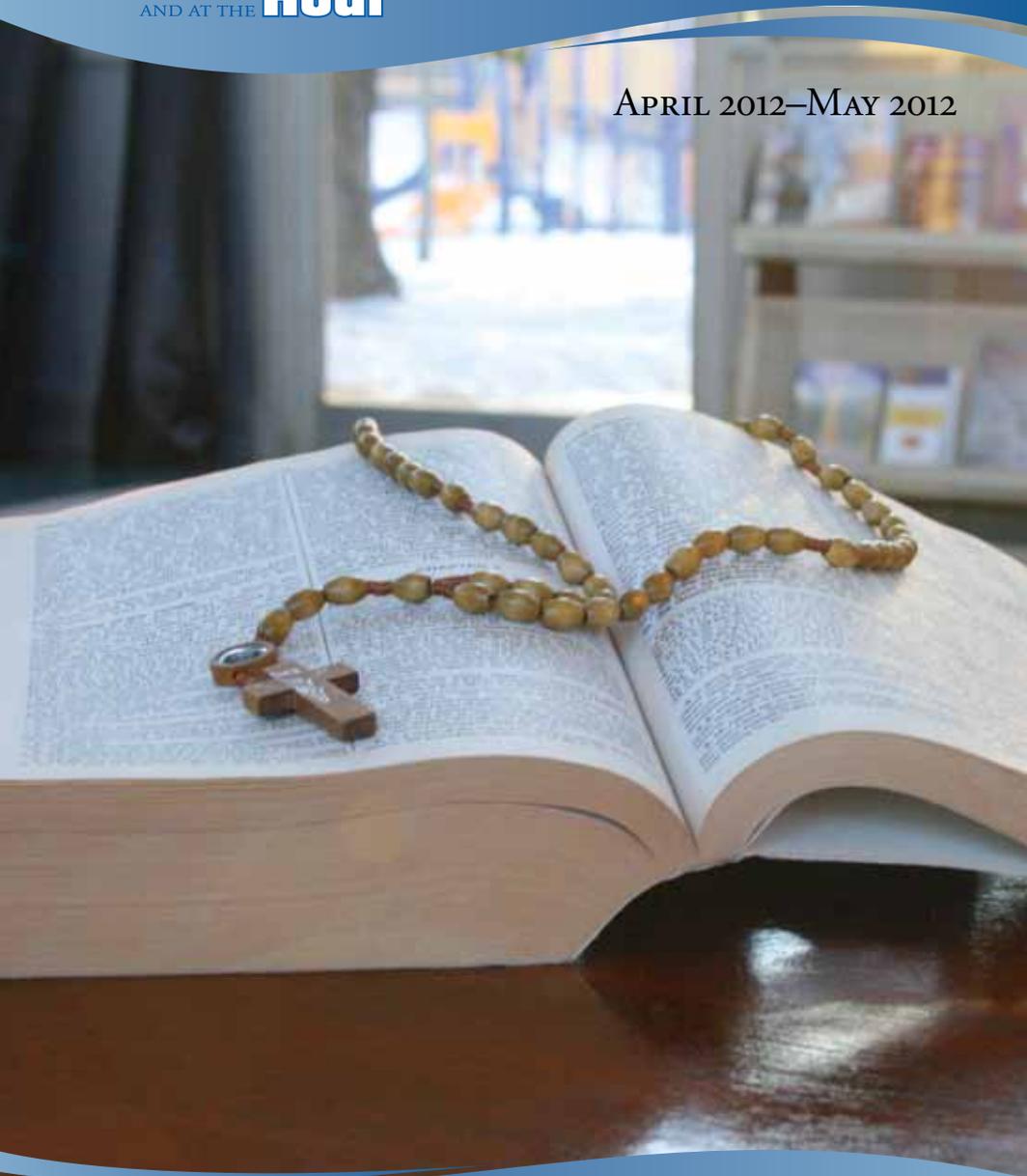


The **Voice of Providence**
now **hour**
AND AT THE

PUBLICATION OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

APRIL 2012–MAY 2012



Featured Story: *The Rosary of The Virgin Mary, page 23*

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Blessed Clare Bosatta:
A Guanellian Mystic

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*O St. Joseph, foster father of
Jesus Christ and true spouse of the
Virgin Mary, pray for us and the
suffering and dying of today.*

The Voice of Providence:

Is a non-profit bi-monthly publication of the Divine Providence Province of the Servants of Charity, a Catholic Religious Congregation founded by Saint Louis Guanella, (1842–1915).

Mission:

The divine call places the Servants of Charity in the heart of the Church, making us share more deeply in her mission in the world and especially in her care for the poor. In the Church, we are witnesses of God’s fatherly love and of the sacred value of each person, even of the least gifted.

In collaboration with the people of goodwill, we endeavor to safeguard the least ones so that we work toward building a better world, open to Christ and His Gospel.

Mother's Day, Life's Day

REFLECTION BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

God is our Father. He gives us life and provides for us. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jer 1,5).

Our parents are God's chosen instruments to bring human life into the world. Our love for our mother is the result of the unique bond we have with our mother from conception to adulthood and beyond. Jesus and His Mother, Mary, are the perfect model of bond between mother and child. Mary was Jesus' mother humanly and spiritually.



Unfortunately, some mothers and some children lose this bond. There are mothers who gave life to their children but are not able to provide for them spiritually or physically. They gave life to their children but are not able to maintain it. But God, who "so loved the world that He gave His only son," raises people every day who dedicate their life to maintain the lives of those who miss their mother's love.

Some women are called mothers because they gave life and some others are called mothers because they maintain life and support the life of those who do not have a mother.

These women could be the religious sisters, grandmothers, a relative, a good neighbor, or consecrated women. They should be honored on Mother's Day for their dedication in caring for life.

Blessed Clare Bosatta, a religious sister of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, died at 29 of TB caring for people of all ages who were handicapped, sick or abandoned by their family. For as tired and ill as she was, she gave her room to an abandoned child who was admitted in the middle of the night. On another occasion, during an icy night, she gave her only blanket to an older lady.

Blessed Clare was a mother who supported the life of the motherless and gave her life for the "children" she embraced as her own.

In gratitude and appreciation to all mothers, in a special way to Mary, the Mother of all mothers, let us pray, "Hail Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners."

Happy Mother's Day, Blessed Mother; Happy Mother's day, mom; Happy Mother's day to all the known and unknown mothers who care for life.



“New Life” Springs Eternal

BY SR. MARGARET MARY SCHISSLER, DSMP

We have gone through our forty days of Lent and now it is time to Praise the Lord for the “New Life” that we are being blessed with.

As Easter is fast approaching we remember that the Resurrection of Christ conquered the power of death and opened for us the way to eternal life. Each Easter our spirits are renewed in the Paschal Mystery that teaches us that we must die in order to rise again. We experience many losses in our daily life and the Resurrection shows us that hope and life awaits us after every storm. Once we accept our crosses in life they become challenges that we are to face head-on in order to transform into learning experiences. Let us all be Alleluia people and Praise God all the days of our life not only at Easter!

The Pious Union/Shrine of St. Joseph has experienced New Life also by completing its expansion project and welcoming more and more pilgrims to give honor to St. Joseph when they come and pray in the “light-filled” Shrine. We are now looking for dedications to cover the cost of our new pews. This is a great act to memorialize a loved one who is always in your heart or to honor a person who means so much to you. As we celebrate New Life we would like you to remember your loved ones with a permanent memory in the Shrine given in their honor and in honor of St Joseph.

We are asking for \$1000 donations for each new pew which will display a plaque in the persons honor. These pews are used every day during the Eucharistic Celebration and each Wednesday, dedicated to St. Joseph and the Adoration of Jesus. We would be honored to accept your intentions and place them before St. Joseph and his Son, Jesus, each and every day in St. Joseph’s Shrine.

Saint Joseph

Terror of Evil Spirits

By FR. PAUL OGGIONI, SDC

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his heels” (Gen 3,15).

From that moment the vindictive fury of Satan exploded after he understood the plan of God to redeem mankind deceived by his treachery. He is a spirit and therefore he was able to understand how compassionate God was. His pride and jealousy however, placed him eternally against the will of his God and creator; from then on, he started his perverse activity to take over creation which God had placed under man's control.

The Bible message, revealing the will of God to save mankind, presents the vision of an insidious and brutal conflict which through the centuries has characterized the human experience toward its journey to final salvation.

The old Eve is fallen mankind; the new Adam, desire of all generations, is the Word that was made flesh in the “new Eve,” the Virgin Mary. She is presented to us like God wanted our humanity to be, free from the snare of the evil one.

Our fallen humanity, restored in Christ but still enticed by the serpent, journeys toward the manifestation of the Lord who, at the end will crush His enemies under His feet.

We can imagine Satan's anger, who can see from one generation to another, his failure to destroy the plan of God. What is the weapon Satan is using to foil God's plan? The weapon is doubt! He is trying to convince man that God is far away, that He is not interested in us and our life. We live on earth, we make our way, and we are our own gods.

The sins of the flesh, injustices, robberies, vengeance do not come from Satan. They are the result of lack of faith. We do not believe in God anymore and therefore we think that everything we do for our pleasure and interest is right and justified.

God's sentence, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers,” marked Satan's destiny forever, to the point that one day he will unleash his anger against Jesus, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God” (Mk 1, 24).

“Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit” (Mt 1, 18).



Without doubt, this was Satan's best and last chance to thwart God's plan. He knows that he is powerless against Mary protected by her Immaculate Conception. However, he thinks that there is another opportunity to spoil God's plan. Joseph the promised spouse of Mary is "a son of Adam and Eve." He could break God's plan. Joseph is torn by doubts at Mary's silence and confused by her explanations by faith, hope and love. He is afraid of losing his honor in the eyes of family and society which considered his engaged spouse an adulteress and therefore punishable to death by stoning. Joseph would throw the first stone.

Satan already tastes his victory. If the Son of God, made flesh, would die with Mary by stoning, the plan of Redemption will die as well.

“Joseph the promised spouse of Mary is “a son of Adam and Eve.” He could break God’s plan. Joseph is torn by doubts at Mary’s silence and confused by her explanations by faith, hope and love.”



Joseph went through nightmares. He suffered the dark night of the senses refusing to perceive the presence of God and the joy to live; he suffered the night of the spirit and felt abandoned by God. He prayed with the Psalmist, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice!” (Ps 130, 1). With his prayer, Joseph defeats Satan and recognizes Isaiah’s prophecy in the message of the Angel, “The virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name Him Immanuel” (Is 7, 14).

Mary is the Woman who will strike the head of the serpent! Mary is the Virgin who will give birth to the Immanuel, God with us, the Messiah, and the expected Savior.

Joseph took his wife into his home and both lived a life of virginity faithfully dedicated to the manifestation of the plan of God in the Word made flesh.

When Mary entered the home of Joseph he was consecrated by the work of the same Holy Spirit through whom she conceived the Son of God.

For this very reason we honor St. Joseph as the terror of evil spirits and Patron of the Church.

The Church is the spiritual woman, the virgin who conceives the children of God while it is continually engaged against the snares of the devil. The church is the mother of all of us who believe in the love and mercy of God, who assures us the doors of hell will not prevail against her.

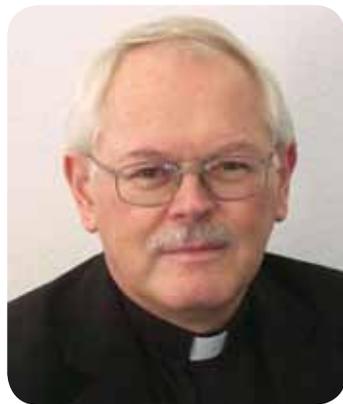
Fear of Death is Healthy and Christ-Like

By FR. RON ROLHEISER

When I was 22 years old, a seminarian, I was privileged to have a unique kind of desert experience. I sat with my siblings in a palliative care room for several weeks, watching my father die.



My father was young, still 62, and in good health until being struck with pancreatic cancer. He was a man of faith and he brought that to his final struggle. He wasn't afraid of God, whom he had served all his life, nor of the afterlife, which his faith assured him was to be joy-filled. Yet he couldn't let go of life easily, struggling almost bitterly at times to surrender. There was a deep sadness inside him, ultimately more soft than bitter, during his last weeks of life. He didn't want to die.



But his sadness was not rooted in a fear of death, of God, or of the afterlife. His sadness had to do with leaving this world, leaving his wife, his family, his community, his dreams for his retirement years, and with his own enjoyment of life. He was sad at the bitter fact he was dying while the rest of us and the rest of life were continuing on, without him.

I was reminded of this recently while reading an article in *America Magazine* by Sidney Callahan within which she shares about her own fear of dying. Here's the salient part of her text:

“But less severe losses also seep into my fear of dying. Intense sadness arises over giving up one's part in the ongoing drama of one's daily life and one's times. The familiar local round and love of one's family and people (including my adored dog) strongly bind us to our specific and beautiful world. To have this story interrupted is a painful prospect when we could go on forever. When your life is a blessed Sabbath banquet given by God here and now, leaving your place at the table can be hard – even for a more glorious celebration. In dying we will inevitably be entering into an unimaginable, novel existence, like a fetus being born. Despite the promised wonders in the world to come, I am afraid I identify with the happy contented fetus warm in the womb who does not want to come out.”

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Before dismissing this as an immature or less-than-a-holy feeling, we might want to examine Jesus' own fear of dying. The Gospels present His agony, His "sweating blood," as a moral drama rather than as a physical one. It's Jesus in His humanity, as lover, who is sweating His death. The Gospels make this clear. In describing his death they highlight His intense loneliness, His isolation, his being "a stone's throw away from everyone" and His feeling of abandonment. The pain He expresses in the garden isn't fear about impending physical pain, it's fear about impending abandonment, about His losing his place at the table, about the moral and emotional isolation of dying, of dying alone, of dying misunderstood, of dying as unanimity-minus-one.

It can be helpful to contemplate this for a number of reasons.

First, a deeper understanding of this can help us recognize and deal more openly with some of our own fears about dying. We need to give ourselves permission to be sad at the thought of death. As well, a deeper understanding of this can help us prepare ourselves for the loneliness we will one day all have to face. As Martin Luther put it: "You are going to die alone." You had better believe alone.

Next, a deeper understanding of this can save us from making simplistic judgments about how other people deal with death. Too common is the simplistic belief that if a person has real faith, he or she should be able to let go of life easily and die peacefully. There's truth in this, but it needs tons of qualification: As Iris Murdoch once wrote: "A common soldier dies without fear, Jesus died afraid." Jesus, as the account of His death in the Gospel of Mark makes clear, did not go through the death-process, the process of letting go serenely. He faced His death with faith and courage, but He also faced it with deep sadness, intense struggle, near bitterness and seeming darkness at the center of His faith. Healthy people, people who love life, find it hard to give up their place at this world's tables. Small wonder that Jesus struggled!

Finally, a deeper understanding of this can, paradoxically, help us to enter life more deeply. Jesus tells us we must lose our lives in order to find them. Among other things, this means accepting that one day we will lose our place at this world's tables. And that acceptance can give us a deeper appreciation for the tables of family, community and enjoyment that we sit at now in this specific and beautiful world.

Life and love are precious, on both sides of eternity. Our fear of losing our place inside of them is a healthy, holy fear.

Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Currently, Father Rolheiser is serving as President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas. He can be contacted through his website, www.ronrolheiser.com.

Saint Joseph the Worker

PARTIALLY EXCERPTED FROM
SAINTS OF THE ROMAN CALENDAR
BY ENZO LODI

In 1955 Pope Pius XII instituted the Feast of St. Joseph the Workman and decreed that the new Mass in the saint's honor be said on May 1st. It is not by chance that this day was chosen. May 1st is May Day, a Communist legal holiday in honor of the radical workers. In contrast, the Holy Father sets aside May 1st to give honor to St. Joseph and to restore dignity to labor. The Church wants people to have private property and to work out a decent livelihood through their labors. She knows that through this private property a person will have more initiative and be more diligent. Labor will be more dignified as it was for St. Joseph.

The liturgy for this feast vindicates the right to work, and this is a message that needs to be heard and heeded in our modern society. In many of the documents issued by Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI,

the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II, reference is made to the Christian spirit that should permeate one's work, after the example of St. Joseph. In addition to this, there is a special dignity and value to the work done in caring for the family. The Office of Readings contains an excerpt from the Vatican II document on the modern world: "Where men and women, in the course of gaining a livelihood for themselves and their families, offer appropriate service to society, they can be confident that their personal efforts promote the work of the Creator, confer benefits on their fellow men, and help to realize God's plan in history" (no. 34).





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make requests and send donations.*

Sermon on a Good Friday

FROM PARABLES OF A GOOD SAMARITAN BY CARLO LAPUCCI

On Good Friday 1908, Father Guanella and Father Bacciarini were at St. Mary's House in Lora, Italy to preach on the Seven Last Words of Jesus on the cross.

Father Aurelio Bacciarini was his right hand in running the Congregation and at the Founder's death, he would become his successor, Father General of the Servants of Charity, and later the Bishop of Lugano in Switzerland.

The two priests were supposed to explain the Seven Last Words by alternating at the pulpit. For the word "Sitio" (I thirst), Father Guanella climbed the pulpit and talked about the mysterious thirst that Jesus had before dying.

"On the cross, Jesus was thirsty. Jesus is still thirsty today. He is thirsty for us, for our souls. We are so hesitant to fully respond. We are reluctant to give Him our life, to return His infinite love, to bear witness to Him, and to bring more souls to Him. Jesus is thirsty for our sanctification, for my priestly soul, for my priestly sanctification that I do not pursue enough ... and because of that ... I cannot be ... of much help to him ..."

At this point his voice broke down and he was unable to continue. He mumbled some words and burst into uncontrollable tears of sorrow. Father Bacciarini, moved to the heart to see such humility and sincere sorrow, took the pulpit and finished the Seven Last words. While he preached, Father Guanella spent the time kneeling in his pew with his head in his hands, weeping tears of deep sorrow and in shame for not loving Jesus as he was supposed to.



Unconditional Parental Love

FROM “MAKING SENSE OUT OF BIOETHICS” BY FR. TAD PACHOLCZYK

Once I met a woman who had worked for years in fashion and modeling. Unsurprisingly, she was strikingly attractive.

She was accompanied by her teenage daughter who, by contrast, was rather unremarkable to look at, maybe even a plain-Jane. After spending time with them, I began to sense that the mother, whose life had largely revolved around her appearance, seemed to look down on her daughter, perhaps unconsciously, because of her average appearance. Her daughter seemed aware of this lack of maternal acceptance, and seemed troubled and uncomfortable as she tried to compensate and please her mom in other ways.

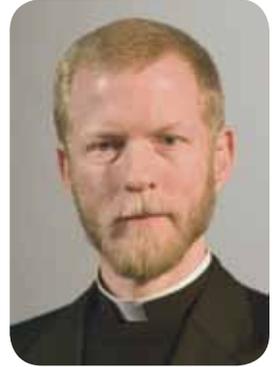
The girl's situation was a strong reminder to me of how important it is for every child to experience unconditional acceptance from their parents if they are to grow and mature in a healthy way. Unconditional love profoundly and beautifully molds us as human beings.

A growing number of parents in our society, however, no longer seem to hold to this key notion of unconditionally accepting their own children. If parents are told by doctors that their children might be born with physical or mental disabilities, many parents today will reject them and even yield to the temptation to end their lives through direct abortion.

I was recently discussing the Special Olympics with the father of a boy who has Down syndrome, and he remarked that when he takes his son to the local chapter, there seem to be reduced numbers of new children participating each year. He wondered if this could be due to the expanded targeting of Down syndrome children through prenatal testing and abortion.

Most unborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome, in fact, are never allowed to be born. Data from the United Kingdom indicate that between 1989 and 2006 approximately 92% of women chose to terminate a pregnancy with a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome, while in the U.S., several published studies suggest the figure may be somewhere between 87% and 98%. A great many Down syndrome children, indeed, never see the light of day.

In the face of this harsh data, the importance of explicitly repudiating the eugenic mindset that has taken hold in our society cannot be overstated. No child is perfect,





but every child is precious. We need to act as a people “set apart” in our attitude to the begetting of children who may be disabled. Historically, Catholics have always stood apart in this way.

Practically, this means overturning our culturally-conditioned attitudes towards “imperfect” children, and accepting every child without preconditions. We must push back against the almost ubiquitous pressure that counsels us to ensure that our children are born without defects.

Bioethicist Luke Gormally argues it this way: “In part these pressures are the natural temptation to avoid the burdens of care for the handicapped... In part, however, they are the pressures of cultural attitudes, assimilated by many Christians, towards the child.”

He continues: “For many it has become merely quaint to think of each child as a unique gift of God; children are more like planned acquisitions in our culture, acquisitions which should fit into our expectations about how our lives should go, about the ease and enjoyments that should characterize our lifestyle. A child who might threaten our ease may, if he or she is viewed as an acquisition, be thought of as a replaceable acquisition. And indeed genetic counselors will tell parents: you can terminate this pregnancy and try again for a ‘normal child.’”

A husband and wife are called to give themselves to each other completely and unreservedly, and to accept each other unconditionally in the marital embrace. Every child of theirs, whether entering the world with a handicap or not, is an expression

and fruit of themselves and their acceptance of each other. To reject their own progeny because of a disability is to reject each other on some level. To deny life to their own flesh and blood is also to reject an infinite gift from the Giver of gifts, and to arrogate to themselves a ruthless power over life. Meanwhile, the unconditional acceptance of a child as a gift of God flows from the true and unconditional acceptance of each other as husband and wife, even with all their spousal faults and defects.

As Gormally concludes, “Truly unreserved self-giving carries with it a commitment to unreserved acceptance of the fruit of that self-giving. The dignity of the child is only adequately recognized in the acceptance and cherishing of him just as he is.”

We do well continually to realign our thinking, so we can come to see how our children, whether “perfect” or not, are treasures and never possessions; they are gifts, and never acquisitions. They are blessings to be safeguarded and nurtured in the embrace of unconditional parental acceptance.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org







The Divine Providence Province: **Second Provincial Chapter**

By FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

The Servants of Charity of the Divine Providence Province celebrated their Second Provincial Chapter in Manila, Philippines in January 2012. It was a time of grace and prayer for the twenty-seven delegates from Italy, USA, India, Philippines and Vietnam.

The work of these delegates consisted of assessing the missionary work done throughout the Province during the past three years. In planning for the future the Chapter members followed the desire of Pope Benedict who re-launched the study and implementation of the “*New Evangelization*.”

The concept of *New Evangelization* does not indicate an aspect, a concern, a field or an area of the Church’s mission; rather the mission as such. *New Evangelization* is a “synonym for mission”. It is the new name for the Church’s centuries honored mission, the mission that is at the basis of being Christian and being Church. We could say that it urges us to reach a new awareness of what has always been the identity, the reason of being for every Christian and the Church, that is, Jesus’ mission that the Church lives by.



The expression *New Evangelization* entails an appeal to return to the essential, to those things proper to Christian life and to disseminate the originality of Christianity in today's world. Not only does this expression refer to new challenges, but first and foremost, it urges us to rediscover the essentials and to face new challenges thanks to a renewed acceptance of Christ and His mission.

Clearly, the new evangelization is connected to the new aspects that characterize today's world. We can identify intertwined scenarios that provide an overview of the complexity of today's world: secularization, migration, the challenge of social media, the new economic reality, the emphasis on scientific and technological research and the rise of new political and economic stakeholders at the global level. We must learn to decipher and live within these new scenarios, and to turn them into places of witness. We have to start from Christ and move forward from *Christ's witness to living in the world as Christians*. Rather than a new understanding of the Gospel, we have to savor its strength again. The *New Evangelization* requires an attitude of hope and a careful search for what can be shared and what can be resisted. This will only be possible if we remain tied to our roots. If we are linked to our roots, discernment will be true and profound.

The *New Evangelization*, therefore, consists of the boldness of the encounter, a renewed missionary trust and a renewed willingness to reach out to every person. It is the conversion of an ecclesial pastoral care into a missionary dimension; it is the ability to activate modern "*Courtyards of the Gentiles*," places to talk about God; a strong impetus towards the announcement open to dialogue.

However, the *New Evangelization* starts from *personal evangelization*. From this point of view, there is something in evangelization that is almost contagious, and comes about almost spontaneously; unplanned and unintentional. True life generates true life. The signs of the Gospel are by themselves contagious. A life that was renewed by a true encounter with Jesus Christ becomes automatically evangelized. The explicit proclamation of the Gospel should be kept alive, and intensified, because there is no evangelization without announcement. However, we need to beware of an evangelization in which the concern for leading others toward faith or for helping the Church grow gets the upper hand over the care for self-evangelization, the need for transforming oneself, or the dynamics of letting others reach us and God. In fact, Christ comes to me through others. The person that I evangelize also evangelizes me, even those who are not believers, who do not know the Gospel yet, or are poor. They do not realize it, but they mysteriously evangelize me. If the awareness of being evangelized is kept alive, a framework of human ties characterized by mutuality is also kept alive, as well as the central place of grace in evangelization. After all, God was the first to do so. Christ is the first evangelizer.

Cyclone Thane Strikes Cuddalore

FR. M. PETER SEBASTIAN, SDC

The joyful mood of Christmas and the eagerness of the New Year disappeared during the sudden appearance of Cyclone Thane, which struck Cuddalore on December 30, 2011.

The whole nation was shocked by the tragedy and havoc that was caused by Cyclone Thane which severely affected the coastal areas of Cuddalore and Pondicherry in the Archdiocese of Pondicherry. Cyclone Thane is now considered to be one of the worst cyclones ever experienced in Cuddalore. The low depression that formed around 450 km from Chennai in the Bay of Bengal traveled south, and developed into a heavy cyclone that cantered around the Cuddalore coast on December 29th, and moved across the coast in the early morning between 2 am and 4 am. Heavy continuous rains with whirling winds raging from 130 to 150 km. hit the coast, with huge tidal waves reaching an estimated 17 to 19 ft. high.





All were in fear, and 45 people died. Thousands of houses were evacuated by the forceful wind, and many trees were damaged and lost. Furniture and personal belongings inside the houses were carried away in the storm, and thousands of people were made homeless. Many people are suffering and without shelter, and unimaginable damage was caused to human life, homes, property, crops, livestock and trees were uprooted. The heavy gale blew for hours, and caused irreparable losses in the Cuddalore region. Since December 29th, electrical power supplies have been cut off at night, along with the entire communications network. Several regions were thrown into total darkness while in the clutches of Cyclone Thane. Many thatched houses, huts, mud homes, cement sheet houses and other temporary shelters were blown away. Many of the age old trees, coconuts groves, mangroves and cashew nut forests were uprooted, and various field crops submerged and damaged. Big buildings like churches, presbyteries, schools, hostels, and handicapped centers were even damaged.

The poor remained stranded in the streets without shelter, electricity, water, and other basic needs, such as milk and fuel. People struggled to move about because of all of the uprooted trees, and the transports got struck. People were unable to sleep during

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“As an expression of our love, we shared our shelter, food, belongings and a small amount of cash with the neediest people nearby.”

the nights that followed, because of fear, mosquitoes, a lack of electricity, and false rumors about earthquakes and thieves in the area. Peace was shattered and the routines of everyday life dismantled.

The Servants of Charity Community in Cuddalore extended its help by offering holy Masses and prayers, adoration and rosaries. We have shown our sincere hearts to our needy people by giving them water to drink, to cook and to take a bath. We have provided the opportunity for them to recharge their cell phones, emergency lights and all types of rechargeable devices without time limits. We visited our worker’s shelters, our poor students and our people’s homes without hesitation and comforted them. As an expression of our love, we shared our shelter, food, belongings and a small amount of cash with the neediest people nearby. Counseling and consoling were the most urgent needs that we were able to address.

We, the Cuddalore community, sincerely thank everyone; especially our confreres who have shown their solidarity, generosity and love. We thank you for all of your prayers and support. Many people have written and phoned to ask about us and this has provided great comfort. We extend our gratitude to everyone today. Let us continuously pray for the victims of Cyclone Thane, and continue to extend a helping hand.



The Rosary of the Virgin Mary

By FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

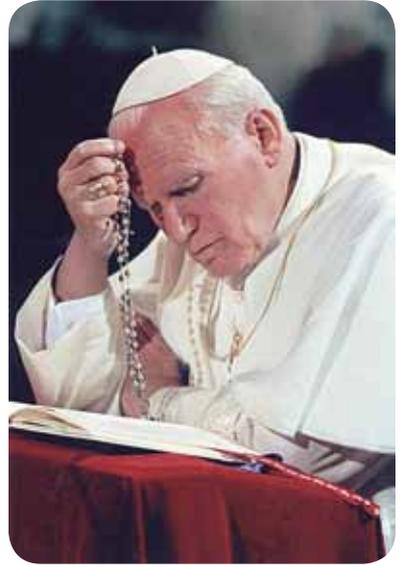
Blessed John Paul II was unmistakably a Marian pope, as shown by his writings, his visits to prominent sites of Marian apparitions, and his papal motto, “Totally Yours.”

The Catholic faithful loved their Pope who grew up under Nazi, then Communist oppression and lost his mother at the tender age of eight. However, many of the Catholic faithful missed the theological Marian aspect of John Paul II’s pastoral leadership of the church.

Mary, for John Paul II, is not relegated to private devotion, but is the “school” for a new evangelization in the modern world. She invites us to communal study, deepens our understanding of the gospel, and so eases our isolation. As pastor of the universal church, the Pope was drawing on an image of the familiar and universal mother’s love for her child as a means for spiritual nourishment. Yet because he used the ancient devotion of the rosary, the spiritual contribution of his example in learning from Mary has not received sufficient attention. We need to understand deeply the spiritual gift of John Paul II’s meditation on the Rosary. The Pope’s foremost role is that of pastor, and Blessed John Paul’s Marian reflections tend to the hunger in our souls.

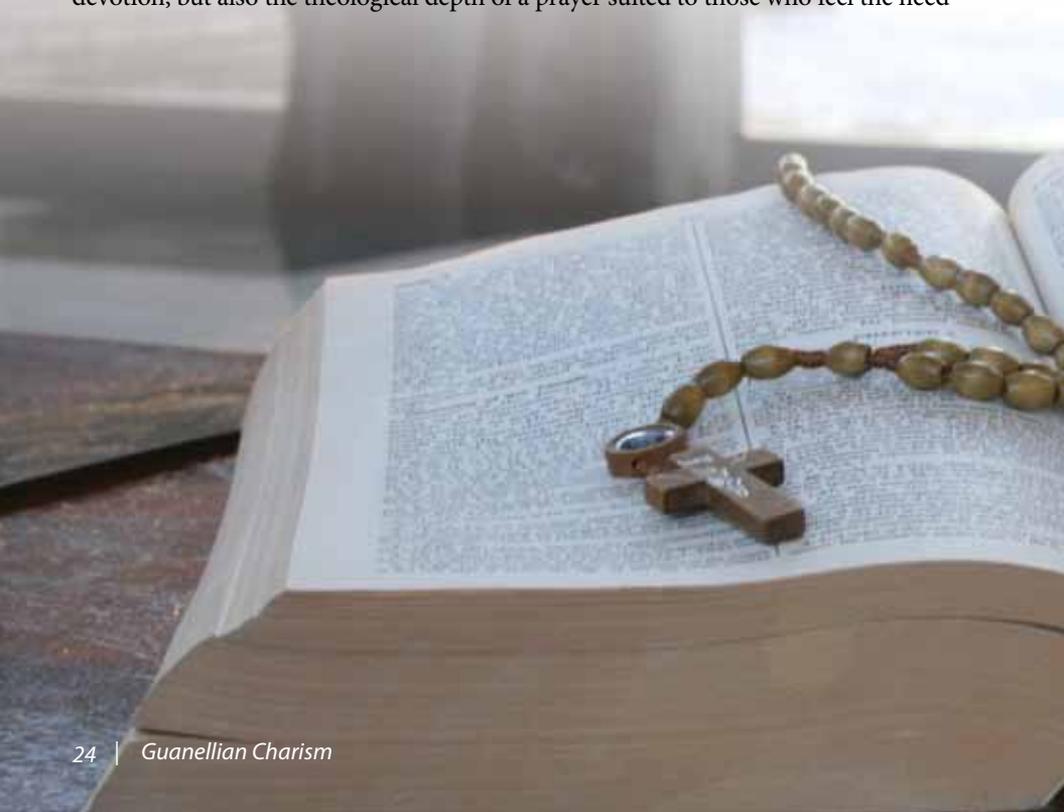
Given his devotion to Mary, it was no surprise when John Paul II recommended anew the rosary as devotion. He wrote lovingly of Mary in the gospels, shared the influence the rosary had had on his own life, and suggested that the rosary was a “school of Mary” for learning about Christ. It was, indeed, one of his most intimate reflections.

It was a great surprise when the pope added a new set of mysteries, the Luminous, to the long established Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious mysteries. In fact, from the start the Rosary had been mostly a prayer of the laity. It started as a popular practice as an imitation of the monastic recitation of the Breviary. The 150 Hail Marys, recited in the rosary, corresponded to the 150 psalms chanted by the monks and gave a way for the laity to contemplate scenes from the gospel. This is how the rosary long functioned in the prayer life of Christians who were largely illiterate.



After considering why John Paul II thought it necessary to enhance this lay devotional prayer, it's necessary to understand the theological reason for his having done so. While the Pope could easily be seen as interfering in the private devotions of the faithful, or as being a retrograde Pope clinging to a pre-Vatican II traditionalism, his encyclical *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (The Rosary of the Virgin Mary) honors the lay contribution to tradition and was in accord with the Second Vatican Council's definition of the church as the "People of God," in which the laity plays an important participatory role. From the start, this Pope's audience was the People of God. This was evident in his use of the media, his international appearances, his World Youth Days, the popularity of his international bestseller *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, and in the response of lay workers under Communist Poland who, heeding their Pope's conviction on the dignity of all human beings, brought down the Iron Curtain. Theology was no abstraction with this pope. He used it to electrify and empower his hearers. In an age that saw the abandonment of churches in Europe and the United States, he nourished the church spiritually by returning to the foundations of the faith. When John Paul wrote on the rosary, he embodied the Second Vatican Council's respect for the laity by offering theological reflection for professional theologians, clergy, and laity alike.

John Paul II used the rosary as an occasion to teach us how to again experience and treasure the mystery in our lives. The contemplation of Christian mystery is the most important reason to foster the prayer of the rosary. It offers the simplicity of popular devotion, but also the theological depth of a prayer suited to those who feel the need



“The Christian contemplates the events of Christ’s life in order to get back to the scene, to encounter Christ himself, to gain a taste of who Christ is, and to experience God speaking.”

for deeper contemplation. This ancient repetitive prayer can again still our souls. The faithful had the tradition of meditative prayer, namely the rosary. “Rosary” means “garland” and, by extension, “garden.” In this garden, John Paul II sought to teach us its loveliness again.

Contemplation is more than recalling information or thinking *about* God. The Christian contemplates the events of Christ’s life in order to get back to the scene, to encounter Christ himself, to gain a taste of who Christ is, and to experience God speaking. The twenty mysteries of the rosary are key moments in the gospels where Christ’s divinity is glimpsed. Through contemplation we enter those key moments to experience and deepen our friendship with Christ. We pray the rosary with “a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace,” to experience the Incarnation again, the mystery of God dwelling with humans in Christ.



All of the mysteries of the rosary serve the core mystery of the Incarnation, God's true presence with humanity. Prayer is communication with the living God and each mystery of the rosary is an opening to that communication; a font of nourishment for spiritual growth. The rosary is a garden, a circle, with the crucifix at the center. The rosary is not magical or mere bead counting but answers our human need for concreteness, for touching and imagining mysteries.

The rosary offers a spiritual pilgrimage, a chance to deepen and refresh our souls. "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest" (Mt 11, 28).

The rosary puts us in line behind Christ's mother. Through contemplation, we join her pilgrimage of faith as she guides us in the faith.



“The rosary offers a spiritual pilgrimage, a chance to deepen and refresh our souls. ‘Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest’ (Mt 11, 28)”

“Contemplating the scenes of the rosary in union with Mary is a means of learning from her to ‘read’ Christ, to discover His secrets and to understand His message” (RVM, 14). In our baptism, Mary ceased being a mere biblical character and became our mother in the life of the spirit as well. Walking through the mysteries with her, we learn to watch Jesus as she did, with loving, all consuming care, from the womb to the grave and beyond. “The rosary,” John Paul says, “mystically transports us to Mary’s side as she is busy watching over the human growth of Christ in the home of Nazareth” (RVM, 15). We align our spiritual discipleship with her, the first disciple.

My Call to be “Mother”

By SR. BRENDA McHUGH, DSMP

“I am NOT going to become a Sister! I want to be a mother with many children!” Sr. Ann still giggles when she remembers my words at that first day of recollection with the Sisters that I attended. It was “my mom’s idea” for me to come just to accompany my older sister who was the one who wanted to be a “nun”. I wanted NO part of it!

Being the second oldest of ten children, I was convinced at the age of twelve that I was being called to be a mother. I certainly had plenty of practice in caring for my younger brothers and sisters. It became second-nature for me to feed and wash, clothe and teach my younger siblings and I looked forward to the day I would have my own children.





I had prayed about it and was convinced of my calling to be “mother”. I knew that God never gives people talents and natural abilities, and then asks them to bury them or not to use them.

One day, I announced to my mother that I was going to be a mother and have a lot of kids, but that I did not necessarily want to have a husband. Of course, she was horrified at this idea, thinking that her pre-adolescent daughter was going to get pregnant early on without ever getting married. But inside of me, there was a deeper calling that simply did not fit into any categories with which I was familiar and I could not quite explain my inner desire.

It was not until several years later, in volunteering at a camp for children with developmental disabilities run by the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, that I saw with clarity the desire of my heart in action. I saw these vowed religious women as mothers. They were ministering to the children in their fragile human state with such love and care, nurturing their bodies and their souls, treating them with human dignity and as precious in God’s sight. In that moment, I knew and understood that the deep call to be a mother was still there. Every reservation that I had about being a Religious was gone. I saw the Sisters as real human beings, who gave their lives completely to God, by caring for His “little ones”! All the “road blocks”, I had put in the way were gone as I realized with greater clarity God’s call for me to be “mother” as a vowed Religious. As a Sister, I could be a spiritual “mother” without physically bearing children of my own.

A few years later, I asked to enter the convent. On August 15th, 1988, I made my First Profession of Vows, along with five other young women as a Daughter of St. Mary of Providence.

Today, I continue to be mother as a vowed woman religious as I serve in the Church and teach my students. Along the way, I found that my Mother was right, when she told me at the age of twelve that “children do need a father”. I also discovered it was entirely too lonely without a husband. The only one that satisfies all my desires is Jesus Christ and God is the most loving Father to all “our children”.

I believe that being a mother is at the very heart of a woman religious’ vocation. We are called in a very special way to work for God in teaching His children to believe, to forgive, to pray. God gives us an abundance of grace to feed the spiritually hungry, to counsel the doubtful, to be a guide and support to those in need of a “mother”. Edith Stein points out that the vocation to spiritual motherhood is a call to nourish others in the divine life and to lead them to God.

I feel privileged, enriched and empowered as I look to Mary. She knew what it was to be a woman and experienced the true sense of motherhood as she carried within her womb the Son of God, and as she held His beloved tiny body in her arms. It is beautiful for me to see that the picture of Our Lady of Providence, is one that shows her as mother, tenderly holding the Christ Child in her arms, in a tender exchange of a loving gaze. Her virginal motherhood is an example to me as I strive to live out my calling to be a spiritual mother! Pope John Paul II points out that “virginity and motherhood



acquire their full meaning and value in Mary, who as a Virgin became the Mother of the Son of God” (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women).

All women by their nature were created to give life to others. But how can a woman religious, who has taken the vow of chastity be a mother? Doesn't chastity imply a personal renunciation of physical intimacy and motherhood? Yes! But in giving up, I gain. I give up marriage with another human, but I choose a spousal relationship with Christ. I give up bearing children of my own to become totally available for union with God. In this way my self gift to God is not sterile, but fruitful and it bursts forth into the world with spiritual fruitfulness. In other words, as a woman religious I have a marriage and a family directly with God. God asks me to be an image of His life-giving love. Pope John Paul II explains in his encyclical “On the Dignity and Vocation of women”, that hidden in the heart of every consecrated woman religious, is a maternal potential that disposes her to love not only her Divine Spouse, but all whom He loves.”



This is what I promised to God as I took my vow of chastity. It is not always easy to live this in today's world. Yet, over and over again, I am invited to a “redemption of the body”, as St. Paul puts it: “to offer my body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship.” God doesn't say offer “your soul” or “your spirit” but “offer your body.” Your body is your physical presence in the world, it's where you live and it's how you act upon your environment. If God has your body He has you. “A consecrated woman religious who genuinely gives herself to others in community and receives others as gift experiences the opposite of lust that uses, rather than loves the other.” (Sr. Renee Mirkes)

The pope writes that “the motherhood of every woman, understood in the light of the Gospel, is similarly not only “of flesh and blood”: it expresses a profound “listening to the Word of the living God and a readiness to safeguard this Word, which is the Word of eternal life.” In Mary, this Word became flesh and lived among us. May it also be so for all who dedicate themselves to God. Pray for this for all women and men Religious and priests: that the Word of God may become so much a part of them, that it becomes enfleshed: living and breathing and creating new life in the souls of those they encounter.

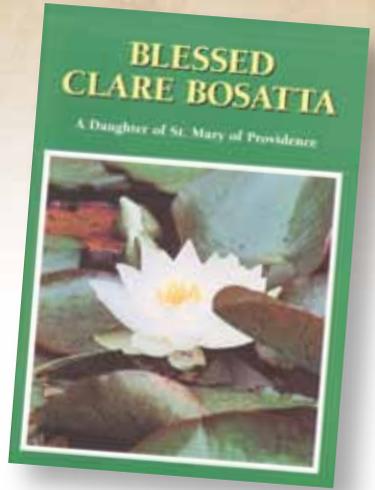
I know that Sr. Ann is still laughing at my initial rebellion against being a “nun” and I am laughing with her. I never dreamed I would be blessed with so many “children” with whom I get to share God's life! My life is richer and fuller than I ever imagined it could be!

THE PIOUS UNION OF ST. JOSEPH'S LIBRARY

Blessed Clare Bosatta A Guanellian Mystic

I just finished reading a delightful and amazing biography of Blessed Clare Bosatta.

This book contains fifty pages narrating, in awe and admiration, how a beautiful, bright and young girl falls in love with Jesus in the mystery of His passion and death on the cross. Through the contemplation of this mystery she ascends to a high level of mystic spirituality that even baffled her Spiritual Director, St. Louis Guanella. She died at the young age of 29, offering her life for the poor she served. She was the first victim of the Guanellian Family.



The saints are ignored in life and seldom understood. Their way of life keeps them apart from what is considered “normal.” They die unexpectedly and arouse public attention. They accomplish great marvels that exceed the laws of nature and we call them miracles. The fame of the sanctity of Sister Clare spread soon. She was proclaimed “Blessed” by Blessed John Paul II on April 21, 1991.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Joseph Rinaldo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC



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Mass times: Sun 10:00 a.m. • M, Tu, Th, Fr and Sat 11:30 a.m.

Wed 8:30 a.m. followed by Adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

Benediction: Wed 4:45 p.m. • Divine Mercy Chaplet: Wed 4:30 p.m.

Holy Rosary: Before Mass • **Stations of the Cross:** Friday at 11:00 a.m.

Anointing of the Sick: First Saturday during 11:30 a.m. Mass and when requested

Confession: Before and after Mass, upon request

To receive the Monthly Shrine Bulletin and all special event mailings, please contact the office at 517-522-8017 or send email to piousunion@pusj.org

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