

Roman Mazierski

*The Holy Spirit Leads His People
Into the Light Out of the Darkness*

The questions I am always asked is, “How did it happen that you have turned to the Lord and become a Bible believer, after having been a Roman Catholic priest for many years? Did you read any Protestant books? Did you approach a Protestant pastor to seek his guidance? Or was it that you went to a Protestant meeting during which you became converted?” Protestant people ask me such questions very often, and I must give them always the same answer, “No, I never did any of those things before my conversion, simply because they are forbidden to the members of the Roman Catholic Church to which I always tried to be very loyal and sincere.” “So, how did it happen that you turned to the Lord?” they persistently ask. I say quite frankly, “I did not turn to Him; it was the Lord who turned to me, and in His infinite mercy liberated me from the spiritual captivity in which I was kept since the early days of my childhood.”

My Childhood

I was born in Poland, an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country. About 92 per cent of her population belongs at least formally to that church, so I was born into a pure Roman Catholic family. As a seven-year-old boy, I started to attend a primary school where, besides the ordinary subjects, we were taught by a priest religious instruction, i.e., some stories from the Old and New Testaments along with many definitions from Catechism. Since that time, two desires started in my little heart, (1) to come nearer to Jesus and (2) to acquire a better knowledge about God. It was like hearing the call of the Lord in my heart, although at that time I did not realize that it was really His call and still less how I could possibly answer and fulfill it. I could not look for direction in the Word of God because we had no Bibles. Neither children nor grown-ups were encouraged to acquire them, on the contrary, an opinion was spread by higher clergy that to read the Bible was a dangerous thing, as it contained the seeds of various heresies, only the Church being able to discern and choose from it what was sound enough to be read from the pulpits during the Sunday services. Every Sunday we were led by teachers from school to attend the mass in the nearby church, of which we did not understand a word, because it was in Latin. So the heart remained hungry and thirsty for God and His truth for many years.

My First Communion

During those school years under Roman Catholicism, children, however, have at least one moment when they are supposed to be brought very near to Jesus. It is the solemn moment of their first Communion. Unfortunately, that moment left me with a bitter disappointment. Why? Before those little children of 8 and 9 years of age are admitted to their first

Communion, they must go to their first confessions of sins, and to perform it properly they are subjects of a long and careful preparation. During the six months period of preparation for our first Confession and Communion, our priest did not endeavor to fill our young hearts with trust and love toward Jesus, but was anxious rather to fill them with fear and terror by reminding us again and again that we must confess all our “mortal” sins to the priests in confessionals, because if we did not, we would commit a sacrilege and be condemned to Hell forever. It was certainly quite all right as contained in the Roman Catholic theology on confession, but all the same, it was, and still is, a terrible thing to impose upon the subtle minds of little children such a cruel doctrine, able to break their hearts and dominate them by terror for their whole lives. The result was that we forgot everything about our expected meeting with Jesus and concentrated entirely upon the difficult task to recollect all our sins (as it was very difficult for us to be sure which was a mortal one and which was not!), and then to try not to forget any of them. It was a real torture of minds, all the time dominated by fear of eternal damnation.

Some of the children were asking their parents to help them to recollect their sins, some other ones were spending hours while writing down long, very long lists of their transgressions, and then tried to learn them by heart, but all the same the fear remained that something might be forgotten at the decisive moment of the Confession. So, some of us used to take those lists of sins to the church and while kneeling at the confessionals tried to read furtively from them to the priest, trembling from fear because it was forbidden. And this fear remained in many hearts for all their lifetimes, weakening and paralyzing their wills until they became completely enslaved under the spiritual dictatorship of their church and clergy. It was enough for them to be told to obey only the Church instead of their own conscience, not to attend any “heretic” meetings where the pure Gospel was preached, not even to think about leaving their Church, for which they would be excommunicated and consequently condemned to Hell. It was enough to completely break children’s hearts and to drive these children into physical diseases for all their lives! I have seen such victims of this religious terror and was deeply shocked by them.

I Train for the Priesthood

After having finished my primary and higher schools, I had to decide about my career. I still thought I heard the voice of the Lord calling me to come to Him, and I felt in my heart the desire to devote all my life to Him. But how could I do it? I was always taught that the only way to Him was through His only true Church, i.e., the Roman Catholic Church. So, I did not see any way of answering His call other than becoming a priest in this one true Church. All other churches were regarded as untrue, heretical, and anti-Christ. I truly believed this. According to my decision, I enlisted as a student under the theological faculty at Lwów University. As students of theology, we were obliged to live in the seminary, which was very much like a monastery, situated upon a hill, surrounded by high walls, with its small cells and long corridors. At first, I felt very happy there. Everything seemed so different from the outside world and destined to bring us very soon into a personal union with our God and Savior. Our lives were now devoted to two main things: devotions and the study of theology. Both seemed designed to bring one to personal union with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. So, with all the zeal and eagerness of a young man, I threw myself into the accomplishment of all the devotions as the Church prescribed them. Every day I attended one or two masses, went each morning to the Communion, and once a week to Confession. With utmost care, I did all my daily meditations, religious readings, and prayers; attended the

evening services, prayed the Rosary, and the Litanies; read many books describing lives of canonized saints, and honestly tried to imitate them; and soon I was regarded as one of the most devoted students in the seminary. But all those efforts and “merits” did not bring me any nearer to my Savior. It was a disappointing experience, but there has been one man who tried the same way before—the Apostle Paul, who, before his conversion, being still a faithful Pharisee, tried to attain his own righteousness by his own efforts, to fulfill all the prescribed rules of the Law according to what he was taught by the Rabbis, but it did not bring him into unity with God, and he simply confesses that he failed (Phil. 3). So did I!

Ceremonies of the Church are External

Regularly, all theological students (called “Clerics”) had to attend long but beautiful liturgies at the cathedral of the town, where they were conducted either by the Archbishop or Bishop, assisted by many clergy wearing their silver and golden robes glittering with precious stones. The high altar—adorned with beautiful flowers and shining with a multitude of candles and electric lights, the fumes of fragrant incense, slow and precise movements of the celebrating clergy, their singing to the medieval Gregorian tunes, all that—created sort of a mystical atmosphere to such an extent that the church seemed to many a simple soul as an ante-room of Heaven. But gradually, I found out that those beautiful and attractive ceremonies of the Church were merely external things; behind them there was no Spirit at all. I was horrified they were often performed in such a manner by priests. It was not difficult to realize that they themselves did not believe in what they were doing. Often, during those solemn liturgies at the Cathedral, the higher clergy used to whisper to each other, relating some jokes, or making fun about some part(s) of the sacred functions they were performing. Sometimes they were celebrating in a hurry, like some officials wanting to quickly finish their jobs in order to close their files. How often it reminded me of the bitter complaint the Lord put into the lips of His prophet: “*This people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me*” (Isaiah 29: 13). I shuddered at the very thought that some time in the future I might become like one of them—as one of our greatest Polish poets wrote: “*Without a heart and without a spirit, behold the people of skeletons!*” (A. Mickiewicz)

Interview with My “Spiritual Father”

Theology is defined as “science about God,” and so to acquire this science we attended the lectures of the best priest-professors at the local university. It was in connection with studies on the Old and New Testaments that at last, and for the first time in our lives, we had to read and study the Bible. Our professors commented upon passages of the Scriptures, and the Bible we used was the “approved” edition and it provided notes on nearly every page, i.e., official Church explanations. None were allowed to read the Word of God without those “notes” in order to prevent them from understanding it any other way than was intended by the Church. Before long it became evident to me that those notes were treatment to obscure the simple meaning of the Word of God, and sometimes they were quite contradictory to it. I started to fall into some doubts and came to the conclusion that something somewhere must be wrong. I tried to find the right solution from a study of the official Church doctrines, so-called “dogmata,” only to discover that a number of them were not based upon the Word of God, and some were quite contradictory to it. Something really seemed to be wrong! But what, and where? Worried by such doubts in my conscience, I went to see our “spiritual

Father,” who was a specially appointed priest to guide and advise us in our spiritual difficulties. After listening carefully to what I had to say, he gave me the following answer, “You know that there cannot be anything wrong in the teaching of our Church, as she is the only true Church of Jesus Christ upon this earth. If there is anything wrong, it is your conscience, in which you, being a young man, rebel against the authority of the Church. This is a sort of spiritual temptation which often besets young students of theology.” Then he advised me not to worry and not to try to find solutions to my doubts, but rather I forget about them.

My Spiritual Struggle

Following this advice, I honestly tried not to think any more about my doubts, to forget them. Many times I fought against the voice of my conscience, which continued to warn me that something *was* wrong, but the voice never succeeded for long. My spiritual struggle continued all the time throughout my theological studies, until after having passed all the required examinations. The time of our ordination arrived. I had a very difficult decision to make. Still in doubts and feeling that something *was* wrong, I wondered whether to accept ordination as a priest or rather to withdraw. Not wanting to rely upon my own feelings, I went to see one of the most devoted and experienced priest in the town, and after opening my heart to him I asked him what I should do. His answer was, “There is no reason at all for you to withdraw from ordination. Everybody has some doubts about the doctrines of our Church, but these are not sinful as long as you fight against them and try to get rid of them. Anyway, after you are ordained a priest, the Archbishop will soon send you and your colleagues to your places of work in parishes, and you will have so much to do there that you will have no time to think about your doubts any more.” This advice reassured me, and I accepted ordination and became a priest.

My First Parish

Only about a fortnight afterwards, I received from the Archbishop’s Chancellery my first appointment as a curate to a vicar in a small town in the southeastern part of Poland. My vicar apparently considered me too young and too inexperienced to work in the town and entrusted me with the spiritual care of country people in some twelve villages belonging to the same parish. I found those poor peasants poorly educated but very simple souls devoted to their Church and, above all, anxious to secure by all means their own salvation. I felt compassion for them and their children because of their simplicity in believing whatever they were told by their priests, whom, with the utmost reverence, they were taught to regard as mediators between God and themselves and as representatives of Jesus Christ. It was pathetic and shocking to see how the priests used to take advantage of their position, not only by teaching all sorts of medieval superstitions but—using the means of terror of Hell to enslave those souls—making material profits from their credulity.

My Aim—Keep Close to the Gospels

This was certainly not the way Jesus used to deal with the multitudes that came to Him. He has led me to try to follow His example by filling my heart with compassion for them, “because they were scattered abroad like sheep having no shepherd,” and dominated by

hirelings. I thought it was He that inspired me with great enthusiasm for that work and I believed that it was His guidance that helped me to decide through my teaching and preaching to keep as close as possible to His Gospels. I felt that whatever was wrong, there could not be anything wrong with His Gospels. His example has also shown me how to avoid filling with fear and terror anyone to whom I gave religious instruction, and especially little children, showing them Jesus as their loving Friend whom they had no need to be afraid of, according to His words: “*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God*” (Luke 18:16).

All I Could Do Was...Pray!

Sometimes, I really felt like bringing those simple souls, which were entrusted to me, near to the Savior, but I myself was still far from Him. I was on the wrong way and unable to find the right one leading to Him. So, there remained only one thing I certainly was able to do—it was to pray. I used to lock myself up in the empty church, either in the afternoon while there was nobody in, or late in the evening. I would fall to my knees to cry to the Lord, “Oh, God! Show me the way out of this darkness to Thee! Tell me what is wrong and what is right!”

Beams of Light

So I prayed, year after year, apparently without any visible change, and my spiritual struggle continued. However, I thought from time to time the merciful Lord was giving me some proofs that He listened to my prayers. Now and again, it seemed like He was throwing beams of light into the darkness of my soul, and in this light I was able to discern quite clearly what was right, because it was based upon the firm rock of His own Word. I also saw what was *wrong* because it was built only upon the shifting sand of human doctrines and traditions. In that light the whole system and spirit of the Church stood condemned by the judgment of God. It will be easier to understand what I mean by those enlightenments if I give some examples of them.

A Religion of Fear

Once, a poor countrywoman came to me bringing her 16-year-old daughter. Weeping, she complained to me about the girl, “Something has happened to my daughter. She used to be quite a happy girl, but now she does not speak about anything except Hell, and she maintains that she is already condemned to Hell.” As I had never heard anything like that before, I looked in astonishment at the face of the girl. She was very pale, and her eyes look wildly insane. Was she obsessed? I asked her one or two questions, but she did not answer them; instead, with a weird smile, she started to relate to me something about Hell. She was fortunate that she did not live in the Middle Ages, because then she would have been burned at a stake as a witch. But what now? I turned to her mother and asked her, “What do you think about this? When and how did this start?” At first she did not want to tell me her opinion; later on I realized why. She was afraid that she might provoke me to anger as a priest. But when I stressed that I could not help her without knowing all about it, she, hesitatingly at first, told me the whole story. “Several months before you started to work in our parish, there came some monks to our church and arranged a big mission. For a fortnight our parish church was crowded every morning and evening with people who came not only

from the town but also from distant villages to listen to the mission messages. My daughter attended all those services and listened anxiously to every sermon. But those monks preached mostly about Hell, which is prepared for sinners. When they were leaving, my daughter bought a missionary book from them, and she used to read it every day. But this book is also full of stories about eternal damnation and Hell.” She finished her tragic story in tears, and now I knew what happened. Her daughter must have been a really honest girl, because she came to the conviction that she was a sinner. But then she heard the monks—who must have looked to her like saints from heaven—proclaiming Hell for sinners and describing all sorts of torments awaiting them there. So, she finally came to the conclusion that being a sinner she was already condemned to Hell, and the missionary book, approved by a Bishop, confirmed her in this dreadful thought. What a spiritual torture she must have gone through before she developed that weird, insane smile! Now, there she stood, one of many victims of the system of terror applied by the Church I was representing in ministry. I felt like a defendant accused of being an accomplice in those cruelties, unless I did something to heal the wounds inflicted by a spiritual inquisition. I was so shocked that I immediately told the woman, “Take your daughter home, and the first thing you will do after coming home will be to throw that missionary book into the fire, to burn it completely in order to prevent your child reading it any more. Afterwards, take her to the nearest big town and place her into a special hospital for mental diseases, and tell the doctors all you have told me. She will probably be kept there for some time, during which we must pray for her recovery.” They went away, and I remembered to pray for the girl.

Months passed, till one day the same woman came again with her girl to thank me for all the advice I gave her. “I did all you told me, and now they sent my girl back home from the hospital because she is cured,” she said. The girl really looked healthier and there was nothing insane now in her eyes. I spoke to her and she gave me quite reasonable replies, never mentioning Hell any more. But still there was something in her eyes like a deep, deep sadness, or rather a very important question, “Am I saved, or am I condemned? Oh, yes, it was a very important question, for everyone: for her, for me, for you! Based upon the answer depended not only her health but also her eternal life! So, I started patiently to persuade the poor soul that our Lord Jesus Christ did not come to condemn us to Hell; however, we deserved it. I told her, “He came to save you, and that was why He offered Himself upon the Cross, shed His blood, and died for you to have you in Heaven.” Gradually, while I was speaking, the smile of happiness—like sunshine—rose on her face, and it remained there while I was talking with her.

Many a time has the Lord opened my eyes to such cases, where by infusing the fear of eternal damnation during childhood, the men and women of delicate conscience were driven into a permanent state of fear. They go to confession every week, or even daily; they spend hours confessing their sins and their circumstances to “father confessors,” only to leave the confessional with ongoing doubts and fears that, for some reason or other, confirm their confessions were not valid, and consequently, if they died, they must go to Hell. Hearing confessions are sort of a plague for confessors, who are especially taught during their preparation for priesthood how to deal with such persons suffering from “scruples,” but nothing seems to satisfy those unfortunate souls with regard to the important question of their salvation.

Another Dreadful Example

The case of the girl who had been healed from her fear reminded me about an even more tragic victim, someone who I thought about every time I went back to my native town for

holidays. He was a relative of mine. While visiting my parents there, I had the sad opportunity to meet this relative who, as a little boy, attended the same primary school as I had. Every day after school we used to play together with some other children in a nearby orchard. He was about two years younger than myself, had a brilliant character, and always took excellent reports home from his teacher. But he completely changed after his first Confession. He would no longer play happily with other children, looking rather for a solitary place in the garden where we found him sometimes standing under a tree and whispering to himself. His mother used to ask him, "Son, what is wrong with you? Why are you talking to yourself?" But he would not give her any explanation. Still worse, he ceased to be a brilliant pupil; he worked diligently on his homework late into the night. His thoughts were occupied by fear so much that he was unable to concentrate his attention upon his schoolwork.

He was growing up, and his fear was growing in him, too, until it took full possession of his mind. He was unable to finish his university studies; he tried a few jobs, but was fired from each of them after a short trial period. "He does not concentrate upon his work," explained his employers. So, even as a man, he had to rely upon his poor widowed mother. Not even the learned psychiatrists could cure him. The last time I saw him, he was a man of about 35 years. Night after night he would not go to bed, but rather stood in the middle of his bedroom, keeping the light on, staring before him with eyes wide open from fear. Then the war came, and during the occupation of Poland by the Nazis, he was caught, along with many others, and placed into a concentration camp. The prisoners had to work very hard with German guards watching them closely. His efforts to work were found unsatisfactory, and the camp authorities would not believe that he was physically paralyzed by fear. The cruel guards started to beat him in such a way that in a few months' time they had killed him. This was the tragic end of a once happy boy who was the pride and hope of his parents—until his delicate mind came under the terror of Romanism.

My Struggle Continues

But in spite of all those enlightenments and experiences about the discrepancy between the Roman Catholic system and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I still persisted in believing that this was the only true Christian Church in the world, and I tried to explain all those abuses as individual acts of her clergy, who either became overzealous in their efforts to dominate the souls and consciences of their flocks—thus proving themselves as "more Catholic than the pope" and using even bad means to obtain good aims—or they had lost their faith and became ordinary "breadwinners" by purely automatic execution of their official duties. Sometimes, however, I felt with horror that I might become like the latter ones. But the Lord did not let me fall down into such a horrible abyss, although He had a very long and hard job with my obstinacy. He continued to give me His wonderful enlightenments, showing me what was right and what was wrong. This lasted for years, but there were some of those enlightenments so clear and important that I was never able to forget them, and they are bright in my memory even until now.

A Call to a Dying Man

It was on an early (late winter) morning, when the days in my country are dull and damp with rain and frequent snows coming down. I had just returned to my room after reading the Mass at church when somebody knocked at the door; a driver of a horse-driven cart entered.

“Would you come, Father, to administer the last rites to a dying man?” he asked me. “Of course, I’ll go with you at once,” I said. I went to the church to collect the Sacrament and all other things necessary in such cases. In a few minutes, I was sitting uncomfortably on a cart with primitive seat made of straw, and we traveled through the streets of the town; the driver was ringing a small bell, while passers-by showed their devotion to the Sacrament by kneeling down on the pavements and bowing their heads, as they are accustomed to doing in countries with a Roman Catholic majority. Shortly, we arrived at a small hut on the outskirts of town; I was led into a very poorly furnished room with the ceiling so low that I had to bow my head not to touch it. “Very poor people must live here,” I mused.

A large bed covered with a white sheet over straw, instead of a mattress, occupied most of the room. Upon it lay the dying man. He was not very old, only about 46 or so, but he looked exhausted—by his illness, poverty, or hard labor. I did not know which, and there was no time to ask questions because, I noticed at once, he was near death. He rested on his back, his eyes open wide staring to the ceiling, and he breathed heavily. It was necessary to hurry up with last rites before he died, so at once I started to speak to him to prepare him for his last confession of sins, before I could give him the sacramental absolution—communion and unction with holy oils. But someone interrupted me. It was his wife; she stood leaning against a wall, weeping bitterly. She said, “Excuse me, please, but I do not think he can hear you because he is already unconscious.” Well, I thought she might be wrong, taking for unconsciousness what might have been only a weakening of his hearing. So, I began to shout in his ear, “Your priest is here; try to recall your sins and confess them!” But he did not take any notice of me; he did not even turn his face towards me. Apparently, he must have completely lost his hearing. Still his eyes were open, so maybe he could see me. In my efforts to reach this poor soul now leaving this world, and to secure his salvation by application of last rites, I went round his bed and placed myself at his feet, opposite his face, in hope that he would glance down and notice me in my black cassock, white surplice and stole, and come to realize that this was his last chance to confess and receive absolution.

I waited and waited, but he never glanced down; by now he apparently had lost his sight. Once more I tried to reach his soul by the sense of touch. I reached for a little crucifix, carried always in the Sacrament satchel, and pressed it slightly against his lips. I expected him to show, at least by the common sign of consciousness, what was going on by kissing the crucifix. But he did not show even such a reaction. To my great distress, it was hopeless. There I stood at the bed of this man in agony, with all my priestly power and authority to save his soul and to open for him the way to heaven, but was unable to perform it. Oh yes, of course, I knew very well from my theology studies, and the Church’s instructions, that I could give him a so-called “conditional absolution” which would be valid even without his confession of sins, provided he sincerely repented for them before falling unconscious.

But what if he had not repented? Well, the theologians would say that it was his own fault, and if he was in a state of “mortal” sin, such a “conditional absolution” would be invalid, and in consequence, he must go to Hell. But that was what I did not want. I had enough trouble with my own soul and did not want to be responsible for the soul of this poor man going to Hell. I stood there worried, feeling completely helpless in spite of all the means provided by the Church to save a perishing soul. They proved insufficient and too uncertain, even if applied in this case. In my distress, I looked once more at his sallow and emaciated face and then something peculiar caught my attention, his lips were moving! Continually moving! Was he whispering something? And if so, what was it? I did not hear anything until I came near to him and brought my ear close to his lips. Only then did I hear a very faint whisper, but I could not discern what he said.

Again, I concentrated all my attention; at last I was able to catch it. It was, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." They were the very words that were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ while He was dying for the salvation of those "*that...believeth in Him*" (John 3:16). Hanging upon the Cross He was giving His spirit into the loving arms of His Father with this last prayer, "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit*" (Luke 23:46). Now, this dying man who did not see anything, did not hear anything, and did not feel anything, moving toward complete unconsciousness, in his distress, continued to repeat in a waning-away whisper, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." And so he died.

Jesus Saves!

The Church, or her rites, failed to save his soul, but however sinful it might have been, the Lord gave me the strongest assurance at the same moment that this man did not need my conditional or unconditional absolution, that he did not need any rites or sacraments. He did not need my priestly help to be saved, because he could be saved already by faith in the only real Priest and Savior, Jesus Christ. Could it be that this saving faith must have been the dominant factor during his hard life, and his last illness, comforting and assuring him, so that even in his agony his believing soul prayed: "Father, into Thy hands"? This was a real revelation for me and the best lecture of theology in my life, because the Lord Himself had taught me at the bedside of this dying man that the salvation of a soul does not depend upon any human efforts, rites or doctrines, but upon Jesus' sacrifice upon the Cross and our own faith in Him and through Him in our Father in Heaven. Only later on, after my conversion, I found the confirmation of this truth in the Scriptures, both in the Old Testament, "*The just shall live by His faith*" (Habakkuk 2: 4), and in the New Testament, "*For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith*" (Romans 1:17). The revelation of this truth has shattered to pieces my belief in the Roman dogma about the automatic "ex opere operato" power of rites and sacraments of the Church. Fortunately, our salvation does not depend upon those uncertain, and sometimes inapplicable functions, but upon the mercy of our Father brought upon us by the utmost sacrifice of His Own beloved Son.

No Will to Live

Still, I continued to cling to my "only true Church," and finally the Lord answered my continuous prayers by striking me hard. My health broke down and a disease developed in my left kidney. In spite of all the medical attention I had, I was getting worse and worse, until after one and a half years of illness, I was directed to a specialist who, after a careful examination, told me that all the previous treatments were completely wrong and that I must be immediately operated on because my life was in danger. So, I entered the hospital, not even knowing what a long and complicated operation it was to be. When I came to, after the anesthesia, I felt so weak that I could hardly move for days, and I had no desire to live on. My life seemed to be a complete failure, a great mistake; I had failed to find my way to the Lord. I felt fed up with everything and came to the conclusion that the best solution would be just to die. It did not seem very difficult anyway, because after surgery, I was on the danger list. During the night a doctor came to see whether I was still alive, because the doctors thought I was going to die that very night. I became quite indifferent, and I even refused to take the medicines prescribed.

I was still expecting death, which would free me at least from my spiritual torture, when one afternoon some relatives came to visit me, and one of them asked me whether I had prayed for my recovery. I answered that I had not. They were quite astonished by my reply, and they begged me to pray for it. I could not explain to them why I had not. I had to promise them that I would because I felt compassion for them, seeing how worried they were. The doctor was very annoyed with me when he learned that I had not taken the medicines, and I had to promise him that I would take them. I kept both promises, even against my own will. I especially prayed that the Lord heal me only if He would bring a definite change in my life and use me in the future according to His will. Shortly afterwards, this prayer was answered. My condition improved daily; even the doctors were surprised, because—as they told me quite frankly afterwards—they had little hope of my recovery. After two months' stay in the hospital I was released and, although very weak, started back to work while wondering how the Lord was going to heal my soul and use me. The answer came after about two years' time, when my spiritual struggle became almost unbearable. It was at the end of fifteen years in ministry in the Roman Church, when I definitely realized that I was in the wrong place.

Through Conflict to Conversion

After all the enlightenment the Lord gave me through all those years, He brought before me a dilemma: either remain in the Church into which I was born and ordained to minister; to preserve all the privileges of a priest: the reverence of my people, the approval of my superiors, and a very promising career in the Church hierarchy—but never able to come to Him; or to leave that Church and my priesthood, because it was all wrong and not built upon the Word of God, and entrust myself completely in faith to Him. If you think that I immediately obeyed this call of the Lord, you are mistaken. I did not! I simply could not, because I was too weak and too frightened. Imagine yourself to be taught since your childhood that “outside of this only Church there is no salvation,” that whosoever left that Church would go to Hell, and that the worst tortures that exist are reserved for the excommunicated priests. To become such a priest in a Roman Catholic country like Italy, Spain, or Poland, means to be regarded by your own relatives, friends, and most others as a traitor, not only to the Church, but also, even to your own nation, because “the only true Italian, Spaniard, or Pole is a Roman Catholic.” So, you must face a social boycott, or at least the cold shoulder from your former friends. No, I could not do it! But at the same time, I believed it was the last opportunity the Lord offered me, and still, I could not do it! The struggle of my conscience continued for another year, but there was still one thing I could do—it was to pray! “Lord, do something, because I am too weak, strengthen my spirit, help me!” So, I would cry to Him day and night out of the depths of my heart. And finally His grace overwhelmed me: He filled me with enough courage to obey His call so that I did not mind accepting any suffering which I might have met afterwards. I put “all” my trust in Him. I have never regretted it. He alone accomplished my conversion. There was no merit of my own in it. It was like being lifted up by His everlasting arms out of the darkness into the blessed liberty experienced solely by the children of God!

Blessed Assurance

And what happened afterwards? I have been asked many times afterward to tell about all the mercy of the Lord in bringing me to Himself. It would take a whole book to tell you all about

His infinite care, goodness, and the blessing He has shown me after my conversion. Maybe one day I will write a book to share with others all the praise I owe to Him. Now I would like to finish with a definite statement that all my spiritual trouble, uncertainty, and fright, completely left me; I am as happy with the Lord now as I could never have been before my salvation! *“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”* (John 8:12). I am wishing and praying for this happiness to come to all those who are still in the same darkness in which I used to be until the Lord saved me. The Lord testified, *“I am the light of the world”* (John 8:12). He banishes spiritual darkness. He came as the “light” revealing God’s holiness, exposing mankind’s sinfulness, to the end that all who believe on Him should be delivered from the darkness and ruin of sin. This is my sincere desire for those do not yet know of His deliverance from darkness into light.