On Hyparchic Saints

Provided by John Kirby

"We are living in times which have no precedent, and in our present situation universality, which could formerly be implicit, has to be fully explicit. It has to permeate our language and the whole of our way of life.

"Today it is not nearly enough merely to be a saint, but we must have the saintliness demanded by the present moment, a new saintliness, itself also without precedent. "

Maritian said this, but he only enumerated the aspects of saintliness of former days, which for the time being at least, have become out of date. He did not feel all the miraculous newness which the saintliness of today must contain in compensation.

"A new type of sanctity is indeed a fresh spring, an invention. If all is kept in proportion and if the order of each thing is preserved, it is almost equivalent to a new revelation of the universe and of human destiny. It is the exposure of a large portion of truth and beauty hitherto concealed under a thick layer of dust. More genius is needed than was needed by Archimedes to invent mechanics and physics. A new saintliness is a still more marvellous invention.

"Only a kind of perversity can oblige God's friends to deprive themselves of having genius, since to receive it in superabundance they only need to ask their Father for it in Christ's name.

"Such a petition is legitimate, today at any rate, because it is necessary. I think that under this or any equivalent form it is the first thing we have to ask for now, we have to ask for it daily, hourly, as a famished child constantly asks for bread. The world needs saints who have genius, just as a plague-stricken town needs doctors. Where there is a need there is also an obligation."

- Simone Weil, from 'Last Thoughts', 1942

and St Francis' perfect description of an aspect of hyparchic activity:

The Franciscans often repeat the words of their founder St Francis who, in his humility, almost denied all his works while saying: "My brothers, let us start all over again, because we haven't done anything yet."