. (O'Sullivan, 4)

It is certain, that with all the talk generated by the recounting of the miracles associated with the relics of Saint Philomena, that all these facts were known abroad, which probably instigated some considerable speculation as to their meaning. Any number of stories and explanations could be deduced, but they would be guesses at best.

Still, three people, unknown to each other and living in different parts of the world, said they received locutions which revealed to them the life and nature of Saint Philomena's martyrdom. Each account was practically identical. The private revelations also explain the meaning of the symbols found on the tiles of the little saint's sarcophagus.

According to the revelations, the parents of Saint Philomena were unable to have children until they met a Christian physician. After their conversion and prayer, they conceived Philomena (which means, daughter of light). Her father was a Greek king of a small kingdom which was being threatened by Rome. During diplomatic efforts for peace, the Roman Emperor said he would spare the kingdom if Philomena was given to him in marriage.

Philomena informed her parents she could not enter into this arrangement as she had vowed herself to Jesus. Her parents tried to convince Philomena that she was not bound by this vow, for at the age of eleven, she was not of sufficient maturity. Philomena, emboldened by the Holy Spirit, remained true to her commitment to Jesus. The Emperor was furious at the refusal and ordered various tortures of Philomena, to include throwing her into the Tiber with an anchor fastened to ensure her drowning (remember the symbol of the anchor) and ordering her shot with arrows (remember the arrow symbols).

During these tortures, Philomena received the ministry of angels who healed her of her wounds. Eventually, the Emperor had her beheaded for refusing his hand. (O'Sullivan, 37-39)

(Question 2: Of course, given our limited time, this is a very short summary. What might we learn about Saint Philomena from this brief account and what inspiration might we receive?)

- Commitment to Jesus
- Commitment to faith
- Commitment to purity
- Courage
- Strength
- Heavenly assistance

While researching Saint Philomena, I found she was consistently referred to as the patron saint of babies, infants, youth, and desperate causes. Depending on the source, though, the list of her patronage is much longer. As I looked at the various summaries about her, curiously, I did not find the explanation as to the reason she is associated with such causes. The miracles attributed to her are broad and the beneficiaries of these miracles represent a wide spectrum as well.

(Question 3: I suspect some of the patronage is attributed as a result of the revelations about her life while others are attributed as a result of the kinds of miracles attributed to her intercession. As we consider the causes of babies, infants, youth, and desperate causes, to what may this patronage draw our attention?)

- The vulnerability of youth
- The vulnerability of the ill and afflicted
- The vulnerability of those beset by troubles and adversaries
- No matter our station or vocation, we may find ourselves among the vulnerable
- We may ask for help for others
- We may ask for help for ourselves
- Her youthful martyrdom is an example of the strength, courage, faith, and purity we all may possess as we live our faith

(1 Timothy 4:12)

12 Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.

As we mentioned earlier, the accounts of conversion are too numerous for us to list here today, but I wanted to share one story. The story is of a man who had not been to Mass since his First Communion and professed he did not believe in miracles. He reluctantly accepted the invitation of a friend to attend Mass, though he expressed he would prefer to do almost anything else. During the moments at Mass, the man felt a gaze to his heart, but subsequently bent his head and covered his face; perhaps to avoid the gaze, but also perhaps in shame. After the Mass, the man found himself talking with the priest. The man gave the following account of the moment:

I felt myself again beneath that gaze that seemed to crush me. I blurted out a few confused words: ‘Reverend Father, I have a burden on my shoulders that weighs me down.’ Then I heard what seemed an angelic voice, such a one as I had never heard before, so sweet that it did not seem to proceed from mortal man.

“‘You must get rid of the burden at once. Go on your knees, tell me your poor life. Our Lord will take the burden, my friend.’ Then I commenced my Confession, it was the story of all my life since my First Communion. Little by little, I felt relieved, then consoled, and finally completely at rest. When I had finished, the saintly priest added: ‘Come back tomorrow, but now you will go to the altar of Saint Philomena and tell her to ask of God your conversion.’ I did not weep in the sacristy, but I confess that I wept abundantly at the altar of Saint Philomena.’” (O’Sullivan, 25)

(Question 4: Again, this is a brief account. **What might we observe from this reluctant conversion?)**

- It began with an invitation by a friend
 - It continued with the experience of the Mass
 - It continued with the encouraging words of the priest
 - The priest encouraged giving the burden over to Christ
 - The priest encouraged the man to invite the intercession of Saint Philomena
 - The conversion was deep and profound
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If you remember, during episode 186, we mentioned that Saint Kolbe looked to the inspiration of Saint Theresa of Lisieux and became a saint himself. While we know little of the life of Saint Philomena, several of her devotees became canonized. These included Saint John Vianney, Saint Anthony Mary Claret, Saint Padre Pio, Saint Euphrasia Pelletier, Saint Francis Xavier Cabrini, Saint John Neumann, Saint Madeline Sophie Barat, Saint Peter Chanel, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, and Venerable Pauline Jaricot. (Cunningham)

(Question 5: I'm sure there are many like me that when we talk of saints, we believe we are talking of something which is special to the saint, but beyond us. Perhaps some of the saints I just mentioned felt the same way, but by venerating a saint, they found themselves walking the path of sainthood themselves. **What might happen to us should we look to a saint for inspiration?)**

- We cannot observe something without being influenced by the experience
 - We may learn lessons which may influence our decisions and actions
 - We may observe a path to courage
 - We may observe a path to strength
 - We may observe a path to what is right and just
 - We may observe a path to sharing the blessings of living the fullness of our faith
 - We may not be perfect, but we may find ourselves walking in a better direction
 - We may find ourselves walking with the saints to the Sacred Heart of our Lord
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For a novena in honor of Saint Philomena, visit novenaprayer.com and search for Saint Philomena. <https://novenaprayer.com/?s=Philomena>

Feastday: 11 August

Patron: Babies, infants, youth, and desperate causes

Death: Unknown

Canonized by: Pope Gregory XVI

Quotes:

– *Pope Gregory XVI*

Pray to Saint Philomena, What ever you ask from her, She will obtain for you.

– *Father O'Sullivan, O.P.*

The Saints whose intercession we invoke are servants of God renowned for remarkable sanctity and purity of life, and the Church rightly teaches that these great friends of God can, by their prayers and merits, obtain for us graces which we should not otherwise receive.

– *Saint Theresa of Lisieux*

When I die, I will send down a shower of roses from the heavens, I will spend my heaven by doing good on earth.

Final Thoughts:

I must point out that while several Popes advanced the cause of Saint Philomena, the Sacred Congregation of Rites, during the time of Pope John XXIII, removed her from the liturgical calendar. This was largely due to the lack of historical evidence as to the life and works of the young saint. She essentially did not fit the mold for canonization, of which there was not a specified process when her remains were discovered. (Cunningham)

Regardless of the controversy, the testimonies as to the miracles attributed to the intercessions of Saint Philomena remain. While removed from the liturgical calendar, the Church still allows private devotion. When we consider our personal relationship with a saint, we should also look for the Holy Spirit to be our guide as we discern.

The inspiration we take from Saint Philomena is partially from the private revelations about her as well as the miracles attributed to her intercession. What they mean to each of us individually must be discerned.

As we look at our current day, we can point to any number of desperate causes. We can also point to the assault upon the sanctity of life and the innocence of our children. Popes and saints have called upon the intercession of Saint Philomena, therefore, I do not think we are in bad company should we do the same. We must remember, this youthful saint has no power unless granted to her by God. Let us pray that through her intercession we will find the means to protect the innocence of our children, enable the sanctity of life, and enable our children to resist the tactics of the devil. Let us allow the saints to help amplify our prayers.

There is so much more we could share about the saint of babies, infants, and youth, but again, we have so little time. If you would like to learn more about Saint Philomena, we invite you to follow the links in the reference section of the topic summary for this show. You can obtain the topic summary by visiting <https://wcatradio.com/armoroffaithstudyguides/> and look for episode 191.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has once more come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next time as we turn our discussion to the Saint of Lost Boys.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to share the blessings of our trust and faith in You. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path.

And let us share the Flame of Love Prayer:

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
spread the effect of grace of thy Flame of Love over all of humanity,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Saints of Inspiration – Part VIII: Saint of Lost Boys

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