

Down Syndrome

A TARGET FOR ELIMINATION

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Published By:

The Pious Union of St. Joseph
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Photos: St. Louis Center Archives,
Joseph Yekulis, Kelly Flaherty

*© 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.

The Sign of the Times

REFLECTION BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

We just finished one of the most bitter presidential campaigns ever remembered from anyone still alive. It was nasty. It was a dangerous hurricane of incomprehensible speeches, words and more words, promises, denials, accusations, deafening noises, blinding lights. It was too much to take. We shut our ears and our eyes and went with the flow. We are still asking what happened. It brings to my mind what happened in Germany seventy five years ago. The handicapped started to disappear. People pretended not to notice. Then the elderly started to disappear. Nobody objected. It was not in their backyard. It was not any of their relatives. It was none of their business. Then the Jewish started to disappear and their possessions were confiscated; they must have done something wrong. Then all children who were not born in perfect condition disappeared. People shut their ears, their eyes and their hearts. By the time they opened them they did not know what had happened.

In either situation, people failed to see the signs of the times and the gravity of what appeared to be isolated incidents taking place somewhere else and to other people. In our times we have signs that cannot be ignored. Abortion is legal and encouraged. Sodomy has been legalized. In the new health care the elderly and the handicapped are at the mercy of the ones who have none. Homosexuality is declared fashionable. God has been expelled from schools and public places. Prayer is not politically correct. Religion is overtly and openly persecuted. We have to open our eyes and our minds. We Christians cannot silence our faith but we shall work hard in the defense of life, the poor and God's law. We cannot be tolerant toward the intolerant and peaceful with the aggressive. There are some values that cannot be compromised. As we celebrate this Year of the Faith, we need to rediscover the roots of our faith. Restore our belief in God our Creator, Redeemer and Provider and become evangelizers. We do not need to go to foreign lands. We must start by evangelizing ourselves, then our families; especially the children. Find the courage to move through our neighborhoods and announce the good news. How do we do that? In prayer, faith and possibly as a group we can find enough inventive creativity to make a difference. Lent is a perfect time to evangelize, to die with Christ and to rise with Him to new life.

Shrine News

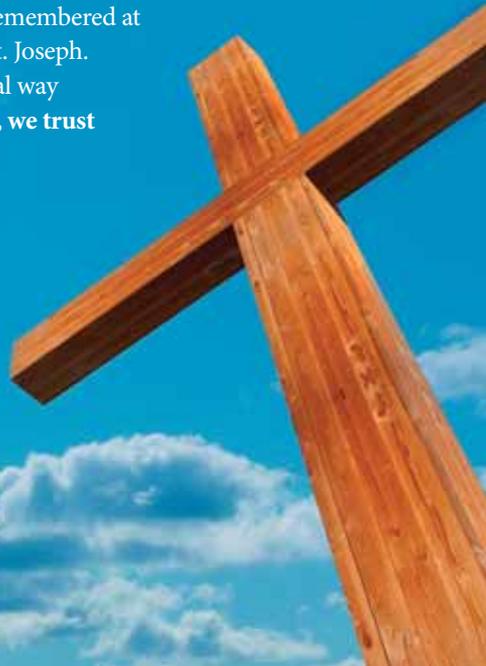
BY SR. MARGARET MARY SCHISSLER, DSMP

We are in the Easter Season and hopefully we all experience the beauty of being an “Easter People.” Especially in this Year of Faith each of us needs to be people of light so that others may be attracted to that light and search for Jesus.

Our past Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, stated in his 2008 Easter homily, “We must turn ever anew toward Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We must be converted ever anew, turning with our whole life toward the Lord. And ever anew we must withdraw our hearts from the force of gravity, which pulls them down, and inwardly we must raise them high: in truth and love. At this hour, let us thank the Lord. ...Let us pray to him in these words: Yes, Lord, make us Easter people, men and women of light, filled with the fire of your love.”

As people of “light” we need to embrace our Lenten time in our life. If you really think about it our days of fast and abstinence are not just confined to our season of Lent. Each day we may encounter some sort of sacrifice, voluntarily or involuntarily, that we need to deal with. Through prayer we are able to see those sacrifices as stepping stones to reaching a higher level of sanctity. This is what helps us to fully experience the joy of being an “Easter People” and spreading hope to all whom we encounter!

As you know May 1st is the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. This year that day happens to fall on Wednesday, our day dedicated to St. Joseph with Eucharistic Adoration here in the Shrine. As we continue to pray for all of your needs and intentions we ask that you send us your specific intentions that you want remembered at our Mass and throughout the day of prayer to St. Joseph. We ask him to intercede for all of you in a special way beginning with his Feast on May 1st. **St. Joseph, we trust in you to protect and guide us.**





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All donations are used for ministry at the Shrine of St. Joseph for the Suffering and Dying and for the continued building up of the Shrine in his honor.



For more information or to make a pledge, please call the Pious Union of St. Joseph Office Monday–Friday at 517-522-8017.

Send email to piousunion@pusj.org.



Sharing Your Devotion

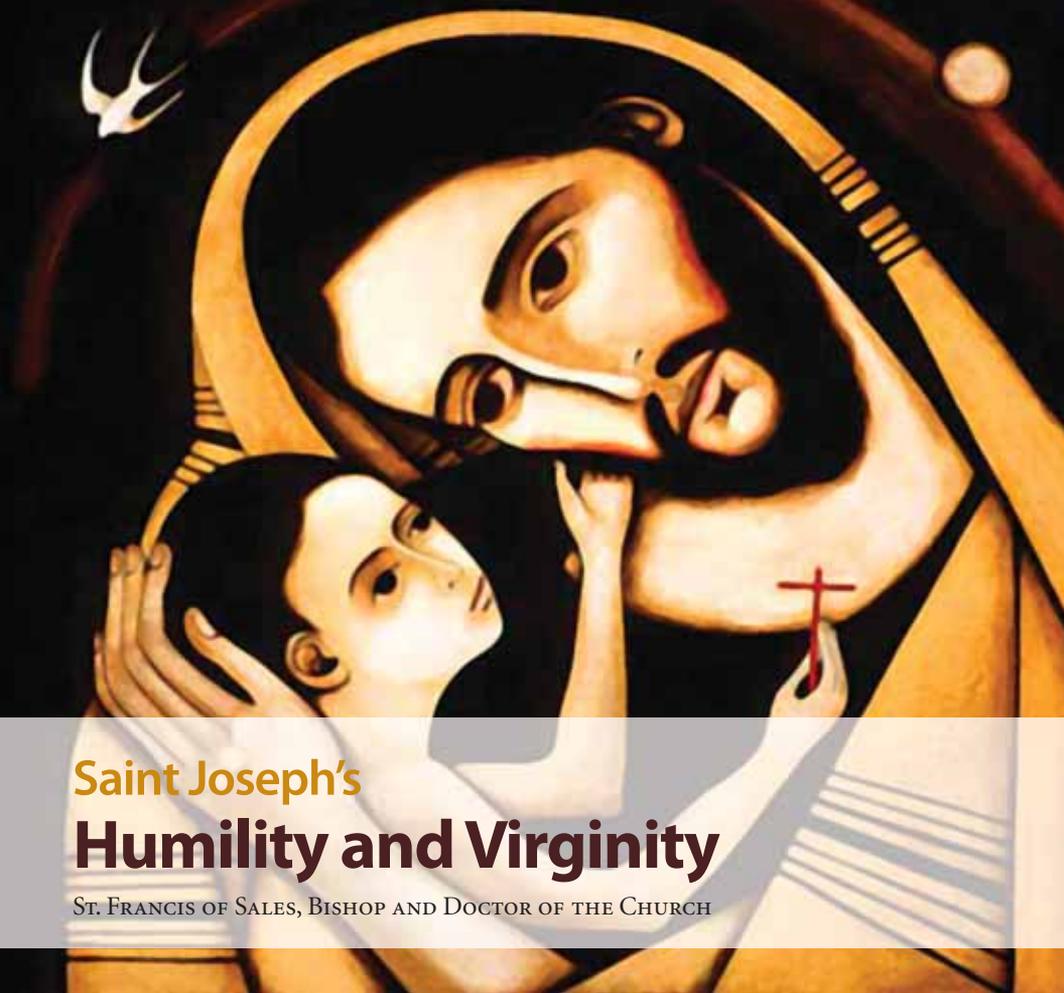
to St. Joseph with your family and all
those who God brings into your life

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Offer a Mass in thanksgiving to St. Joseph	\$10 offering
Share a copy of the Holy Cloak with a friend	\$5.00 each
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*Let's generously celebrate the 100th Anniversary of
St. Guanella's visit to the United States by spreading
devotion to our dear St. Joseph.*

*Please use the envelope in the center of the magazine
to make requests and send donations.*



Saint Joseph's Humility and Virginit

ST. FRANCIS OF SALES, BISHOP AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

Just as St. Joseph took care to guard his virtues under cover of very holy humility, he was also diligent in hiding the precious pearl of his virginit. If he agreed to be married, it was so that, without anyone knowing it, he could hide his virtue under the veil of a holy marriage.

On this subject, virgins and those who wish to live in chastity are taught that it is not sufficient to be celibate. If they are not humble and do not guard their purity in the precious vase of humility, they will be like the foolish virgins (see Matthew 25: 1–13), who, on account of their lack of humility and merciful charity, were turned down from the bridegroom's wedding feast and forced into the wedding feast of the world where the advice of our Divine Lord is not taken seriously. He says that you must be humble to have a share in the celebration, which means that it is necessary to practice humility, for He is the one who said: When you are invited to a wedding... go and sit down in the lowest place (Luke 14: 8, 10).

Consequently we realize how necessary humility is in order to preserve virginity. It is well known that no one shall take part in the celestial banquet and the nuptial feast God prepares for virgins in His heavenly home, unless the person practices it. Precious things such as sweet-smelling ointments are not exposed to the open air, as the fragrance would gradually be lost in the environment and spoiled by insects. Likewise, holy souls, fearing to lose the value and merit of their good deeds, should place them for safe-keeping in a vessel, not in a common one, but in a precious alabaster vessel, like the one used by Mary Magdalene as she poured out the ointment over the sacred head of Our Lord (see Mark 14: 3).



This alabaster vessel is the humility in which we must, in imitation of Our Lady and St. Joseph, keep our virtues and all that would draw admiration from the world, being happy to please the Lord and dwell under the sacred veil of self-abjection. We wait for God to come and take us to a safe place filled with His glory, and where He will Himself display our virtues for His honor and esteem.

To what extent do we think St. Joseph possessed virginity, the virtue which renders us like angels, if the Most Blessed Virgin was not only completely pure and innocent, but virginity itself? How much do we think that the one who was called to be the guardian of her virginity, or better still, her companion (since she herself did not need to be protected by anyone) must have possessed this virtue!

Both had taken a vow of virginity for a lifetime when suddenly God asked them to be united in a holy wedding, not contrary to their wishes or retracting their vows, but rather reconfirming and strengthening them in their holy enterprise. Moreover, they vowed then to live their lives together in a virginal way. St. Joseph was not given to Our Lady in order to make her break her vow of virginity, but to be her companion, so that the chastity of Mary might be preserved in its entirety in a more wonderful way under the veil and the shade of their blessed marriage and of the holy union of life which they shared.

If the Blessed Virgin is a gate, said the Eternal Father, we wish it to remain shut because it is the east gate of the sanctuary that no one can enter or exit (see Ez. 44: 1-2); on the contrary, it has to be reinforced with incorruptible wood, meaning a companion who is pure and bears the name of St. Joseph, and who, therefore, has to surpass all the saints, even the angels and Cherubim, in this commendable virtue called virginity.



Mailbag

I always look forward to receiving the publication. It is informative and prayerfully done.

Since becoming a member of the Pious Union of St. Joseph, I have with God's Grace developed a prayerful devotion to St. Joseph.

Thank you,

Amelie

Dear Pious Union of St. Joseph,

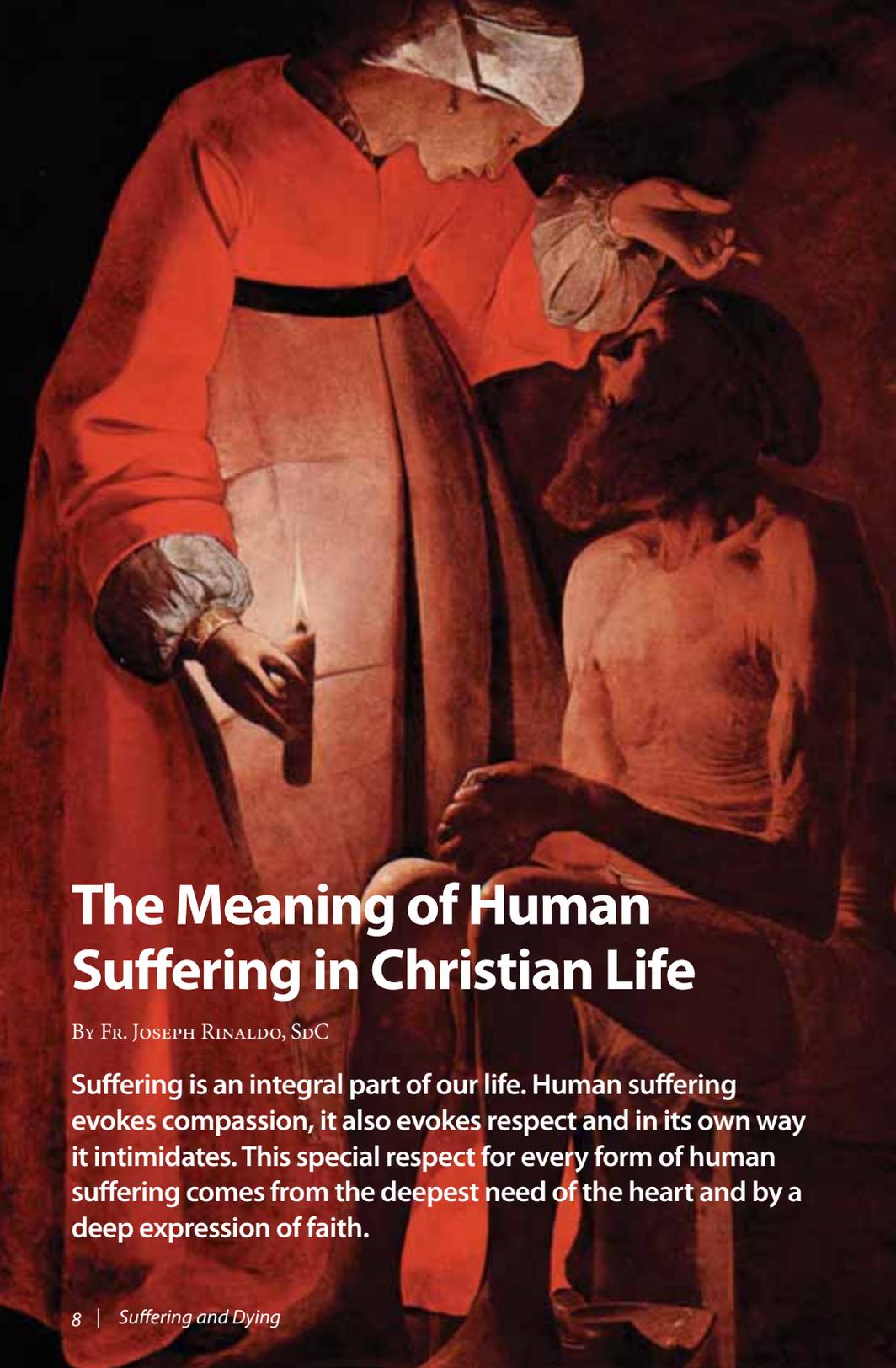
We hope the enclosed will help in your work of God making St. Joseph and the Holy Family better known and loved this Lent.

Indeed we feel the next Pope will be chosen on March 19th and his name will be Joseph - Protector of the Holy Family and church.

With our love and prayers,

Capt. John and Bea

Happy 25th Anniversary!



The Meaning of Human Suffering in Christian Life

By FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

Suffering is an integral part of our life. Human suffering evokes compassion, it also evokes respect and in its own way it intimidates. This special respect for every form of human suffering comes from the deepest need of the heart and by a deep expression of faith.

For this reason, St. Paul writes, “Now I rejoice in my suffering for your sake.” (Col 1,24). Suffering is part of the mystery of man. It is a personal occurrence within man’s soul which is unrepeatable, and cannot be expressed or transferred to others. Suffering is a problem which calls for relief, invites meditation, presents a problem and poses questions. There is physical suffering and moral suffering. Medicine is the art of healing, but suffering is something wider than sickness. The Bible is a great book about suffering. It describes several situations of suffering, above all moral suffering. We find suffering for the danger of death, the death of one’s children, especially the firstborn or only son; the lack of offspring, nostalgia for one’s homeland, persecution and hostility, mockery and scorn, loneliness and abandonment, the remorse of conscience. We find it difficult to understand why the wicked prosper and the just suffer, along with the unfaithfulness and ingratitude of friends and neighbors. The Old Testament identifies suffering with evil. Man suffers on account of evil which is a deprivation or distortion of good. He particularly suffers when he ought to have a share in the good and does not have it.

Thus in the Christian view, the reality of suffering is explained through evil, which always refers to good. For each form of suffering, inevitably arises the question: Why? It is a question about the cause, the reason and the purpose of suffering and its meaning. It is obvious that physical pain is common to the animal world. But only the human being knows that he is suffering and wonders why. Why the suffering? Why does evil exist? Why is there evil in the world? We can put this question to God with all the emotion in our heart and with our mind full of dismay and anxiety. God expects the questions and listens to them as we read in the book of Job. It tells us the story of this just man, who without any fault of his own is tried by innumerable sufferings. He loses his possessions, his sons and daughters and finally he himself is afflicted by a grave disease.



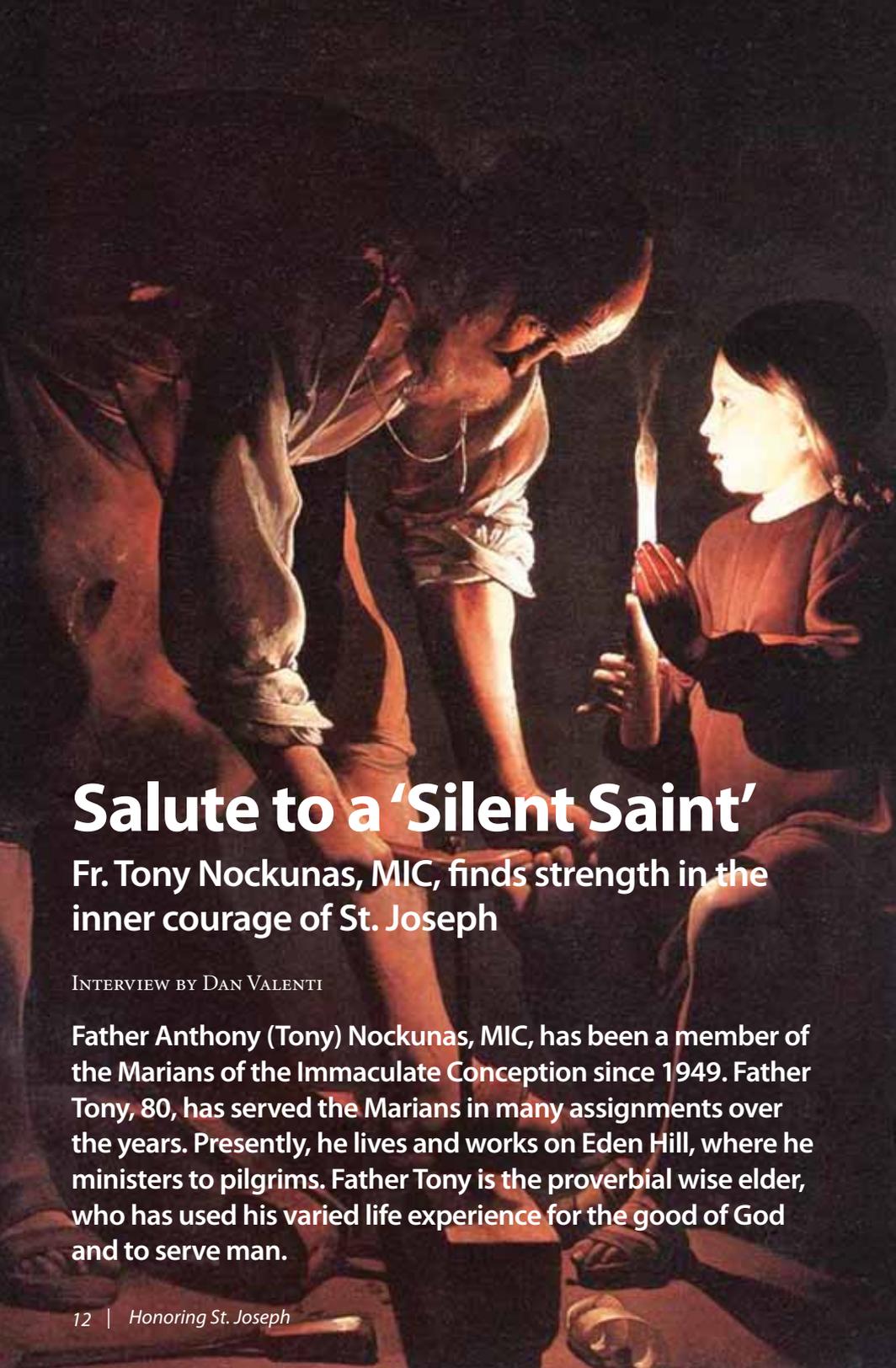


“...ONLY THE HUMAN BEING KNOWS THAT HE IS SUFFERING AND WONDERS WHY. WHY THE SUFFERING? WHY DOES EVIL EXIST? WHY IS THERE EVIL IN THE WORLD? WE CAN PUT THIS QUESTION TO GOD WITH ALL THE EMOTION IN OUR HEART AND WITH OUR MIND FULL OF DISMAY AND ANXIETY.”

In this horrible situation three friends come to his house and try to convince him, that since he has been struck down by such varied and terrible sufferings, he must have done something seriously wrong. Job however rejects their conclusion for he is aware that he did not deserve such punishment. In the end, God himself recognizes that Job is not guilty. His suffering is the suffering of someone who is innocent; it must be accepted as a mystery which we are unable to penetrate completely by our own intelligence. In order to discover the profound meaning of suffering, we must open wide our heart to the suffering. Love is the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. The answer has been given to man by God in the Cross of Jesus.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3,16). Eternal life means liberation from evil. Jesus came to free us from evil so that man would not perish. Liberation from evil must be achieved by the only begotten son through His own suffering. The Prophet Isaiah foreshadows the suffering of Jesus in the Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant, *“He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our grief and carries our sorrows; yet we esteem him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgression, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”* Human suffering has reached its culmination in the passion of Christ. At the same time human suffering has been linked to love. The cross of Christ has become the source from which flow rivers of living waters. In it we rest the question of the meaning of human suffering, and read into it, to its depths, the answer to this question.

The Redeemer suffered in place of man and for man. Every man has his own share in the Redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of Redemption. Thus each man, in his suffering can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ. Suffering is always a trial, and at times a very hard one. The Gospel paradox of weakness and strength are best communicated to us through the Letters of St. Paul. The apostle writes in the second letter to the Corinthians, “I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” In the second letter to Timothy we read, “And therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know I have believed.” And in the letter to the Philippians he will even say, “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.”



Salute to a 'Silent Saint'

Fr. Tony Nockunas, MIC, finds strength in the inner courage of St. Joseph

INTERVIEW BY DAN VALENTI

Father Anthony (Tony) Nockunas, MIC, has been a member of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception since 1949. Father Tony, 80, has served the Marians in many assignments over the years. Presently, he lives and works on Eden Hill, where he ministers to pilgrims. Father Tony is the proverbial wise elder, who has used his varied life experience for the good of God and to serve man.

Q How did your devotion to St. Joseph begin?

A: As a boy, but my devotion to Mary was stronger. I grew up on a farm in Lithuania, one of eight children. I didn't have specific ideas about religious life, but the Lord had a plan. My mother was a devout Catholic, more than my father, who had to work the farm.

Lithuania suffered from great atrocities. The Russians occupied the country until the Germans invaded in 1940 and threw the communists out. In 1944, the Russians drove out Germany. I witnessed gunfire between the two armies in a battle near our farm. The Germans used the farm as a field hospital.



Q At what point did your faith life include a priestly vocation?

A: Later. I left Lithuania in 1944, when I was about 16. That year I went to stay with my aunt's family in Germany. I stayed through April 1945. It was a rough life, but we had enough to survive.

I think because of the impermanence resulting from the war, I started paying attention to the things that last. That's when my vocation began, although I still didn't know it. High School is when my spirituality began to develop.

Q Is that when St. Joseph came into the picture?

A: Yes. Gradually, as I desired to serve God as a priest, I became attracted to St. Joseph and the mission God gave him. Joseph's call came directly from God, as I sensed about my calling.

The Scriptures tell us St. Joseph was thinking about divorce. In doing so, Joseph wasn't thinking of himself. He was thinking about God and Mary.

When he learned Mary was pregnant not by him, Joseph didn't want to offend God, and he didn't want to hold Mary up for insult and ridicule. He thought the honorable solution was divorce. But then Joseph had a dream that came from God, and he believed God. Joseph said "yes." I learned from this and also said "yes."

Q How else did St. Joseph influence you?

A: I've admired St. Joseph for his industriousness as a faithful provider of his family. He worked as a carpenter, and in private revelation, we learn about his goodness, for example, not charging for work if someone had no money.

“...I LEARNED TO PRAY IN LATIN AND BEGAN PRAYING REGULARLY TO ST. JOSEPH, TRUE SPOUSE OF MARY AND FOSTER FATHER TO JESUS. MY PRAYER INCLUDED A REQUEST FOR INTERCESSION ON BEHALF OF THOSE WHO WOULD BE DYING ON THAT PARTICULAR DAY OR NIGHT.”

My devotion to St. Joseph made progress when I became a student at the seminary in Rome. At that time, I joined a confraternity that prayed for those who were dying. This brought me into a greater relationship with St. Joseph, because he is the patron saint of a happy death.

Q Why is he patron of the dying?

A: He had Jesus and Mary at his side when he died! What could be better? [Fr. Tony laughs] Scripture does not mention Joseph's death, but tradition and inference hold that he died before Jesus and Mary. The Gospels contain several references by others to Jesus' relatives and mother, where these people make no mention of Joseph. He only appears during the childhood of Jesus.

Q Did helping the dying appeal to you on an emotional level?

A: That's a good way of saying it. In the seminary, I learned to pray in Latin and began praying regularly to St. Joseph, true spouse of Mary and foster father to Jesus. My prayer included a request for intercession on behalf of those who would be dying on that particular day or night. Almost 60 years later, I still pray this way and each year offer a Mass for the dying.

Q The Gospels don't say much about Joseph. Why?

A: It's true. Saint Joseph is one of the "silent saints." He doesn't utter a word in the Bible. I think he was a quiet man. He had an inner strength that comes from great faith.

We know of his deep faith because of the way he could discern and trust the voice of God, who spoke to him in dreams. He knew Jesus was special because the angel told

him in a dream that the boy was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph believed this.

Q What other qualities do you see in St. Joseph?

A: Saint Joseph lived his spirituality. He was a workingman and provided for Mary and Jesus. He also remained open to God's instruction, listened to the Old Testament prophets, and prayed the Psalms. I have no doubt he was industrious, fair, and good. He's the patron saint of workers.

Q He seems a courageous man.

A: I agree. When I counsel people with family problems, I recommend they pray to St. Joseph. The same with refugees. When I worked as a parish priest in Plano, IL, we had many Hispanics who have left their countries and who needed help. I would refer them to St. Joseph, because he, too, was a refugee. He took Jesus and Mary [out of Judea and] into Egypt to escape danger. That took great courage. I think I know, because I, myself, am a refugee from communism.

Q Is there anything else to add?

A: One last thing to remember about our devotion to this special saint. Sometimes when we think of the Holy Family, St. Joseph gets forgotten. Everyone would profit greatly by including St. Joseph in daily prayer.

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Guanellian Lay Movement in Rhode Island

By FR. SILVIO DE NARD, SdC

A Catholic parish is part of a larger body called a diocese, which in its turn is a member of a larger body that is the Catholic Church. A diocese is presided over and governed by a bishop under the leadership of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome.

Inside the Church there is a group of people called “Religious.” That’s not saying that the rest of the faithful are un-religious. Religious or consecrated persons are those who belong to an Order or Congregation and are bound by the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience plus the fact that they live in community life.

The Servants of Charity Institute is a religious congregation, founded by St. Louis Guanella, whose purpose of being around is to take care of those in material and spiritual poverty: elderly in need, youth in need, handicapped in need.

Why on earth are they taking care of a Parish in Rhode Island? Are not parishes supposed to be run by diocesan priests?

Father Guanella was born as a diocesan priest and parish life was his first love. However, he discovered very soon that a parish was not enough to him. It was too small for his big heart burning with charity and spreading around like lava from a volcano. One other group that his Religious were to take care of was parishes. And in the parishes they go carrying their own identity and philosophy: love to all.

A Guanellian parish priest needs a big heart because the needs of his parishioners have to find refuge in it. His being a disciple of Father Guanella cannot be disregarded because he is working under a Bishop or because his religious house is a rectory. On the contrary, his Guanellian being gets new horizons and his approach to spiritual and material poverty widens.

“THE GUANELLIAN LAY MOVEMENT,
BY TAKING UPON THEMSELVES THE TASK OF
BEING “GOOD SAMARITANS,” BRING TO THE
WORLD THE DIVINE AIR OF LOVE AND MERCY
THAT ONLY THE GOOD LORD CAN GIVE.”

In East Providence, Rhode Island, the Servants of Charity serve the Sacred Heart Church and School. Their spirituality, through mysterious channels that only the good Lord knows, affects the whole parish. I use the present tense because our Guanellian charism and spirit is a reality that affects the whole Church and the faithful that enter into contact with them.

There is a small group of parishioners that have requested to be introduced more fully and deeply into the riches of Father Guanella. Five times a year they meet and discuss a topic centered on Father Guanella and his spirituality that takes inspiration from the Sacred Heart of Jesus and his love towards us, all of us without distinction.

Jesus ministered to the people in need of spiritual and material help. Who are we not to imitate and carry out that charitable ministry? Father Guanella understood the importance of charity and service in the life of any Christian. Guanellians are all those who serve and give their time and energy to the less fortunate, the less healthy, the marginalized, those who have no one.



The Servants of Charity cannot reach everyone. They need helpers. The Guanellian Lay Movement is those helpers called by the Lord to bring love and mercy into this crazy world that seems obnoxious to self-giving and true love. By taking upon themselves the task of being “good Samaritans,” they bring to the world some fresh air, the divine air of love and mercy that only the good Lord can give.

Parishioners and students of the Sacred Heart Parish are not holier than others. They are sinners like anybody else. Yet, by having as guides two Guanellian Priests and two Guanellian Sisters, they have the rare fortune to be introduced to the spirit and charism of Father Guanella, a man of action, of concrete deeds, of charity made reason of life.

Together, Priests, Sisters, and Laity, can do a lot in spreading the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of peace and justice, mercy and love, forgiveness and self-giving. Prayer and suffering are the two Guanellian words that make a difference to us personally and to the world in general. Father Guanella said that together we can do a lot, divided we cannot do much both for the glory of God and for the prosperity of society.

And the Winner is...

Life!

By FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

Amid the furor of the United States elections, we did not pay much attention to some extremely important results from the same elections around the country. Now that we started to analyze our failures and successes, one surprising story stood out. Against all odds and projections, the citizens of Massachusetts voted to reject physician assisted suicide. It seemed impossible in Massachusetts, the first state in the Union to allow homosexual marriage, with a media machine on its side.



The “Dignity 2012” campaign proposed to allow physician-assisted suicide for those diagnosed with a terminal illness with six months or less to live. The American Medical Student’s Association endorsed the act claiming that quality of life is an important part of health care, supporting the choice of terminally-ill patients who wish to end their suffering.

Massachusetts congressman Barney Frank not only supported the act, but also condemned the opponents of physician assisted suicide claiming “I know firsthand how extreme these groups can be, Death with Dignity is a personal choice and we deserve to have a fair and meaningful dialogue, not a smear campaign loaded with scare tactics and funded by radical anti-gay, anti-choice hate groups.” So with the proponents of the act held up as protectors of human dignity and those who opposed represented as hate groups, by October 2012, one month away from the election, polls showed that 65% of voters were favorable to the measure.

The Catholic Church had started a counter campaign with several bishops from Massachusetts working to defeat the measure by buying advertisements, but on the eve of November 4th it seemed that the people of Massachusetts had made up their minds. The next day, as the 2.7 million residents of Massachusetts voted, slowly the tide turned, Death with Dignity was defeated 51% to 49%. A tiny margin of 62,000 votes made the difference when a few weeks before a landslide victory had been predicted.

What happened? It wasn’t money, the millions of dollars hadn’t convinced voters, nor did propaganda or television praises turn the tables. The secret was grassroots at its best; people, especially senior citizens, stopped for a minute to think of the consequences of



this act. At first we start to terminate the ones who ask, then we make a move on the ones who could ask; then again we interpret the intention of the ones who do not say anything. From there to the doctors making their own decision, the step is small.

The Pentecostal Church joined the Catholic Church in this humble campaign. Knocking on doors, phone calls, emails and preaching, made a difference.

Pentecostal teaching holds that every individual is made lovingly by God and is therefore a divine creation. God determines the destiny of every individual, although He does not often reveal His reasons. Taking a life, even one's own, is sinful, because it interferes with God's plan. Pentecostals also believe that life begins at conception; therefore, abortion is murder and a sin.

The Catholic Church recognized that physician assisted suicide, while presented as a "compassionate" solution, not only violates church teaching, but also holds deeper dangers for the poorer and disadvantaged classes. The poor, especially those with disabilities or racial minorities, already have difficulties accessing good healthcare. As suicide for terminally ill and inevitably, those with "low quality of life" became more diffuse, these groups would find themselves targeted in short order. As Blessed John Paul II warned "a right to die will inevitably give way to the duty to die." What could demonstrate more dignity than the death of this beloved pope, who in need of assistance and visibly ill continued to carry out his mission until his dying breath?



In 1985, New York State Governor Mario Cuomo rejected the proposed law on assisted suicide reasoning that, “It must be recognized that assisted suicide and euthanasia will be practiced through the prism of social inequality and prejudice that characterizes the delivery of services in all segments of society including health care. Those who will be most vulnerable to abuse, error, or indifference are the poor, minorities, and those who are least educated and least empowered.”

The abortion industry giant, Planned Parenthood, places many of its clinics in neighborhoods with a high density of racial minorities, and the same group would be targeted for physician assisted suicide. The pressure would intensify as the United States becomes increasingly a welfare state and the costs of taking care of the elderly and “unproductive” members of society grow unsustainable.

This David and Goliath story also teaches that we should learn to bond with those who share the same concerns for the vulnerable and voiceless to defeat the ever-growing tide of evil. We are celebrating the Year of Faith and the Church expects us to be involved in the New Evangelization. This is one example of how we can get results by getting involved and going down into the streets to witness our faith. We cannot afford anymore to watch what happens passively. Before we know it, evil will move into our neighborhoods and knock at our doors.



The Spirituality of Blessed Clare

AND THE

Vocation of a Daughter of Saint Mary of Providence

SR. DARLENE JOHNSON, DSMP

When someone is inspired by another it is usually by a certain aspect or virtue of that person's life. Yet, when a righteous person expresses and lives their life of virtuosity to its fullest there are many admirable aspects of that individual which in turn inspire numerous others. Sr. Clare was this type of virtuous person.

I would like to take this opportunity to express how her life of virtue has touched my heart and inspired my vocation more than 100 years after her life.

Even though I had a relationship with God of sorts I was still searching for His real Presence. Upon entering a Catholic Church I somehow knew that He was truly there. I didn't know how, I just knew that I could feel His presence and I wanted to know more. After seeking guidance and completing the RCIA course I received the Sacraments of Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation entering fully as a member of the Church, the body of Christ at the Easter Vigil on April 20th. That came to be the greatest day of my life. Even then I didn't fully understand. I knew something wonderful had happened to me but I had no idea where God was leading me. I was still under the perception that I was in control of my life.

It wasn't until some years later when I found myself working for the Daughters of St.



Mary of Providence that I was introduced to the life of Blessed Clare. As I read and was told of her life by the Sisters a mysterious bond began to form. My first impression was one of awe. How could anyone at such a young age be so holy? Yet, her holiness was not of some spectacular great deeds, but rather of simplicity in heroic charity. She had a love for God that was so intense it poured out in all she did. Nothing was too difficult nor was there affliction too painful. Everything she did was a labor of love, resting on and emerging from a solid love of God. So strong was her faith that at every arrival of internal sorrow or physical hardship she saw opportunities to share in the Passion of her Crucified Spouse, and with a smile ever on her lips she secretly and gratefully implored Him not for relief but rather to let her have more.



As much as I grew to admire her and have a great desire to imitate her in my mind I found despair thinking how could anyone, especially someone like me ever grow to be someone like her. First of all I was already older than she was when she died. Second I was a convert to Catholicism unlike her who was raised in very strong Catholic surroundings. And there was also the fact that she was a religious Sister. I would pray and think and wonder what God was trying to say to me. Finally late one evening I was writing in my journal, April 20, 2000, “I think God may be calling me to be a Sister.” I prayed and prayed and prayed. I couldn’t understand what I was being called to do all I knew was that I was being called and I had to answer. So, like Dina Bosatta I reluctantly left what I thought was meant to be for me and entered the Daughter’s of St. Mary of Providence. It wasn’t an easy transition of life but following Sr. Clare’s secret of adaptation that never fails—obedience, I was graced with a gradual growth in spiritual maturity and understanding.

The more I got to know about Blessed Clare the more I knew I was following the right path on God’s journey for me. As I grew in my own love for God I began to see more

connections, not just the coincidental such as she was born in 1858 and I in 1958, her feast day is April 20th and I was Baptized and recognized my call to religious life on April 20th but more so the desire to bring others to God. The grace to keep God in my heart at all times in all places and look to Him for strength was gradual. The grace to allow God to use me as His instrument to bring hope happiness and healing to others while realizing with all my heart that it is God who does all things and I am only His servant. Best of all the grace to realize that I was right I could never be another Blessed Clare but I can be a Daughter of St. Mary of Providence imitating the virtues that made her so holy to the best of my ability.

Embracing the Spirituality of Blessed Clare we Daughters of Saint Mary of Providence are happy in our work, as we only could be in such Christ-like services; still there is a cloud that sometimes dampens our spirits—the fact that fewness of numbers prevents our doing all that could be done for God and suffering humanity. Having been given a glimpse of the life of Blessed Clare and how she affected my life allows me to hope that in some way it may touch the heart of someone who, like myself, had not previously considered the religious life to allow themselves to be open to this wonderful opportunity to transform their life.





Down Syndrome

A TARGET FOR ELIMINATION

“Denmark, in its Promethean attempt to become a “perfect society,” seems to speed up the stages of the project to eliminate all individuals with Down syndrome. In 2004 the Danish government gave a powerful impetus to this eugenic battle offering the possibility of having free access to prenatal diagnosis for the identification and subsequent elimination of the “defective” unborn child through abortion.

The goal apparently is to reach the record of being the one and only country in the world “free of Down syndrome.” This dream has to be realized by 2030.

It was revealed, at the end of last year, through an article by journalist Nikolaj Rytgaard that appeared in the Danish newspaper Berlingske, with an ominous statement that “the last Danish child affected by down syndrome, to be born soon.”

If we consider, then, that the means used to enter the Guinness Book of World Records is the physical removal of the fetuses, the enthusiastic definition given to the project by Niels Ulbjerg, Professor of Gynecology and obstetrics at the University of Aarhus, as “truly an extraordinary enterprise” seems equally evil. It is the eternal temptation of man to reach perfection without God. A dream that is destined, as history always shows, to turn into a nightmare.

St. Augustine of Hippo, a champion of Christian realism had already understood this some 1,600 years ago, when, in his work Contra Academicos, stated that man can not be perfect if he does not reach his goal that is to search with all effort the truth of God. He also explained that in so far as man tries to be perfect, he is destined nevertheless to remain forever “humanly man,” “perfectum, sed tamen hominem.”

Returning to the Danish effort, it is difficult to escape facing some questions.

Are we confident enough that we could consider as best, a society made of genetically perfect human beings, where there is no more need to experience any feelings of love, charity, solidarity with the weak and defenseless and where it is no longer necessary to understand and welcome those who appear physically different? In the absence of an ethical value, what is the basis of the criterion to determine that those are part of the genetically superior breed are authorized to eliminate the genetically inferior? Who determines the requirements for admitting a person in the ‘perfect society’? Who guarantees the limits of those requirements? Who can exude, for example, that the next step in Denmark is the elimination of unborn children with diabetes, heart disease, blindness...? Are we really sure that to achieve perfection it is necessary to make prevail the Spartan logic of Mount Taygetus than the evangelical exhortation to love one’s neighbor as oneself?” (Excerpted from Guanelliani.org)

The concept is not foreign to this country. “Currently, 92% of all children with Down syndrome in the United States are aborted. A newly developed maternal blood test, the MaterniT21, can be administered as early as 10 weeks gestation and has a nearly 100% success rate in detecting Down syndrome. In the Affordable Care Act, also known as



Obamacare, such screening will be offered to all pregnant women free of charge...

“Seeking to rid a population of genetic disease through controlling reproduction is not a new endeavor. On July 14, 1933, Germany enacted the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring. Any man or woman who was afflicted with “feble-mindedness,” schizophrenia, manic-depressive disorder, epilepsy, Huntington’s chorea, genetic blindness, genetic deafness, severe physical deformity or chronic alcoholism were brought before hereditary health courts. The courts then mandated these individuals be sterilized. By 1935 the law was amended so the patients had no avenue for appeal and there were fines for physicians who failed to report patients who met the criteria for sterilization. This law was

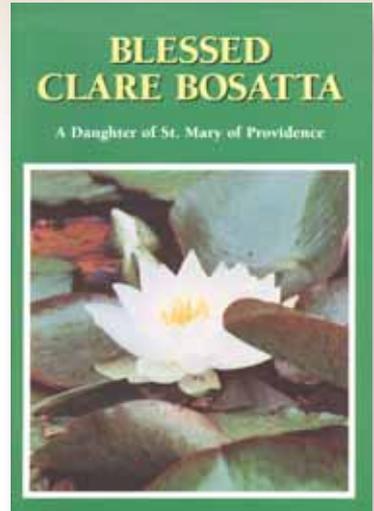


followed by the creation of Information Centers for Genetic and Racial Hygiene to identify potential targets for sterilization.” (Excerpted from *Prenatal Testing: A Double-edged Sword, Perverting Information in the Pursuit of Perfection* by Denise Hunnell, MD. The article originally appeared on Zenit.org.)

The Guanellians know the value of the lives of these precious individuals; the joy they bring into the lives they touch; the gifts and talents they enthusiastically share with others. In the footsteps of St. Louis Guanella, his Servants of Charity, Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and the Guanellian Lay Movement continue to defend and care for these and all persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities all over the world. In Guanellian society, perfection has a much different meaning.

Blessed Clare Bosatta: A Guanellian Mystic

I have recently read 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, which reads 'Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC



Is God Calling You to Serve Others?

Among those who are deprived of human and spiritual support, we care for developmentally disabled, abandoned youth, indigent elderly, and the incurably and terminally ill. We are also committed to pastoral and missionary work in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa.

The Servants of Charity Priests and Brothers, Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, Cooperators and hundreds of members of the greater Guanellian family serve over a million brothers and sisters while offering comfort, consolation and support. There is room for many others; those needing help and those who want to help.

Consider joining our mission, making the love of God more and more visible in our world. For more information, contact:

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Prayer for Vocations

Pray, we beg You, O holy Mother of God, that religious vocations to this work of mercy may be multiplied, and that those who are called to help may be eager to respond for the greater glory of God, your honor, and the relief of many who suffer in misery and abandonment. Amen.



Please consider helping one of our seminarians to become a priest or a brother for one dollar a day.



To become a member of the Pious Union of St. Joseph or to extend membership to prayerful friends and relatives, please send names and addresses to 953 E. Michigan Ave., Grass Lake, MI 49240 or email piousunion@pusj.org

Shrine of St. Joseph Sacraments and Hours of Devotion

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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