**THIS IS CATHOLIC COURAGE:**

**THE LIFE AND APOSTOLIC MISSION**

**OF**

**FR. JOHN A. HARDON, S.J.**

**Biography & Documentary Script**

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***["The more deeply we love, the more generously we give."](https://godisatworkinyou.blogspot.com/2012/02/more-deeply-we-love-more-generously-we.html)***

 ***[~ Servant of God, Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.](https://godisatworkinyou.blogspot.com/2012/02/more-deeply-we-love-more-generously-we.html)***



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**CHAPTER 1 - A SUMMARY OF HIS APOSTOLIC MISSION**

*"To love God with our whole mind is to make the sacrifice to Him of our knowledge and our reason, and to believe all that He has taught." ~ Saint John Vianney, "Sermon on the Love of God"*

Father John Anthony Hardon, S.J. was born in the year 1914, in the state of Pennsylvania in the United States of America.

He entered into eternal life in the year 2000, at the age of 86, at the Jesuit Colombiere Center in Michigan, which had opened in 1959 as a Jesuit college named after Saint Claude de la Colombiere (b. 1641, d. 1682) who was a Jesuit teacher, orator, and spiritual director in France.

*"God is in the midst of us, or rather we are in the midst of him; wherever we are He sees us and touches us: at prayer, at work, at table, at recreation." ~ Saint Claude de la Colombiere, S.J.*

**GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!**

Fr. John Hardon, S.J. is a priest forever.

In addition to serving our Lord as a Catholic priest, he was also a member of a Catholic religious order (the Society of Jesus/Jesuits), as well as an orthodox Catholic theologian, confessor, spiritual director, writer, advisor, teacher/educator/catechist, contributor, collaborator, speaker, fisher of men, and an apostolic communications pioneer at a time in human history when when Luciferian Modernism had infiltrated Christ's Catholic Church, and aggressively spread its errors worldwide seeking the ruin of souls.

Fr. Hardon was also a human being created in the image and likeness of God, who like us was born with a fallen human nature and who chose to become and to be an exemplary Catholic disciple, leader, role model, and evangelizer for Christ's flock.

His efforts in imitation of and in union with Christ our High Priest have thanks be to God benefitted countless souls in our time and will continue to benefit countless souls until the end of time, despite the unceasing efforts of the forces of darkness and those serving the wrong master to stop him.

Certainly, his "fiat!" to God in imitation of and in union with Our Lady and his generous spending of himself throughout his priesthood have and will continue to be of immeasurable value to many people.

May the precious and priceless fruits of his labors in God's service be made manifest to all in its superabundance from the Beatific Vision in heaven for all eternity.

Through the vast amount of teaching material he produced thanks be to God for our sake, we have been provided a vital opportunity to learn Catholic teaching correctly for the greater honor and glory of our Triune God first and foremost, and then for the sake of one’s own soul's growth in holiness and for the eternal sake of all souls through all time - past, present and future.

We are to apply what has been properly learned to the work of each one's personal and God-given holy apostolate throughout life, and we are to do so with God's direction and with all of God’s Almighty might.

We are to seek at all times to accomplish Almighty God's will in imitation of and in union with Jesus Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit, and through the maternal intercession of His Immaculate Mother who He made the Mediatrix of all of the necessary superabundant and supernatural graces every one of us needs.

*"May the Heart of Jesus Christ be our school! Let us make our abode there. Let us study its movements and attempt to conform ours to them. Yes, O Divine Jesus, I want to live there." ~ Saint Claude de la Colombiere, S.J.*

As our Triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is not limited to time and place, our prayers, good works, sacrifices, and works of reparation benefit not only ourselves but also all people through all time.

Fr. Hardon provided very enlightening teaching on this very subject in this excellent video lesson called *"The New Catechism II"* which can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMdSipd9JqM>

*“There is no more important plea in all the four Gospels than the honest prayer of the blind man. Remember?‘Lord, that I may see.’ In our Lord's Eucharistic presence I would like to help you and myself to penetrate beyond the veil of our faith so that we might see, see more clearly, see more deeply and as a consequence love more generously. There is no one stronger than the man or woman of conviction. And the convictions we most need in the spiritual life are convictions of faith." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "Retreat On the Credo: Our Need of Faith"man or woman of conviction. And the convictions we most need in the spiritual life are convictions of faith." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "Retreat On the Credo: Our Need of Faith"*

**CHAPTER 2 - HIS EARLIEST YEARS**

An exceptional book for every Catholic heart and home is *Fr. Hardon's "A Spiritual Autobiography."*

The contents of this interesting, beautifully revealing, incredibly inspiring, and very easy-to-read book that is astonishingly not very long at only 116 pages, were dictated by him while in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Leading readers right to Jesus Christ our High Priest, Father Hardon's revelations in each far too brief chapter leave souls thirsting for more and ultimately thirsting for more of Our thirsting Savior - the Divine Bridegroom of Every Soul - Who longs for our love in return.

*"The most fundamental way the parents train their sons and daughters in the ways of God is by themselves living the ways of God." ~ Servant of God, Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Survival of the Catholic Family"*

From Fr. Hardon's personal accounts, expressed in the profound way he had of communicating through his written and spoken words, we learn what his earliest years were like.

We also learn the ways in which Divine Providence prepared him for not only his fruitful God-given personal apostolate of 86 years, but also for his apostolic mission in our time which will endure until the end of time and then forever transcend the finite by giving glory to God in eternity -. and in many various ways.

Father John Anthony Hardon, S.J. was born on June 18, 1914 in Midland, Pennsylvania, to a devout Catholic married couple in their mid-twenties named John and Anna Hardon.

When Fr. Hardon was one year old, during an event he described as "in God's Providence" ("A Spiritual Autobiography," p. 3), his father was killed instantly while at work at the age of twenty-seven.

Young Mr. John Hardon had fallen from a scaffold during his lunch break while carrying out what his son would describe many years later as "an act of charity" (p. 3).

Like father, like son.

His intention was to protect fellow workers from being harmed by a beam that was loose.  His son grew up to protect precious, priceless, and immortal souls from being harmed, by the dangers of sin and also of improper teaching.

Anna, who had just turned twenty-six years old, was suddenly a widow while her son was suddenly without his father. While grieving and regrouping, she was suddenly in the unthinkable position of having to provide and care for herself and her son.

According to Fr. Hardon in his autobiography, Anna received a small amount of compensation from the company her late husband had worked for which that was not sufficient to meet their needs. Within two weeks of his death, she began working as a cleaning woman in an office "for a minimal salary" (p. 3) to support them both.

Anna worked at night in order to care for her son during the day, and continued this work until "literally the day of her death" (p. 3).

**THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING CHILDREN WITH THEIR GOD-GIVEN RIGHT TO A PROPER AND HOLY SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION**

*"Parents must be alert, and aware and, I would say, aggressive in making sure that other people, no matter how powerful, are not contradicting the religious formation which they, the parents, have the first and foremost duty before God to provide for their children." ~ Servant of God, Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Survival of the Catholic Family"*

According to Fr. Hardon, his mother told him she never remarried out of concern "about the kind of stepfather her son would inherit" (p. 3).

*"Parents nurture their children in the supernatural life by what they say. We are here touching on the mystery of self-communication. And there is no communication that is more universal or more effective than the spoken word." ~ Servant of God, Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Survival of the Catholic Family"*

"During the days of my childhood, before going to school, I can never remember a morning when she did not pray with me or an evening when we retired without first talking out loud with God" (p. 3).

According to Fr. Hardon, he never remembered a single day when his mother did not attend Holy Mass and receive Holy Communion.

He also recalled sacred pictures on the wall of their home.

*"The most fundamental way the parents train their sons and daughters in the ways of God is by themselves living the ways of God." ~ Servant of God, Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Survival of the Catholic Family"*

"I will never forget the holy water font outside the door as we entered the room. The only change she made was to raise the font as I got taller until it was high enough for me and too high for her. Until my last day in visiting her before she died, we never entered the house without blessing ourselves with holy water" (p. 3).

Anna's son revealed that when seated at the table, he could not remember even one conversation with his mother that did not involve spiritual matters.

He further revealed in his spiritual autobiography that should any bread ever fall to the floor during meals, either his mother or he would immediately pick it up and place it back on the table. She taught him " the highest purpose to which bread can be put to use is to change bread into the living Body and Blood of Christ at Mass" (p. 3).

By the time Fr. Hardon turned five, his mother had taken in two women boarders who lived with them for six years. The two women, Judith and Susan, attended his first Holy Mass as a priest following his ordination at the age of 33.

*"In God’s ordinary Providence He uses as the channels of His grace those persons who are in possession of His grace. Believing parents are channels of His faith to their children. Chaste parents are channels of His chastity to their children.Prayerful parents are channels of His spirit of prayer to their children. In a word, holy parents are channels of holiness to their children." ~ Servant of God, Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Survival of the Catholic Family"*

**CHAPTER 3 - HIS FIRST HOLY COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION**

The following two profound revelations come right from Fr. Hardon, and were revealed by him before the Blessed Sacrament for his spiritual autobiography for every soul.

*"The basic reason why we should pray before the Blessed Sacrament, is because Christ wants it." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "Prayer Before the Blessed Sacrament, Part I"*

**HIS FIRST HOLY COMMUNION**

Fr. Hardon described His First Holy Communion as "the most noticeable event of my childhood" ("A Spiritual Autobiography," p. 4).

He recalled the teaching of one of his instructors, Sister Benedicta, who had prepared the children to receive for the first time the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

She told the children, "Whatever you ask Our Lord on your First Holy Communion day you will receive."

At six years of age, after having returned to his place in church with Jesus Christ the Divine Bridegroom of Every Soul and our Divine Redeemer, Restorer, and Remedy for All, the Second Person of our Triune God within the Blessed Trinity, the God-Man Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Head of the Catholic Church reposing on his very young tongue, the little boy predestined by God to do great things for every soul, for the greater honor and glory of God first and foremost, immediately asked Our Lord, "Make me a priest."

He recalled years later that he had only the faintest idea of what he was asking God (p. 4).

Thanks be to God he had received adequate instruction from those entrusted with his proper spiritual formation, and he would go on to pay forward his having received the truth, in superabundance as God willed for the sake of the whole world, and at tremendous personal cost in imitation of and in union with Christ.

Fr. Hardon made it a point to tell us in his spiritual autobiography that from the age of six, he never forgot what Sr. Benedicta had taught him and the other children about requests Our Lord wants made on the day of one's First Holy Communion, and which He is happy to fulfill according to His Most Perfect will.

According to Fr. Hardon, when he was ordained to the Sacred Priesthood of Jesus Christ twenty-six years later, his first thought was to thank God for "hearing my prayers."

*"We believe that God became man in order to be able to suffer. Are we willing, and I mean willing, to suffer with the Son of God, like the Son of God, for the Son of God to join with Him in the redemption of a sinful world? Redemption is meaningless unless it includes suffering. This is our faith. This is our privilege as Christians. This is the great gift we have received from God to join Him who became man to be able to suffer out of love for us. This is the priesthood of Jesus Christ. We are privileged to unite ourselves with Him by joining Him in carrying our cross out of love for Him as He carried His Cross out of love for us." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Priesthood"*

**HIS CONFIRMATION**

Fr. Hardon was eight years old when he received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

In his spiritual autobiography, he "vividly remembered" that "Confirmation makes us strong in our faith."

That day, young John asked the Holy Spirit for "the grace of martyrdom, which means to die for one's faith" (p. 4).

"Over the years, I have never tired telling people that Confirmation prepares them to live a martyr's life, and if it is God's will for them, to die a martyr's death - if it is God's will" (p. 4).

On December 30, 2000, it was God's will that Father Hardon die a martyr's death, after having lived a martyr's life, in imitation of and in union with Jesus Christ the Divine King of All Martyrs.

No doubt right after having passed into eternity, he thanked God for having answered his prayers.

*"In allowing the human race to sin, God foresaw that mankind would have to suffer in expiating its sin. Yet mysteriously, and I mean mysteriously, God allowed mankind to sin, sin deeply. It is not as though God needed a sinful human race to teach us the meaning of sin. What God wanted was to enlighten us on how deeply He loves us in allowing us to expiate our sins by loving God more than, shall I say we could have loved Him, had we not sinned." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Priesthood"*

**A PRAYER BEFORE THE BLESSED SACRAMENT**

*"Lord Jesus, You became man to redeem the world on Calvary but You are in the Blessed Sacrament in order that the ocean of merit that You won for us on the Cross might be poured out on a sinful, suffering human race. Teach us, dear Jesus, to realize that You are here and want us to be here too, so that believing in You, being near You, we might obtain from you, what will make us happy even in this valley of tears and assure us that everlasting experience of living in the Real Presence unveiled. Amen." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "Prayer Before the Blessed Sacrament, Part I"*

**CHAPTER 4 - HIS MIDDLE CHILDHOOD YEARS**

Fr. Hardon's orthodox Catholic teaching material doesn't just bare precious fruit, it bares entire orchards for every soul*. Imaginer!*

During her son's early childhood years, Anna Hardon moved him and herself to Cleveland, Ohio.

Fr. Hardon spent his first three grammar school years attending St. Wendelin Catholic School. He reported in his spiritual autobiography that he had to walk two miles each way to get to school, and also mentioned that winters in Cleveland could be "very severe" (p. 7).

The boy, who would go on to become a vital, tremendously needed, and highly regarded orthodox Catholic educator in our time, found as a grown man that it was a small price for a young child to pay to receive "a sound Catholic education" (p. 7).

After his mother moved them to St. Michael's Parish in southwest Cleveland for his fourth year of grammar school, the child's walk to and from school was reduced to one mile each way.

According to Fr. Hardon, "It was these days of attending a Catholic school that confirmed my decision to go on to the priesthood" (p. 7).

What wonders to be able to share Fr. Hardon's personal experiences from his own perspective as detailed in his spiritual autobiography.

He noted that what stands out from his grammar school years is the pride he felt from always being first in his class.

Fr. Hardon recalled that when he was ten years of age and in the fifth grade, Sister Lucretia started class by addressing him very publicly and at the "top of her voice."

"Johnny! Stop showing off!" was her message (p. 7).

He instructs us further from his own experiences by sharing the following personal account, which appears in his spiritual autobiography right after the revelation of his fifth grade encounter with Sister Lucretia at St. Michael's.

"Twelve years later when I entered the Jesuits, I was called in by the Novice Master who told me, 'Either you show signs of humility, or I will have to dismiss you from the Society of Jesus within the next thirty days.'"

Fr. Hardon then noted in his memoir that "needless to say," he worked on his humility ever since (p. 7).

God's truth binds us to Him, when we accept it.

**TO MORE EFFECTIVELY LABOR FOR SOULS**

Fr. Hardon acknowledged that as a child he found it particularly hard to accept humiliation of any kind, and throughout his priestly and teaching ministry he repeatedly taught about the importance of acquiring ever greater self mastery.

To acquire ever greater self mastery for the greater honor and glory of God, one must learn that humiliations are vital tools in one's spiritual arsenal.

God's people are to benefit from humiliations of all sizes and kinds, in imitation of and in union with Christ. How do we do this? We do so through practice and with the understanding that God allows distasteful things to happen to us for our greater good.

Certainly throughout life we all receive ample opportunities to get up again after having fallen, many times very hard, underneath the great weight of the crosses of humiliation - whether we have tripped on ourselves and/or had been pushed by other people.

"In the meditation on the Kingdom it is imperative to have a correct notion of suffering and humiliation as instruments for personal sanctification antecedent to the apostolate. The more closely a man follows Christ, poor and condemned, the greater becomes his union with God and the more effective his labor for souls." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. , "All My Liberty, Chapter 6: Modes of Humility"

Included in Fr. Hardon's spiritual autobiography/teaching manual is something he learned from his classmates during those early childhood years: "the hardest thing for an above-average person is to remain humble and not consider himself superior to other people"(p. 7).

*"The evil spirit seduces the mind by making error appealing." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Strategy of the Devil in Demonic Temptations"*

Fr. Hardon mentioned that for this reason St. Augustine was of great importance to him and his proper spiritual formation, thanks to the Saint's work to combat his pride.

No one can win the important battles to overcome one's self interest, for the greater honor and glory of God, without being willing to engage in them.

No one can fight these battles for us. Fortunately, God provides people like Fr. Hardon to help us by continuing to guide precious, priceless, and immortal souls to Jesus Christ.

Fr. Hardon summed up his early years by revealing in his spiritual autobiography that he was first in his class throughout his eight years in grammar school, and during those years he learned how hard it is to remain humble in one's own eyes "when others have such a high regard of intelligence" (p. 8).

Once again he made it a point to thank God, this time for having helped him acquire the priceless gift of humility along the way of his cross.

*"What is the first and indispensable condition for resisting the evil spirit? It is a deep, sincere humility of heart." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Strategy of the Devil in Demonic Temptations"*

**CHAPTER 5 – THE CONSEQUENTIAL HIGH SCHOOL YEARS**

**OF “DOC” HARDON**

His life story would make a great movie, but is for every soul an even better reality. + From Joseph Karl Publishing's book and documentary, "This is Catholic Courage: The Life and Apostolic Mission of Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J." 'Love the Madonna and pray the Rosary, for her Rosary is the weapon against the evils of the world today. All graces given by God pass through the Blessed Mother.' ~ Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

**CHAPTER 5 – THE CONSEQUENTIAL HIGH SCHOOL YEARS OF "DOC" HARDON**

When the time for his high school years had arrived, Fr. Hardon, who made it a point to reflect in his spiritual autobiography about the importance of and his appreciation for a proper Catholic school education during his childhood, was unable to afford Catholic high school tuition.

However, a high school fifteen miles from his house called Cathedral Latin offered prospective students “a competitive admission, for which I was providentially qualified” (p. 9).

No one states things like Fr. Hardon.

In his spiritual autobiography for every soul, Fr. Hardon referred to his high school years at Cathedral Latin as “a major shift” in his life (p. 9).

”I can honestly say that my days in high school so deeply confirmed my faith that, with God’s help, it has remained stable over the years ever since” (p. 9).

“I will never forget what Brother told us about the damage done to Western society by the widespread penetration of Protestantism in the Western world. To this day, I remember what we were told about religious freedom on our country. We were told that since Martin Luther there as been no true social freedom in our society” (p. 9).

“I still remember how the teachers stressed the importance of a common religious faith in our country that wants to practice true freedom and not only call itself a free nation” (p. 9).

Fr. Hardon also reported having learned in high school that “the survival and strength of the Catholic Faith finally depends on Jesus Christ” (p. 9).

He reminisced that he was impacted by many of the traditions passed on to him and the other students by their instructors, the Brothers of Mary.

One of those highly valued and valuable traditions was to begin and then end every class with a prayer, a practice that Fr. Hardon continued during his teaching ministry and passed on to his students by word and by example.

He remembered one of his instructors teaching the students to cultivate good habits, for otherwise one will have bad habits instead.

How important it is, the young people were taught, to cultivate and nurture a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Mother of God, throughout one's life.

“May the Mother of Jesus and our Mother always smile on your spirit, obtaining for it, from her Most Holy Son, every heavenly blessing.” ~ Saint Pio of Pietrelcina

Fr. Hardon noted that during his high school years he desired to continue his education by going to college, but knew that his mother did not earn enough money to cover the cost.

One day, she told her son with an apostolic mission that she had set aside for that very purpose the four hundred dollars in compensation she had received years ago from her late husband's place of work, along with the interest that had accrued on it through the years.

That money covered the cost of his first three years of college.

Fr. Hardon shared that before finishing his high school years, he seriously considered entering the seminary but had concerns about departing from his widowed mother and leaving her alone.

He revealed that while he knew good young women in high school, he never seriously dated since he was discerning his calling to the priesthood.

His mother, he disclosed, was "a very important advisor" in this regard. She recognized the God-given gifts in her son and they both strived to cultivate them in order to accomplish God's most perfect Will, as they witnessed the mystery of God's plans for him unfold through his mother and also through his late father.

"To form a person's conscience is to teach that person what is God's will for that person in the changing circumstances of each individual's life." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "The Art of Forming the Conscience of a Child"

Anna Hardon revealed to her son during those years that, after having been widowed, she had received several marriage proposals but due to her concern for his "spiritual future" she did not accept them in order "to encourage any possible vocation he may have had."

In imitation of the Immaculate Mother of God, Mrs. Hardon sacrificed her own personal welfare not to mention standard of living in order to help her son accomplish his God-given mission for the sake of a world in very serious grave peril.

Fr. Hardon disclosed he already knew for sure by that time that "God wanted me to share with others what I so undeservedly believed I already knew and would learn in the years to come" (p. 11).

His calling to teach was clearly recognized by high school peers who referred to him as “Doc” Hardon.

Thanks be to God, by his senior year of high school, Fr. Hardon "wanted nothing more" than to share His Catholic faith with other people.

"Little did I realize," he said, "how much I needed humility and how dearly I would have to pay to grow in the virtue in the years to come" (p. 11).

**CHAPTER 6 – HIS UNDERGRADUATE YEARS**

In his spiritual autobiography, Fr. Hardon divided his four years at John Carroll University into two parts: the first two years and the second two years.

During the first two years he considered becoming a physician, one who cares for the body, and so he majored in science.

However, God's plan for him was to become a physician of the soul and to teach the One True Faith to the masses as a member of the Society of Jesus, and in English.

*"The English language is deeply materialistic." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "Sacred Scripture & Tradition: Spiritual Being - Intellect & Will"*

Fr. Hardon's counselor during his third year of college was a priest who convinced him that he did indeed have a vocation to the Sacred Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

He then changed the focus of his education and began learning Latin, philosophy, and college theology.

The future prolific teacher's Jesuit instructors helped attract him more and more to the religious life. Fr. Hardon later recalled that to him, "the single most attractive feature" to Jesuit life was "a combination of above-average intelligence and fidelity to the Vicar of Christ" (p. 13).

While in high school and through their college years, John Hardon kept in touch via correspondence with a woman he had known since the fourth grade.

At that time, he kept Josephine in mind as a possible spouse while still discerning God's will for him, still not convinced he could leave his mother on her own and having to support herself should he enter the priesthood. She was getting older and her health was declining.

Like him, Josephine was very bright and she considered him an appealing choice of spouse as well.

When they both were ready to graduate from their respective colleges, she informed John that she had decided upon their wedding date.

He noted in his spiritual autobiography that, "to her credit," she did not speak to him for twenty years after he took her out to dinner and notified her, once their food had been ordered, that he made plans to enter the Jesuit novitiate the following Wednesday.

Fr. Hardon had already disclosed to his mother by that time that he had determined he was destined by God for the priesthood. She responded by making it clear that she would not stand in his way, and he was then able to proceed in peace.

In 1926, two weeks after that conversation with his mother, Fr. Hardon made plans to enter the Jesuit novitiate. Then, he took Josephine out to dinner to tell her.

It was God's will that Josephine marry, someone else, and she became a wife and the mother of several children.

From Fr. Hardon's spiritual autobiography, "As I look back at the years of stone-wall conviction that God called this sinner to the priesthood, I have no doubt that God wants an ordained priest to never for a moment allow his mind to question whether he has a priestly vocation. We are living in the most doubt-saturated period of human history. It is as though we, and not God, are the final arbiter in making decisions that affect our lives and the lives of those who depend on our judgment" ("A Spiritual Autobiography," p. 15).

Catholic priests who are ordained in our time "must maintain steadfastness of mind," he insisted (p. 15).

**CHAPTER 7 – THE GENESIS OF HIS VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD**

From Joseph Karl Publishing's book and documentary for every soul, 'This is Catholic Courage: The Life and Apostolic Mission of Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.'

*"The state of grace is nothing other than purity, and it gives heaven to those who clothe themselves in it. Holiness, therefore, is simply the state of grace purified, illuminated, beautified by the most perfect purity, exempt not only from mortal sin but also from the smallest faults; purity will make saints of you! Everything lies in this!" ~ Saint Peter Julian Eymard*

The chapter in Fr. John Hardon's spiritual autobiography dedicated to the origins of his priestly vocation is one of the longest in a memoir that isn't very long, yet makes a big and lasting impact.

Readers familiar with his teaching and with him as an instructor cannot NOT hear his voice while reading each page, as he continues to encourage souls from his place in eternity to *"Hear it!"*and, with his help, to also understand it.

We are reminded by St. Augustine, "Nothing whatever pertaining to godliness and real holiness can be accomplished without grace."

**TO THE SACRED PRIESTHOOD THROUGH THE SOCIETY OF JESUS**

*"In today's Western world, vocations to the priesthood have dropped tragically. There are many reasons for this. However, one of the main reasons has been the widespread secularization of the modern world." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "A Spiritual Autobiography," p. 23.*

Through the sharing of his life experiences, Fr. Hardon explained that while he clearly believed that he felt called to the priesthood from the time he made his First Holy Communion, he did not yet comprehend what he believed (p. 24).

In God's timing for him and through those entrusted with his proper Catholic formation, he would come to fathom it profoundly.

In the month of May during his senior year of undergraduate studies at the Jesuit Catholic John Carroll University in Ohio, Fr. Hardon applied to the Catholic religious order called the Society of Jesus and was, in his words, accepted "by the grace of God."

He noted in his spiritual autobiography that at that time, forty novices entered the Society of Jesus in less than a month. Within the first two weeks it became clear, he recalled, that not everyone who had entered had the necessary qualities to become a priest, and even fewer had the qualities vital to becoming a Jesuit.

By the second month, about one-fourth of the novices left. Another fourth left by the end of that year.

We learn from Fr. Hardon that "one of the most important qualifications for becoming a Jesuit novice was to make a complete, open self-disclosure of one's spiritual life. We were told in the plainest language that we were to keep nothing back from our spiritual life. Everything was to be disclosed" (p. 17).

**A BEST MEMORY WHILE A JESUIT NOVICE AND A LIFELONG TASK**

Fr. Hardon reminisced that the one thing he "best remembered" from his first month as a Jesuit novice was "the conviction I expressed." That conviction was to share with the Novice Master his belief that  he had "the better qualifications to be a member of the Society of Jesus."

The Novice Master inquired about this conviction of young John Hardon's, by asking the future Jesuit priest in his care *what in particular qualified him for the Society of Jesus.*

John Hardon replied, his "natural intelligence."

Fr. Hardon recalled, "So then he gave me the most unusual, and I would have to say painful, directive of my life to date," telling the novice with a very bright future along the Way of the Cross, "You have exactly thirty days to show some slight sign of humility. Then I will not ask you, but your fellow novices. If they indicate there is some slightest sign of growth in humility after one month, you may stay."

The Novice Master concluded with this: "If, however, your fellow novices tell me there is no notable sign of progress in humility," John Hardon would then be notified either whether he should leave, or that he was being permitted to remain (pp. 17-18).

Father Hardon acknowledged that "never in my life had I worked harder, I don't say to grow in humility, but to show some sign of humility" (p. 18), teaching and also reminding us by his example that to truly succeed, one must first begin and also in the proper manner.

To acquire humility one must first show it, then one can grow in it, with God's help.

First and foremost, one's free will must want it.

**ONE MONTH LATER, THE NOVICE MASTER MADE HIS DECISION**

At the end of that one month, John Hardon was told he could stay, and to come with a smile.

The Novice Master counseled his novice that growing in humility would be a lifelong task for him.

Fr. Hardon revealed that, more than fifty years later, he was still working on it.

**ANOTHER POWERFUL MEMORY OF HIS, FOR EVERY SOUL**

Another memory with lasting impact that Fr. Hardon shared in his spiritual autobiography, more than fifty years after it took place, has to do with the once-a-week practice of having Jesuit novices manifest to each other their faults.

Two novices were selected each week to kneel in the middle of the floor, and from there they listened for thirty minutes as one of their fellow novices shared, with all sixty of the novices present, what they thought was wrong with the character of the novice who had been selected to go first.

Then at the start of the second half of the hour, the focus shifted to the second novice whose turn it was while kneeling on the ground, and the process was repeated.

When his and another novice's turns arrived, Fr. Hardon was selected to be first.

However, he would be the only novice receiving such attention that day, because the public accounting of his faults continued for the entire hour.

He said, "they spared nothing" and, as a result, there was no time left for the other novice.

**HUMILITY HUMILITY HUMILITY HUMILITY**

Fr. Hardon pointed out while sharing the events during this particular time in his life, "One thing that deeply contributed to our novitiate formation was the fact that we were constantly reminded of our failings and even more constantly reminded of what kind of persons we should be" (p. 18).

Fr. Hardon continued that the founder of the Society of Jesus, St. Ignatius of Loyola, understood from personal experience how naturally proud a human being with a fallen human nature is, and that one reason for the prolonged spiritual training of his young religious was to properly address "the difficulty that a gifted person has in living a truly humble life" (p. 20).

*"If God gives you an abundant harvest of trials, it is a sign of great holiness which He desires you to attain. Do you want to become a great saint? Ask God to send you many sufferings. The flame of Divine Love never rises higher than when fed with the wood of the Cross, which the infinite charity of the Savior used to finish His sacrifice. All the pleasures of the world are nothing compared with the sweetness found in the gall and vinegar offered to Jesus Christ. That is, hard and painful things endured for Jesus Christ and with Jesus Christ." ~ Saint Ignatius of Loyola*

To learn so much more of Fr. Hardon's informative revelations with regards to those years, be sure to acquire and read "A Spiritual Autobiography." The book is very relatable, enlightening, thought-provoking, encouraging, surprising, inspiring, deeply moving, educational, and motivating, among many other things, and helps foster an appreciation for those dedicating themselves to the Lord's service as religious, and as priests.

*"We may, therefore, say that the first beginning of a priestly vocation is in the Blessed Virgin Mary. Faith in her as the Mother of the Incarnate God is the foundation of faith in her Son as the living God Who becomes Man out of love for us." ~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "A Spiritual Autobiography," p. 25*

In his memoir, Fr. Hardon quoted St. Ignatius who said, "nothing is more pleasant than to live God, provided this live moves you to undergo many tribulations.

What wonders.

Fr. Hardon also quoted St. Ignatius as saying, "If you wish to advance in the love of God,*speak of it."*

He summed up the shared quotes of the saint's teaching with these words: "We love God only as deeply as we are to suffer for Him. At the same time, God wants to reward us for our love of Him. He does so by enabling us to grow in the love of Him Who is the God for Whom we were made" (p. 21).

Of noteworthy mention and of utmost importance is Fr. Hardon's appeal his to readers, while recalling this time in his life, about the importance of being kind, patient, and loving with other people.

He stated, "The key to authentic charity is to love others in such a way that I am helping them to save their souls" (p. 22).

He also noted that in his judgment, living an authentic religious life with one's fellow religious is the most demanding life that God can expect of anyone.

*”The more a person loves God, the more reason he has to hope in Him. This hope produces in the Saints an unutterable peace, which they preserve even in adversity, because as they love God, and know how beautiful He is to those who love Him, they place all their confidence and find all their repose in Him alone.” ~ Saint Alphonsus Liguori*

**CHAPTER 8 – HIS APOSTOLIC MISSION**

**AND THE SOCIETY OF JESUS**

In his spiritual autobiography for every soul, Fr. Hardon's chapter dedicated to his God-given apostolate, and apostolic mission, that was to come to fruition as a Jesuit consists only of him quoting the admirable Saint Augustine.

"He is a Christian who shows mercy to all,

Who is not disturbed by any injury,

Who does not permit the poor to be oppressed in his presence,

Who assists the needy and helps those in want,

Who sympathizes with the sorrowful and feels the grief of another as his own,

Whose goods all share and no one feels slighted,

Who serves God day and night,

Who reflects on His precepts at all times,

Who makes himself poor in this world to become rich in the eyes of God,

Who suffers himself to be despised among men that it may please God and the angels,

Who is seen to hold nothing concealed in his heart,

Whose soul is simple and spotless,

Whose conscience is faithful and pure,

Whose whole thought is directed to God and whose whole hope is in Christ,

Who desires heavenly rather than earthly possessions,

Who contempts earthly goods in order to acquire Divine."

~ Saint Augustine

**CHAPTER 9 – THE TWO MORE IMPORTANT DAYS**

**OF HIS EARLY SPIRITUAL LIFE**

*“Your best servant is the person who does not attend so much to hearing what he himself wants as to willing what he has heard from you.” ~ Saint Augustine*

John Hardon was accepted into the Jesuit novitiate eight days after having entered, and in his spiritual autobiography recalled that day as one of the two more important days of his early spiritual life. He received the happy news that morning when he spotted a Jesuit habit laying on his bed. He kissed it, and repeated this practice every day for the rest of his life.

*"Sanctify yourself and you will sanctify society." ~ Saint Francis of Assisi*

After two years in the novitiate, Fr. Hardon made his first sacred vows, which Jesuits consider a lifetime commitment.

*“What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.” ~ Saint Augustine*

According to Fr. Hardon, the second of the two more important days of his early spiritual life was when he was notified that he was accepted for final vows, "with God's grace." On the Feast of Our Lady of Purification, February 2nd, 1945, John Hardon pronounced his final sacred vows as a member of the Society of Jesus, which Jesuits consider binding for life.

Imagine reading and simultaneously silently hearing the following quote from him, in his voice: "Only God knows the price I have paid for this loyalty over the years. But the price is nothing compared to the reward with which God has repaid" (p. 20).

*“Late have I loved you, beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! And see, you were within, and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you they had no existence at all. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.” ~ Saint Augustine*

**CHAPTER 10 – HIS INVALUABLE LESSONS**

**AND THE BORROWED BOOKS**

*"A vocation to the religious life is meant to be a call to the fullness of Christianity. It was St. Augustine who described a Christian as one who follows the way of Christ, who imitates Christ in all things."*

*~ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., "A Spiritual Autobiography," p. 27*

John Hardon had pronounced his final sacred vows as a Jesuit in 1945, and in 1947, at the age of thirty-three, he was ordained a Catholic priest.

Fr. Hardon acknowledged in his spiritual autobiography that after having asked for the grace of the priesthood the day he made his First Holy Communion, many people contributed to this grace along the way. Most notable among them was his devoutly Catholic widowed mother, of whom he once again made mention while describing this time in his life. Once again he stated that he could not recall her missing the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass or receiving Holy Communion until the very day she died.

He reflected that "Years before I had any clear idea what a priest was I respected the priesthood with such deep faith that words cannot describe it" (p. 22).

Within the year after having been ordained a Catholic priest, Fr. Hardon's mother passed into eternal life. He was then without his father and his mother while only in his early thirties.

**THE UNEXPECTING OF THE UNEXPECTED**

What transpired next in the life of the new priest was quite unexpected: he was told that his vocation would be to prepare men to train priests.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I anticipate what this would mean" (p. 29), he said.

This specialized endeavor meant for him "long preparation in understanding the Catholic Faith - and I mean understanding the Catholic Faith" (p. 29).

For him personally it also meant the price he would pay in this life, both out in the world and within his ranks, for defending the One True Faith as God willed during the 20th Century, which he described as "the most trying century of Catholic Christianity" (p. 29).

In 1951, Fr. Hardon earned a Doctorate in Sacred Theology after having been sent to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome for two years to learn from "the most talented and educated teachers there," (p. 29).

"Little did I expect to have to defend my faith and to face critics among my most talented fellow students who were all ordained priests," he recalled (p. 29).

**THE BORROWED BOOKS**

While in Rome, Fr. John A. Hardon S.J. was appointed director of the Graduate Library, which had more than one hundred Jesuit graduate students as patrons.

Within two weeks of being appointed the Graduate Library's director in 1949, he was told by his superior to ask the graduate students to return around 1000 borrowed books.

Fr. Hardon described the books as being in 1949 "what we now call heretical" (p. 29); all of the books on the list he was given were recent publications by Jesuits that "cleverly and profoundly undermined the Catholic Faith" (p. 29).

He stated that before retrieving half of the heretical books, "I had become the agent of orthodoxy and therefore the sworn enemy of the modernists, who were updating the Catholic Faith to its modernist theology" (p. 29).

He remembered that doors were slammed in his face, and he lost friends he had considered fellow believers.

"I learned what I thought I would never think," he said, "that members of my religious family would be avowed enemies of the Faith I professed" (p. 29).

Fr. Hardon concluded that the lessons he learned were invaluable. "It taught me that the Faith I had so casually learned could be preserved only by the price of a living martyrdom. This Faith, I was to find out, is a precious treasure that cannot be preserved except at a heavy price. The price is nothing less than to profess what so many others either openly or covertly denied" (p. 29).

**CHAPTER 11 -**

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