

Blessed Guanella and the Eucharist

by Sr. Darlene Johnson, DSMP

As our Guanellian family brought to a conclusion, our yearlong celebration of the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the Guanellian foundation in Rome, Pope John Paul II instituted the beginning of the year of the Eucharist. Coincidence or Providence? Along with his extreme trust in providence, Blessed Guanella also had an ardent devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist. His undying affection for the Holy Eucharist began at a very young age.

It was on the very day of his first holy communion in a quiet meadow in Gualdera, seated upon some rocks that while meditating on the real presence of Jesus in his heart, that he formed his inalienable resolution to consecrate his life to the sacred ideal of relieving the suffering and maintaining the dignity of the outcasts of society. That time of prayer, joy and true union with Jesus and Mary remained in his memory throughout his life. While reflecting back upon this moment shortly before his death, Blessed Guanella disclosed to a close friend the genuine ecstasy he experienced that day and the kind of vision he received of our Blessed Mother with whom he had a gentle and easy conversation brought forth by his union with Christ through the reception of the Most Holy Eucharist. It was this union with and devotion to Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist that sustained him in the fulfillment of his mission. We also have a mission to complete and it is by following the example of Blessed Guanella in his devotion to the Blessed Eucharist and trust in Divine Providence that we too will find success.



When we begin to think, "things are more difficult now," we must remember that the "good old days" in which Blessed Guanella lived were filled with many obstacles and barricades, even to the point of having one of his facilities for over 200 people burnt to the ground by a group of anticlerical militants. When he heard of the tragedy, he immediately continued to celebrate the Mass which he had begun and then relocated the people to a nearby church where he then knelt before the tabernacle and prayed, "Lord, you have allowed the home to be taken from these people so now they will stay in yours."

It was "the fountain of holy love in Jesus Christ with us in the Most Holy Eucharist" that prevailed within him at all times. It is by placing Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist as the center of our lives, which will also fortify us in our mission to sustain and shine more brightly that flaming fire of the charity of God to all whom we encounter. To paraphrase Blessed Guanella, it is that presence of "Christ with us" in the Holy Eucharist that we can perceive that fountain of love, which enlightens the mind and brings peace to the heart. "The Holy Eucharist is the Sun of the earth, the life of the world, the true paradise on earth for all who believe."

It is the Eucharistic aspect of Blessed Guanella's spirituality, which makes possible a life of action and contemplation, which solidifies the foundation of perseverance to "prayer and suffering"; and which pervades a life of giving "Bread and the Lord." It is the Eucharistic aspect of his spirituality that we, as transmitters of today's Guanellian flame of charity, must imitate most fervently.

(Credit: Johnson, Sr. Darlene, DSMP. "Blessed Guanella and the Eucharist" *Now and at the Hour* April-May 2005: 11.)