

# The Voice of Providence

PUBLICATION OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY



## now Hour

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DECEMBER 2008–JANUARY 2009



100 YEARS OF SERVICE AND GRACE ❖ 1908–2008

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### The Voice of Providence:

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### 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.

# Life

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

Life is beautiful. It is the continuation of God's creation among us who were created to love and serve God in this life and then enjoy Him in the next life in Heaven. The opposite of life is not death but non-existence. Our body returns to the earth where it came from, but our soul lives forever. Life is the greatest gift of God. "God created man in the image of himself; in the likeness of God he created him" (Gn 1: 27). Our creation is a totally free gift of God's love for us. Our redemption is a totally free gift of Jesus' love for us. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14: 6). Each individual is unique, unrepeatable and immortal. God in his eternal and loving plan of creation and salvation gave us a spiritual soul. Our soul comes from God and it belongs to God and God wants it back with him where it came from.

God also gave us free will and we can make decisions against our own good and God's plan of salvation. If we make the wrong decision we choose to separate from God and be banned from the vision of God. But if we make the right decision we will be reunited with God forever. Our choices against life are choices against God. All attempts against life are attempts against God who is life.

All violence against life is a grave offense against God and his plan of salvation. Victims of abortion were loved by God even before he formed them in the womb. They were consecrated before birth but deprived, by violence, of God's will for them to love and to be loved, to serve and to be served in this life and to express their gratitude to Him for the Gift of life. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you came to birth I consecrated you" (Jer 1: 5).

As we focus on the defense of life for God's most vulnerable children in January, let us remember that life is a precious gift from God, and violence against human life, large or small, can never be accepted or condoned by true Christians.



BY FR. DENNIS WEBER, SDC

July 25, 2008 marked the 40th anniversary of the promulgation of the landmark encyclical, written by Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (Of Human Life). The encyclical proved to be profound in its theological scope, provocative in the response it elicited from many within the Church and the world and prophetic in the consequences foreseen by the Holy Father. This article will “revisit” the encyclical through the words of Pope Paul VI.

“The transmission of human life is a most serious role in which married people collaborate freely and responsibly with God, the Creator. It has always been a source of great joy to them, even though it sometimes entails many difficulties and hardships. The fulfillment of this duty has always posed problems to the conscience of married people, but the recent course of human society and the concomitant changes have provoked new questions. The Church cannot ignore these questions, for they concern matters intimately connected with the life and happiness of human beings” (no.1). *Humanae Vitae* is often seen as the Church document that prohibits the use of artificial birth control but, as one can see, Pope Paul VI is concerned with a broader vision of the married state.

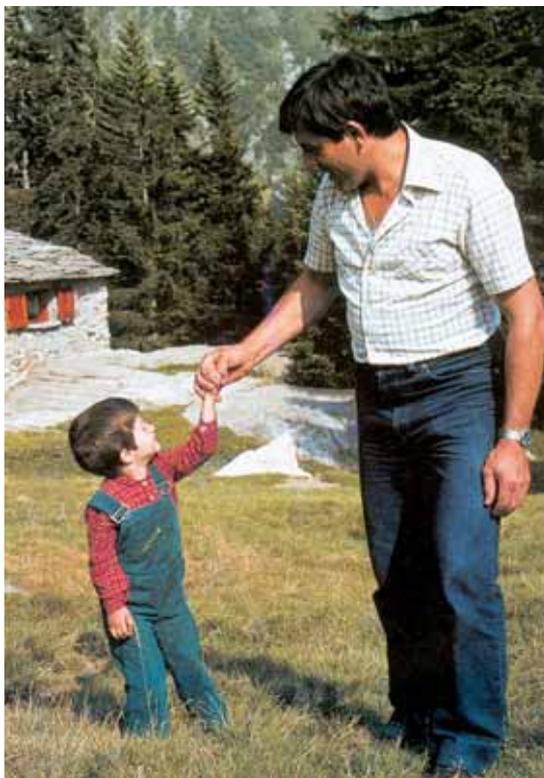
The Holy Father gives us a beautiful vision of marriage and married love: “Married love particularly reveals its true nature and nobility when we realize that it takes its origin from God, who ‘is love,’ the Father ‘from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named...’ It [marriage] is in reality the wise and provident institution of God the Creator, whose purpose was to effect in man His loving design” (no.8).

At the heart of the encyclical he writes: “The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life. This particular doctrine, often expounded by the magisterium of the Church, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act” (no. 11-12). This teaching affirms that each and every marital act must be open to the transmission of human life and that the loving (unitive) and life-giving (procreative) ends and purposes of marriage are always to be linked. Therefore, artificial contraception is not in keeping with the vision established by God through His eternal and natural law.

In light of this vision of marriage and married love, Pope Paul VI foresaw, in a tragically prophetic way, the consequences of artificial contraception that darken and eclipse this vision: “Responsible men can become more deeply convinced of the truth of the doctrine laid down by the Church on this issue if they reflect on the consequences of methods and plans for artificial birth control. Let them first consider how easily this course of action could open wide the way for marital infidelity and a general lowering of moral standards... Another effect that gives cause for alarm is that a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection. Finally, careful consideration should be given to the danger of this power passing into the hands of those public authorities who care little for the precepts of the moral law... It could well happen, therefore, that when people, either individually or in family or social life, experience the inherent difficulties

of the divine law and are determined to avoid them, they may give into the hands of public authorities the power to intervene in the most personal and intimate responsibility of husband and wife” (no. 17). With these consequences, we have seen a marked increase in the divorce rate; the steep rise in cohabitation, single parent homes and teen age pregnancy; epidemic numbers of sexually transmitted diseases; and the most poisonous fruit of the tree of artificial contraception—the evil of abortion.

In spite of widespread acceptance of artificial contraception and its consequences, the Holy Father acknowledges the counter-cultural nature of the Church’s teaching and gives us reason for hope: “But it comes as no surprise to the Church that she, no less than her divine Founder, is destined to be a ‘sign of contradiction.’ She does not, because of this, evade the duty imposed on her of proclaiming humbly but firmly the entire moral law, both natural and evangelical... In preserving intact the whole moral law



of marriage, the Church is convinced that she is contributing to the creation of a truly human civilization...In this way she defends the dignity of husband and wife” (no. 18).

In closing, I would like to re-echo the words of the Primate of Canada and Archbishop of Quebec City, Marc Cardinal Ouellet, who said: “I think we have to revisit it [Humane Vitae] and reopen our hearts to the wisdom of this document.”

# The Silver Rose: A Symbol of Life

By JOSEPH YEKULIS

On June 10, 2007, we were privileged to present the “Silver Rose Mass Program” of the Knights of Columbus at the Shrine of St. Joseph in Grass Lake, MI. This special symbol of Our Lady of Guadalupe was shared with our local migrant workers from the area at a Spanish Mass celebrated by Fr. Paul Oggioni. Although last year’s visit may be “old news,” what remains constant is the message of “life” provided by Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of the Americas.

Speaking in Knightline, a publication of the Knights of Columbus, Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson noted that, “The silver rose symbolizes our commitment to restoring respect for the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death...It is most appropriate that we turn to Our Lady of Guadalupe who made known her will through Juan Diego and the miracle of the roses.



“The rose is a symbol of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who presented St. Juan Diego with a miraculous garden of roses as proof of her appearance. The rose has also been adopted as a symbol of the pro-life movement.”

There are many versions of the story of Our Lady and St. Juan Diego, but one of the most detailed websites describing this sacred encounter is called “Holy Art to God – The History of Our Lady of Guadalupe” ([www.holyartworks.com](http://www.holyartworks.com)). The Voice of Providence has been granted permission to reprint the story for this issue.

“The appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to the Aztec Indian Juan Diego in December of 1531 generated the conversion of Mexico, Central and South America to Catholicism. Indeed, the Blessed Virgin Mary entered the very life stream of Central America and became an inextricable part of Mexican life and a central figure to the history of Mexico itself. To this date the most important religious celebration in Mexico and Central America is December 12th, the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Her appearance in the center of the American continents has contributed to the Virgin of Guadalupe being given the title, ‘Mother of the Americas.’

“Juan Diego was a widower at age 55, and turned his life to God. It was his custom to attend Mass and catechism lessons at the church in Tlatelolco. At daybreak on Saturday December 9, 1531, Juan Diego began his journey to church. As he passed a hill named Tepeyac, on which once stood a temple to the Aztec mother god Tonantzin, he heard songbirds burst into harmony. Music and songbirds presaged something divine for the Aztec. The music stopped as suddenly as it had begun. A beautiful girl with a tan complexion and bathed in the golden beams of the sun, called him by name in his native language. ‘Juan Diego!’ The girl said, ‘Dear little son, I love you. I want you to know who I am.’

“I am the Virgin Mary, the Mother of the one true God, of Him who gives life. He is Lord and Creator of heaven and of earth. I desire that there be built a temple at this place where I want to manifest Him, make Him known, and give Him to all people through my love, my compassion, my help, and my protection. I truly am your merciful Mother, your Mother, and the Mother of all who dwell in this land, and of all mankind, and all those who love me, of those who cry to me, and of those who seek and place their trust in me.’

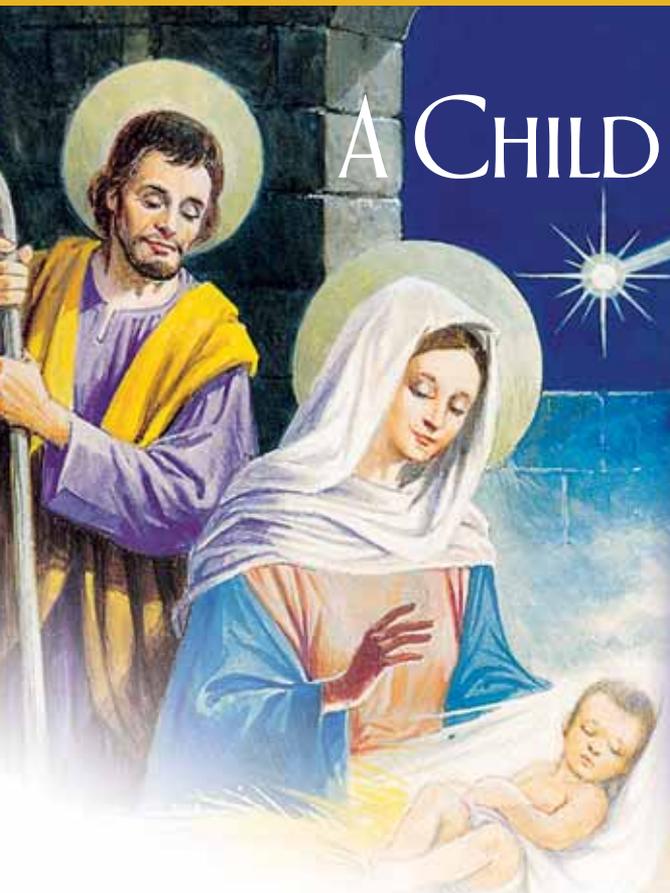
“Here I shall listen to their weeping and their sorrows. I shall take them all to my heart, and I shall cure their many sufferings, afflictions, and sorrows. So run now to Tenochtitlan and tell the Lord Bishop all that you have seen and heard.”

When the Bishop and others did not believe Juan’s story, Our Lady presented Juan with evidence of her true presence by sending Juan up a hill to find a patch of roses that were growing in December. Juan returned to the Bishop with the roses, and “untied the corners of the crude cloth behind his neck. The looped up fold of the tilma fell, and the flowers he thought were a precious sign tumbled out on the floor. The Bishop rose from his chair and fell

on his knees in adoration before the tilma, as well as everyone else in the room. For on the tilma was the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, just as described by Juan Diego.” She appeared for a fifth time before his dying uncle, who was saved and told him to, “Call me and my image Our Lady of Guadalupe.”

This special symbol of life, the Silver Rose, makes its journey from Canada, through the United States, and into Mexico on a yearly basis. The Knights of Columbus coordinate this program, beginning in Toronto, Ontario in May and concluding at the Basilica of our Lady of Guadalupe in Monterey, Mexico on December 12th during the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Shrine of St. Joseph was proud to have participated in this special program in support of life.





# A CHILD IS BORN

*Excerpt from the  
Cardinal's homily  
delivered in the  
Basilica of St.  
Joseph in Rome, the  
International Center  
of the Pious Union  
of St. Joseph for  
the Suffering  
and Dying.*

BY ANGELO CARDINAL COMASTRI

It was December 1940. The philosopher Jean Paul Sartre was jailed in a concentration camp near the German city of Trier. His companions, all knowing that he was an atheist, said to him, "You know how to write well, so please, write something about Christmas. Write a story of the birth of Jesus. This will help us to plunge into the mystery of the love of God."

At first Sartre would not write for them but eventually his heart was moved. It is true that the Holy Spirit blows where and when He will and this Christmas He blew into the heart of Sartre too.

When he reached the point of talking about the Virgin Mary he wrote: "on the face of Mary there was amazement. Astonishment appeared that had never been seen before on the face of a human being. Mary is the

only woman, the only mother who, pressing her son to her heart can say 'My God!' She is also the only woman, the only creature who, kneeling down before God, can say 'My Son!'"

When Sartre talked about Joseph he wrote: "I do not know what to say about him. I would show him only as a shadow, there, in the back of the hayloft with his eyes sparkling. I do not know what to say of Joseph because Joseph does not know what to say of himself. He adores and is happy to adore. He feels almost exiled in the face of the mystery surrounding him and entering into his life. He suffers because he sees how the woman he loves resembles God. In fact God suddenly exploded like a bomb into the intimacy of his family. Joseph and Mary perceived themselves as separated by the brightness of this fire. God is between them. I think that the whole life of Joseph was a long journey during which he learned and accepted this mystery."

Sartre was right. The life of Joseph was but a long journey of following and serving the Mystery that exploded into his life. His humility helped him to be obedient to the will of God. Joseph spent his life in the service of other's vocations: the vocation of Jesus and the vocation of Mary. Spending his life for Jesus and Mary became his vocation, his mission and his commitment in his journey toward holiness.

No one receives a full and definitive experience of God in his personal experience. It is necessary to look for Him day after day. Every day we should persevere, repeating our "Yes" to Him. Every day we should renew our act of faith in Him. Our act of faith today is not enough for tomorrow: it is necessary to renew it. Our "Yes" of yesterday is not enough for today: we should renew it. Our "Yes" of today will not be enough for tomorrow: we need to renew it.

This is the lesson we should learn from St. Joseph.

Let us look at St. Joseph. We, so full of pride, are living in an era of pride and presumption when man, in his foolishness, dares to challenge God. We are so little and fragile. If we do not entrust ourselves totally to God we are lost.

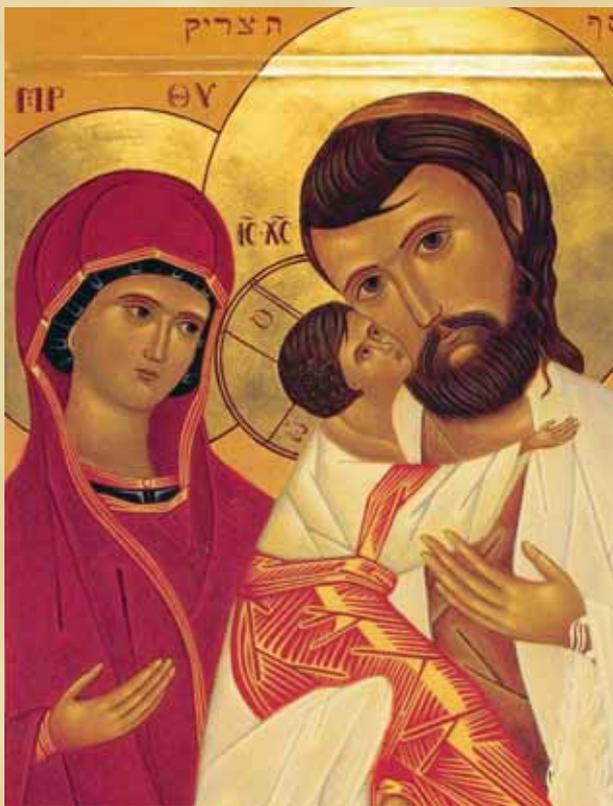
*"The life of Joseph was but a long journey of following and serving the Mystery..."*

# St. Joseph, Dad of Jesus and Husband of Mary

BY FR. TARCISIO STRAMARE

All over the world people love to celebrate Christmas. Many, unfortunately, do not know the reason for the season. To them, Christmas is the opportunity to have a period of rest, to meet their family, to display beautiful decorations, to have a grandiose meal, to receive gifts, and, perhaps, to play Santa Claus.

Christians know well (they should know!) that the “gifts” they receive symbolize the best and greatest present that the Father in heaven, in his divine imagination, could have given to men: his only Son, Jesus. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus.



The evangelist Luke reports his conception at the Annunciation at Nazareth in Galilee, and gives the reason why He was born in Bethlehem: the imperial census that forced people to register their name at the place of their ancestors. Joseph was proud to be a member of King David’s family. David was from Bethlehem, and Joseph from Nazareth reached that village south-west of Jerusalem together with Mary, his spouse, who was with child. There, in Bethlehem, Jesus was born according to Holy Scripture: “You, Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah, out

of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel; his origins go back to the distant past, to the days of old" (Mi 5:1).

The authenticity of that village's existence is confirmed by the presence of a basilica built by the emperor Constantine, by a long standing tradition that goes back to St. Justin Martyr (+ 160), and especially by the native Christians who, since the beginning of Christianity, are proud of having been born in the same village where Jesus, the Lord, was born.

St. Paul considers that event the greatest moment of God's plan of salvation. It came about "in the fullness of time" when "God sent his Son, born of a woman, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption" (Gal 4:4-5).

The words "born of a woman" do not exclude the "ordinary" way to introduce a son into the human family, as specified by the evangelists when referring to the matrimony between Mary and Joseph. St. Paul wants to underline through the presence of the mother (born of a woman) the reality of the incarnation. We may find the same expression in the Creed. Every Sunday we proclaim that "Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father ... came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man." Jesus is both true God and true man. His mother says that. Period! From the gospel we know that Jesus is a divine person, and that brings us to automatically exclude any "man seed" for his human birth. That logic does not exclude, however, the "order" of creation. In it the Lord puts to work his divine power and presence, and, in "order" to carry

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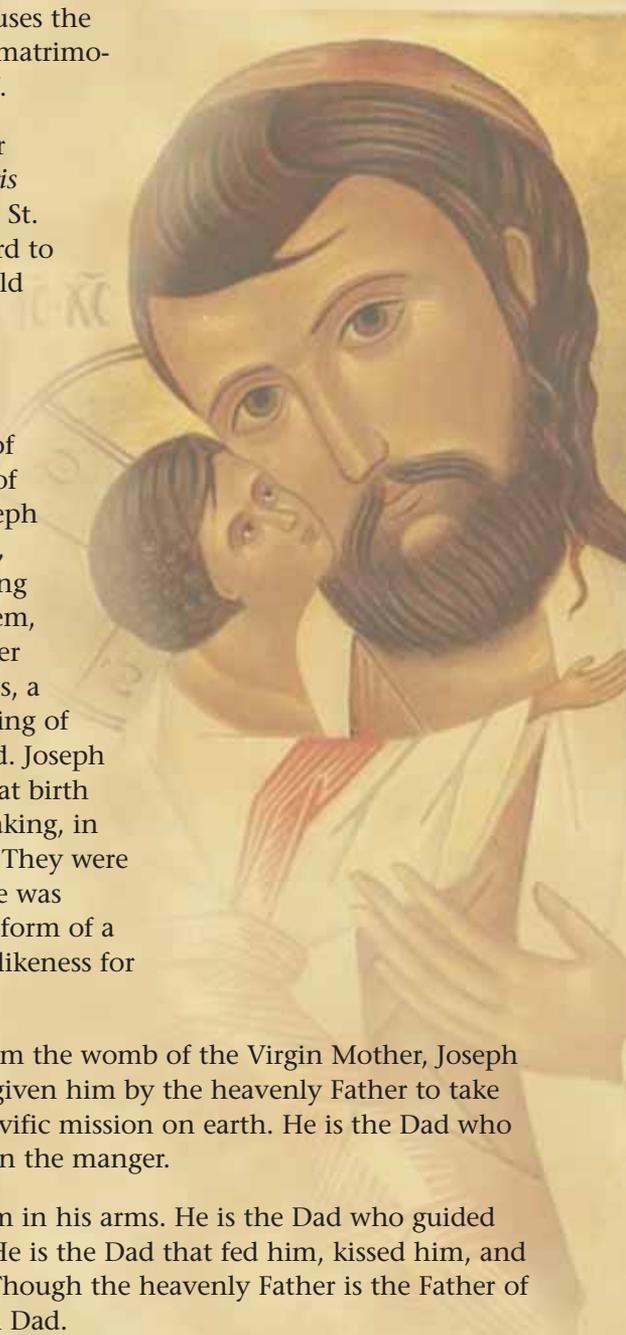
out his plan of salvation, He uses the available human means, like matrimony, family and paternity itself.

Pope John Paul II, in his letter about Saint Joseph, *Redemptoris Custos*, states very clearly that St. Joseph is a true father in regard to Jesus. He means that we should widen the horizons, the view, and the confines of the word “paternity.”

Meditating on the mysteries of the hidden period of the life of Jesus, we may say that St. Joseph held the position of a servant, serving Jesus as his Dad. During that blessed night in Bethlehem, he is present and he is together with Mary at the birth of Jesus, a privileged witness of the coming of the Son of God into the world. Joseph has been an eye-witness of that birth that happened, humanly speaking, in extremely humble situations. They were the first notice to men that he was emptying himself, taking the form of a slave, and coming in human likeness for the remission of their sins.

Once Baby Jesus came out from the womb of the Virgin Mother, Joseph knelt and adored “his” Baby given him by the heavenly Father to take care of and prepare for his salvific mission on earth. He is the Dad who saw Him peacefully sleeping in the manger.

He is the Dad who carried him in his arms. He is the Dad who guided him in taking his first steps. He is the Dad that fed him, kissed him, and watched over him for years. Though the heavenly Father is the Father of Jesus, St. Joseph is the human Dad.



# *The Birth of a Saint*

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

In the Roman Liturgical Calendar only three birthdays are celebrated: Jesus' birthday on December 25th, the Blessed Virgin Mary's birthday on September 8th, and St. John the Baptist's birthday on June 24th. For all the other saints we remember rather their date of death, because, as for each one of us, it is their birth into heaven, their birth into eternal life.



God in his providential plan of salvation has never abandoned his people. We can see how, throughout the Old Testament, God was intimately involved with his chosen people. God's people repeated a cycle of disobedience, punishment, repentance, forgiveness, and forming a new covenant with God until Jesus, the Messiah, came to redeem his people. Jesus established the new Church and entrusted it to the apostles and their successors. God, who gave his only son, now cares more than ever for his people, his Church, through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, through the centuries, has endowed the Church and the people of God with incredible gifts and graces. However, people continue to make wrong decisions and disobey God. This causes wars, famine, disease and poverty. Children, the weak and the elderly are the victims of our inability to love one another as Jesus loved us.

The compassionate Father (Lk 6: 36) does not abandon his people or his Church. Whenever the people of God suffer, the Spirit of God sends gifts of grace to alleviate their suffering. The Spirit also raises men and women of God capable of recognizing His gifts. They embrace it, make

it their own and respond to God with gratitude. These are the saints who accepted the gift from God and who distribute it to all the people in need of that particular gift.

Blessed Louis Guanella was born on December 19, 1842 and died on October 24, 1915. He is a saint of the modern age. Born during the industrial revolution, he recognized the gift of God to the suffering people as a result of the industrialization of society. The cities had become magnets for people living in the countryside. Farming was harsh and often unrewarding work. The city promised a better living, education and affluence. Many abandoned the farms, chasing a dream into the engulfing city where all the rules were quite different.

Children, the elderly and the handicapped remained behind alone, uncared for, hungry and abused. The old family structure had taken care of them. The new society without social programs, assistance, responsibility or even knowledge, was totally unable to assist, protect and educate these weakest members. They were useless, a burden, a nuisance. But God looked after them. He sent a gift to the Church, the gift of charity.

*“The compassionate  
Father does not  
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or his Church.”*

Blessed Louis Guanella received the gift, acknowledged it and passed it on to the children, the handicapped and the elderly. Many men and women joined him and he organized them into congregations recognized by the Church: The Servants of Charity, the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and the Guanellian Cooperators. For over one hundred years the Guanellian Family has been living the charism and carrying out the works of Blessed Louis Guanella. His birthday, December 19th, is not marked in the Roman Liturgical Calendar, but it is marked in the hearts of many. For the Guanellian family his birthday is an historical day. For the many needy people whom the Guanellian family has loved, it is a day of gratitude to God who raised Blessed Louis Guanella in the Church to spread the gift of charity to the suffering people of God. It is a day for rejoicing for the Church who can count another holy man in the Communion of Saints.

# The Christian Family: **Moving Together**



*Theo van Golen growing up in Michigan*

BY KENNETH L. VAN GOLEN, PhD

In 2006 I accepted a position at the University of Delaware and moved my wife and four children from Michigan to the East Coast. The most difficult part of the move was leaving our friends and parish behind. We had become well entrenched at St. Mary parish and in the Blessed Louis Guanella Council #3092 of the Knights of Columbus. My wife and children, ranging in age from three to ten years old, took part in nearly all of the Knights council events. The St.

Louis Center and the Servants of Charity were a central focus of the council. Through the Knight's activities with the center, my children became very attached to the residents of the center and to the priests there. On two separate occasions, my children performed extra chores to raise money, approximately \$75 each time, which they put in a jar and brought to the St. Louis Center to be used for the residents to go to McDonalds or to go bowling.

In addition to the interactions with the St. Louis Center, the council was also involved with the Holy Family Mission in the Philippines. Fr. Matthew Weber sent quarterly newsletters about the children at the mission. Some of the stories were heart wrenching and when our oldest daughters read these stories, they felt very fortunate and blessed. Amazingly, they wanted to find a way to share their blessings with these children. Our oldest daughter who was nine at the time, wanted to learn to sew clothes to give to the children at the mission. In my mind I can still see her telling me this and the memory brings tears to my eyes. The

tears are of happiness, pride and awe of her innocent charity. It is amazing to see the Holy Spirit work through a child. To me this is exactly what Jesus commanded us to do, love one another in our own capacity. To understand what our capacity is, we need to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and listen. In the end, through the inspiration of my oldest daughter, our council held a very successful fundraising dinner for the mission, which was supported by the parish community.



*Author Ken van Golen (left) with Gary Kistka, in Grand Knights' training*

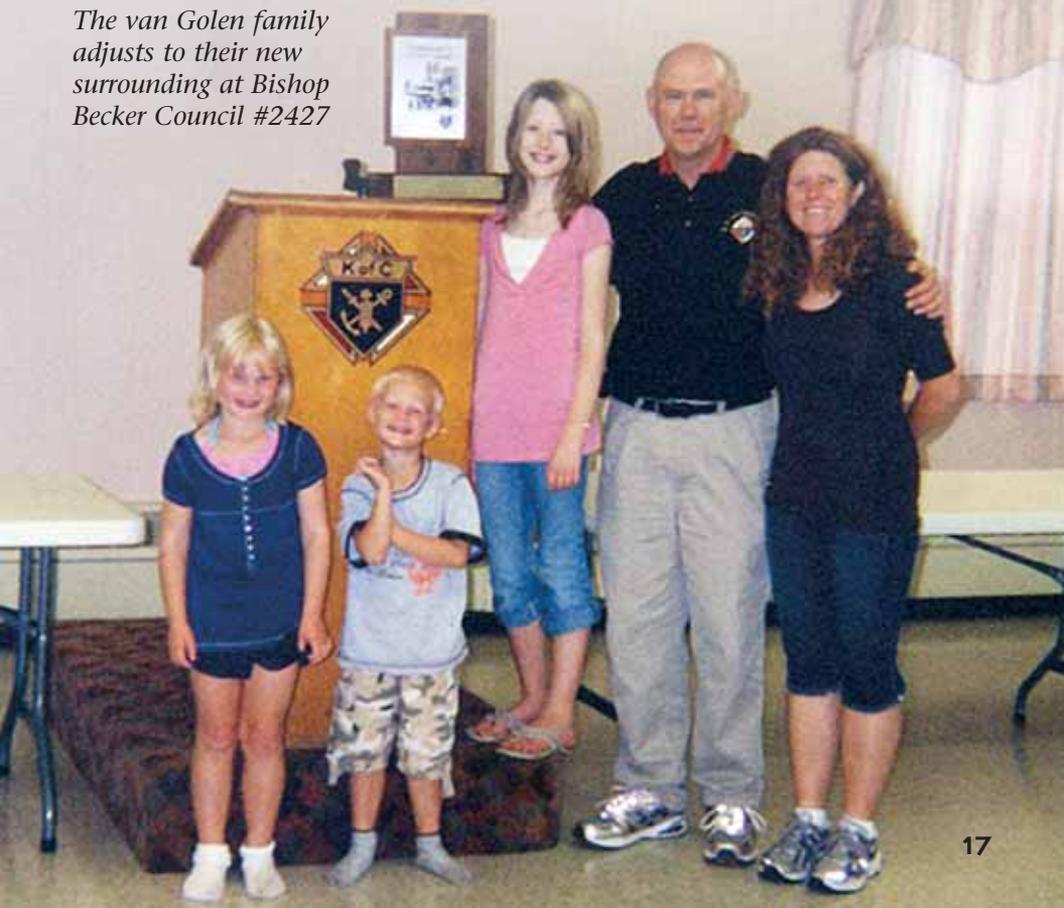
Moving to a new part of the country was much more difficult than we had anticipated. The cultural differences between the Midwest and the East Coast are quite large. After we moved, we “parish shopped” until we found a parish community that we were comfortable in; however, we had to resolve in our minds that we were not going to be able to find exactly what we had back in Michigan. My wife wanted a parish community with a strong youth group as well as a chance to teach CCD. I wanted a parish with a strong Knights council. Eventually we found what we were looking for. My new Knights council, Bishop Becker, has a rich history of charity much like that of the Blessed Louis Guanella council. However, one thing was missing from the new council: family-oriented activities.

Before leaving Michigan, I had the privilege of speaking to the parish on behalf of the Knights. One of the points that I spoke on was that the Knights are a Catholic family-based organization. Truly, I believe that as a Knight, a man lives his faith daily. Everyday, in small ways, he improves his community by helping those around him. He acts as an example to his family and his family becomes an example to their

parish and community. This concept was echoed during a homily by one of the Servants of Charity priests, who said that the Knights of Columbus and their families are the fifth gospel of the Lord. Without reading any of the four gospels, people should be able to look at a Knight and his family, and they should be able to see what Jesus taught; love for your neighbor.

In the two years since moving, I have become Grand Knight of the Bishop Becker council. I found that the lack of family activities in the council was mainly due to an older membership. As a priority, last year we began to recruit men with young families. Slowly the council is changing, with younger men and their families becoming involved. As a consequence we are beginning to instill the concept of charity and love in our children, and the parish community is beginning to notice our actions. With our activities we teach that the gospel is not just words to hear on Sunday during Mass, but a way of family life.

*The van Golen family  
adjusts to their new  
surrounding at Bishop  
Becker Council #2427*



# *A Precious Gift of Life*

BY JOSEPH YEKULIS

This issue presents us with a great opportunity to consider those things that are most dear to us. Christians take great joy in celebrating Christmas with their families, and in connecting with the hope and spirituality of one of our holiest of days. Even fallen-away Catholics return to Mass to re-connect with their spiritual roots for one special night. Our families give us meaning and a sense of connectedness with one another, and during the course of our lifetimes we experience both joy and grace from birth to death. Ultimately, it is the life we share with one another that we celebrate as God's great gift to us.

With St. Joseph as our patron saint of the suffering and dying, we find ourselves blessed from time to time with stories from our readers about their own brushes with mortality, inspiring us to be prepared for the day that Christ calls us home. In this issue, Joy Franklin shares her story about her brush with death after suffering from a pulmonary embolism. She looks forward to another Christmas with her family this year, and speaks humbly about the peace she feels in her heart for God.

Joy Franklin and her husband Tom, a Deacon in the Church, have lived productive





lives of faith and together have raised a large family. Both are involved in many parish ministries at St. Mary Parish in Chelsea, MI. Early this summer, Joy experienced a medical event that nearly ended her life.

Joy is a registered nurse by profession, and when given a diagnosis, quickly understands the gravity of a situation. "My health problems began in August 2006 when I was in Southern Illinois and suffered from a pulmonary embolism." (Symptoms include shortness of breath, chest pain that mimics a heart attack, and a rapid heartbeat, a potentially fatal condition for many people). "The doctors put me on a blood thinning drug, Coumadin, and after four months of physical therapy, I felt like I had fully recovered. As time went on however, I developed a gastrointestinal (GI) bleed in March of 2008 and the doctors took me off the drug.

"In late June 2008, I threw another embolism at home and had to be rushed to the University of Michigan Hospital." Doctors were stunned when they saw Joy's CAT scan. She was suffering from a "Saddle Embolism" which carries with it an 80-90% mortality rate. "My doctor said that people with this condition are either intubated or found at the morgue, and I was neither. I was in intensive care for five days, stabilized, and then sent to a nursing home for two weeks.

"For me, this latest episode solidified my relationship with Christ. You can be at peace when you realize that God is in control. My children are fully grown,

my grandkids are doing well, and maybe I'm no longer needed? Perhaps my job here is done?

"The ambulance ride to the hospital was the most vulnerable day of my life, as the only personal belongings with me were my slippers. But then I found that I was there for a reason. The young female paramedic in the back of the ambulance sought my advice about whether or not she should be married in the Church.

She was seeking guidance, not preachiness, and I was able to help her to think through it on the way to the hospital." Joy is still recovering at home from her latest embolism, and suffers with chronic pain from degenerative arthritis.



Deacon Tom offers these perspectives. "God is not a magician, but a companion, a friend, and a person we can utterly rely on. Rather than living a life of continuous petition, we should live a life of constant praise and thanksgiving, as life happens to us. Thankfulness and praise, anger and tears, quiet contemplation and the occasional belly laugh are the human responses in our relationship with God, and we are called to respond with all our hearts and all our strength. In other words, thanksgiving, grumbling, tears and laughter are expressions of our constant and growing love for God; God's love is constant, and, as we grow, our love for God is not conditioned upon the good things or the bad things which happen in this life.

"The message of scripture is that God is passionately in love with us, seeks after us, is fascinated by us and longs for us to be in the divine presence forever."

"And Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now I know that God will grant whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection. Anyone who believes in me, even though that person dies, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die' (Jn 11:21-27).

# STORY OF A VOCATION

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FATHER SILVIO DE NARD, SdC

I still do not know why the good Lord called me to the priesthood. From a very young age, I have always desired to be a priest. My mom says that I was not even two years old when I told her that, as a grown up, I would be a missionary. The story goes like this:

One afternoon, I was sitting comfortably on my mother's lap looking at pictures from a missionary calendar, just arrived, while my mother explained to me their meaning. Somehow, I was struck by one picture showing a young African boy standing on a tree and looking at the horizon.

"What's he looking at, Mom?"

"He is looking for someone to bring him Jesus. There are many boys and girls like him who are waiting for missionaries. Missionaries are priests and sisters who go there to teach them how to read and write, how to be good boys and girls and how to love Jesus who came among us to save us. Do you see there on the wall Jesus on the cross?"

"Why is he there?"

"It's because we were so bad that, to open for us the doors of heaven, he went on the cross and died. You will learn that later on. For now, let us say a Hail Mary for missionaries, and another one for that boy. Hail Mary, full of grace ..."

According to my mom's account, I followed her in prayer, and then I went back to the real business of playing with my little cars.



Two months later, my mother was at the grocery store for her weekly supplies. I was not with her. She was still checking on something when she felt someone pulling her skirt.

Alarmed she cried out: "What are you doing here, Silvio? I told you not to leave home. What happened?"

"Mom, I want to bring Jesus to that boy of the calendar!"

At that, my mom began to flood the store with her tears. She was crying so much that the store-owner came over to check if someone was hurt. Without any explanation – or supplies – she left, with me trudging after her, and reached the church where more tears were shed at the altar of the Blessed Mother. Once I

became a priest, she told me something that not even my father knew: my mother had offered me to Mary a few days after my birth. "I offer him to you. Take good care of my son, dear Mary, because he is yours!"

Even today Mom cries when recalling that day when her little boy, not even two years old, told her that he had in mind one day to be a missionary for the Lord.

And a missionary I became. Sort of!

It was not so easy. Being a walking earthquake and tornado, relatives, priests, Sisters and even classmates were not impressed by my desire to be a priest. Reverend Monsignor bluntly told me, on a Saturday afternoon after Confessions, that I would be kicked out of the seminary ten minutes after my admission. My grandmother lovingly informed me that no bishop on earth wanted to die too young by having me as one of his priests. My teachers told Dad that I was absolutely not cut for further schooling. Bleak future, indeed!

*"My mother had offered me to Mary a few days after my birth. I offer him to you. Take good care of my son, dear Mary, because he is yours!"*

As usual, the Lord has the upper hand. I went through further schooling without much trouble. I did not procure an early death to any Bishop. And, behold, I was never kicked out of the seminary.

My early idea of becoming a priest grew up together with me. My good parents taught me to pray and attend Mass every day. When I was six, I became an altar boy like my older brother. Being so close to the priest on the altar, my desire to be like him increased and matured day after day. No one was able to deter me from pursuing priesthood. Not even girls! They tried their best, with no result. God's grace was preparing my soul to embrace His divine call and what that call entailed.

I entered the Servants of Charity because my uncle was one of them. I spent wonderful years in their seminary where I was drawn by the splendid liturgies, Gregorian chant, sport activities and good friends. Superiors were fathers to me and models of priestly zeal. They were very patient with me, especially those who welcomed me in the seminary. The first year was a big adjustment for me and for them. Little by little, we got along and here I am now, a priest of the Lord Jesus.

Along the way, my childish desire to be a priest matured into a choice and a commitment to be a servant of the Lord wherever He would call me to serve Him. By God's grace, I never went through an excruciating crisis of faith or vocation. I learned very early to be smart enough to stay close to the Lord at all costs, to avoid what is not good for my soul and vocation, and to pray even when I do not feel like it. The first Servant of Charity that welcomed me in the seminary told me many years later, "Silvio, you are the fruit of many tears, prayers and sacrifices offered to the Lord by numberless people you do not even know. Be grateful to the Lord for the rest of your life. Do not make Him ashamed



of having called you to be one of His priests!" These words would stick in my mind for the rest of my life.

I beg you, reader, to remember me in your prayers that I may persevere until death to God's call, and may serve Him present in those who are in need. That little two year old boy is now a sixty year old priest who daily thanks the Lord for the grace of his priesthood and religious life. What a gift! What a wonder! Blessed be the Lord forever!

*“You are the fruit  
of many tears, prayers  
and sacrifices...  
Do not make Him  
ashamed of having  
called you to be one  
of His priests!”*



# The Land I Love

BY FR. SATHEESH CANITON ALPHONSE, SDC

Love of the land where you were born is one of the common experiences of humanity. My homeland, the land I love and look forward to seeing again, is India. A land of contrast, India is the land with the hottest and coldest climate, the driest terrain and the region with the highest rainfall in the world. The poorest and richest people on the planet live here. A recent survey by the World Bank indicates that two thirds of the people living under the poverty line around the world live in India. Still there is hope in the lives of India's people because all are striving to better their lives in one way or another. India is also a land of surprises because you never know what's going to happen or what will come up in the news each day, taking the form of a natural disaster or a remarkable political change.

India is a land rich in spirituality, of many faiths and religions, religions which originated here and spread to other parts of the world. Buddhism is one example and although it is not as significant in India, it is prevalent in other Asian countries. India, although considered the land of many religions, bears strong tensions with regard to religious tolerance.



Explosions of religious disparity and conflict, however, are instigated and fueled by vested political interests, not religious leaders. People are not aware of what is really going on around them. Faith is exploited, people are confused and overreact at times, even violently. India is a holy land, the place where many saints walked before us such as St. Francis Xavier, St. John De Britto and religious personalities of other religions. I am proud to come from such a gracious and holy land!

Indian culture is ancient. Cultural practices remain untouched and unchanged, which causes problems and hinders the developmental process. Education plays a vital



role in India's development. Those who have a good education move forward, improving their living standards, while those without an education live without prospects for a brighter future. The mission of every Indian today should be to educate the masses of illiterate people who have no means of being a part of the common progress. The difficulty is that those who dare to provide a good education, particularly Christian missionaries, are being persecuted in the name of fighting religious conversion. This is a trying moment for Christianity, I should say. But, as always, the more we are persecuted, the more we spread the Word!

I love India despite religious persecution, corrupt politics and greed. One's homeland is the sweetest place on earth to live no matter what the difficulties may be. Moreover, there are many possibilities for India to grow gracefully as a country; it is, after all, a developing country. One of the main aspects of Indian culture is the closeness of the family. In many other parts of the world, close family ties and family values have played a vital role in the growth of a nation. If this significant value is lost, the whole country is lost. A big country like India, home to over one billion souls, based on family life will create a better future even though many forces are at work against family values and traditions.

I love my country with all its gifts and difficulties; it is a country rich in culture, history, faith and breathtaking beauty. India, full of contrast and contradiction offers the world many reasons for hope, for a future of peace and understanding among nations.

BY KIMBERLY BEAUBIEN

**Conflict between Christians and Hindus in India has not always been a problem. Most Christians and Hindus get along well in India.**

# PERSECUTION IN INDIA

Members of the Hindutva movement (fanatical Hindu groups) only recently began persecuting Christians because they claim Christians have been unfairly proselytizing the Dalits and other oppressed peoples. This is the story of only one of those Christians targeted for "proselytizing."

Fr. Thomas Pandipally, a Carmelite of Mary Immaculate in Andhra Pradesh was the pastor of Jeevadhan Church and vice principal of the Catholic high school. He was a very generous person, ready to undertake any task. The Catholic school was doing well in a town where several other private schools struggled to get students and this caused some people to dislike the priests and sisters who ran the school.

On the evening of August 16th, 2008, Fr. Thomas Pandipally offered Mass, as usual, in Burgiga Yellareddy. Afterwards, he had supper with the Sisters of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation. On his way back to the parish he was stabbed eighteen times. His eye was gouged out and his limbs were broken. The next morning when the FCC sisters went to the parish for Mass, they found Fr. Thomas's room locked and his bicycle missing. They discovered the place of his murder and his brutally mutilated body and called the police.

More than a thousand people attended the funeral at Bellampalli, led by Arch-bishop Abraham Viruthakulangara of Nagpur and the priests, sisters, local officials and students took part in a rally wearing black badges to express their sorrow over his murder.

Most of the violence has taken place in the states of Orissa, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh, where extremist Hindu groups have more power. However, the violence is not limited to these areas. Christians are being killed, tortured, and driven from their homes while their churches and personal property are being destroyed. Throughout India Christians are demonstrating their condemnation and Pope Benedict XVI has called for an end to violence against Christians in India. We pray that this persecution will make us strong in our faith. As Tertullian wrote, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the kingdom of God."

# My Guanellian Journey

BY MARY LOU COONS

When I was asked to write about my spiritual journey and becoming a Guanellian Cooperator, I decided to dedicate this story to my father, who passed away thirty-five years ago when I was eleven. My dad contracted polio when he was a year old and didn't walk until he was eight, after returning home from a pilgrimage at St. Joseph's Shrine in Canada. After he came home he was able to walk, but with a limp. When I was five years old, he was injured in a car accident and became severely disabled. He never improved, even after three spinal surgeries. My dad's sufferings impacted my life so much however, that my spiritual formation began at a young age.





*Mary Lou's father, Karol Wierowski*

Seeing pain and suffering in someone that you love really impacts your life, even as a child. My dad always had a smile on his face, and always offered up his pain for others. He was very devoted to St. Joseph, and this is the model of my father that I remember to this day. My mother has also been through a great deal and is a shining example of God's faith, love and mercy. Her example of coping with my dad's pain and suffering certainly taught me many of life's lessons. She is truly my best friend and I love her dearly. I have been blessed with two beautiful parents. They taught me selfless love, just like the Holy Family.

Despite my Catholic upbringing, I began attending Protestant churches as a teenager. My mom

was concerned, but her priest consoled her saying, "Mary Lou will come back someday." Mom was always devoted to our Lady and Jesus in the Eucharist, and after twenty years, her prayers were answered. Although extremely nervous, I went to confession and then received Holy Communion. I had so much love and peace in my heart that I could not describe the feeling. Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament brought me back to our beautiful Catholic Church along with my mom's prayers!

I started reading about our saints, especially St. Therese of the Little Flower and studying the Catechism. During this time I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, and a few years later, dealt with brain surgery to decompress my spine from Chiari I malformation. Having a chronic physical condition has been bitter and sweet at the same time. I truly look at it as a gift now. Learning not to depend on the wealth of this earth and depend solely on the Lord's grace, I know that I am truly

nothing without the Lord's help. But when I have less of myself, I have more of Jesus in me.

Through coming back to the Catholic Church I was invited to join the Dominican Third Order Laity, which I was in for three years. It was this time of deep spiritual growth and formation that prepared me to join the Guanellian family. I loved reading and studying Dominican spirituality, but what really drew me closer to Jesus' heart were the Dominican Saints of Charity, especially St. Catherine of Siena and Little Blessed Margaret of Costello, who had to overcome so many difficulties.

The Lord truly knows our hearts and what is best for us. Through spending time praying before our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament, Jesus really taught me so much! This was where I received His inspirations for what He has wanted me to do for Him. I began helping persons with disabilities in the Syracuse Diocese, and was inspired by a religious sister who worked with the developmentally disabled. I inquired about her order and called her vocations office, but they told me to call another religious order that worked more specifically with the developmentally disabled. They gave me the name of a wonderful religious order: the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

I ended up making a journey to Divine Providence Village on the Feast day of St. Catherine of Siena, not knowing what the Lord wanted from me. I couldn't ignore His promptings however, and my spiritual director agreed I should go. I met some of our precious sisters and they were so welcoming to me. I was truly honored to be able to pray with them.

They took me on a tour and I was impressed when I saw them pray the rosary with their precious ladies. Some did not speak at all, but when they prayed the rosary, they spoke the words perfectly! Sr. Esther gave me some literature on Blessed Guanella, our Founder. I started reading, and was totally transformed by his beautiful writings. That's when I knew that I had to follow the Guanellian charism. I knew that the Lord had sent me on this journey for a reason; I had finally found the right order to work with.

I am deeply honored to be part of such a beautiful Guanellian family. Father Guanella is certainly a Saint for our times. His writings are so simple and beautiful to understand. I was happy to make my Guanellian Promise to become a Guanellian Cooperator on the Feast Day of our beloved Founder Blessed Louis Guanella.

# Let There Be Life

FR. DAVID STAWASZ, SDC



The Abortion Issue is something that has been adjudicated, legislated and debated since 1973, the year of the controversial Supreme Court decision in *Roe vs. Wade*. Controversy necessarily continues and has extended to other sanctity of life issues such as Embryonic Stem Cell research, gene manipulation, euthanasia, etc. Its effect is written upon the ethics advocated by the various religions, politicians, scientists and medical centers and personnel.

Should legal abortion be upheld as acceptable to humankind, or should the Supreme Court decision be reversed? Should aborted fetuses and abandoned embryos be made available for scientific experimentation? Questions such as these are often considered, off hand, as a matter of religious preference; however notable Church figures have argued that it is a matter of ethics, centered around the question of when personhood is conferred to the fetus.

Statements by some Catholic politicians, whose public views are in opposition to the teaching of the Church, have created further controversy. They insist that they can support abortion as a matter of public policy, while adhering to Church teaching in their personal lives. The Church clearly teaches that anyone who procures, takes direct involvement in or encourages an abortion is guilty of the sin of abortion (CCC 2272).

The principle to keep in mind when wading into the controversy is not a matter of religion, but one of morality: it is always wrong to kill human life. At the root of this sanctity of life issue is the moment when life begins and science, not religion, asserts that life begins at conception.

In looking at *Roe vs. Wade* we remember that the ensuing legislation overturned state law prohibiting abortion (though contraception was legal). The center of the argument hinged upon the 9th and 14th Amendments and a supposed “right to privacy” from undue interference by the government.

Immediately after the decision there arose essentially two types of individuals, those who strongly supported the decision and those who were strongly against it. Many people believe that abortion may be allowed in the first trimester but not during the later months of the pregnancy. However, because life begins at conception, the willful destruction of human life is always wrong, regardless of the timeframe.

The weight of the argument presented in the majority opinion of *Roe vs. Wade*, written by Justice Harry Blackmun, rested on the right to privacy. The court derived this right from the 14th Amendment’s right to liberty and due process of law. Dissenting opinion, voiced by Justice Byron White, criticized the Court for involving itself in this issue by creating “a constitutional barrier to state efforts to protect human life and by investing mothers and doctors with the constitutionally protected right to exterminate it.” He added that he found no basis in language or in the history of the Constitution to allow for this action and that it was “an improvident and extravagant” abuse of judicial power.

Regardless of a right to privacy, it is always wrong to kill. Health issues present more than one option for treatment and these options don’t require abortion by intent, i.e. abortion itself does not save a mother’s life. As the unfortunate anniversary of *Roe vs. Wade* approaches this January 22nd we need to re-evaluate what we can do to end this grave injustice.



# 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 **Guanellian Lay Movement** 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.

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# The Servants of Charity

*100 Years of Service and Grace 1908–2008*

In the Heart of Jesus pierced on the cross and present in the Eucharist, we contemplate the supreme revelation of the love of God, and are able to comprehend how true it is that we really are children loved and saved.

Since its foundation, the Congregation has been consecrated to Christ, receiving from Him continuous proofs of assistance and blessings.

With ever greater resolve, each one of us draw inspiration from Him the meek and humble one, striving to have the Redeemer enter everyone's heart to awaken in him the clear sense of his divine calling.

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