

The Voice of Providence

now hour
AND AT THE

PUBLICATION OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

December 2009–January 2010



Featured Story: *The Making of a Saint*, page 7

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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.



The Birth of Christ

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

Three months before Christmas, businesses, clubs, unions, associations, newspapers, TV and radio stations, politicians and you name it, already have started taking sides for or against Christmas in their advertising.

The most observed celebration of the world has been attacked from every side. A large sector of our society just wants to get rid of Christmas, as they want to get rid of God.

They want to reduce Christmas to a seasonal break by stripping it from all religious meaning and reference.

Christmas is the celebration of God's love for us, who gave us His only son, Jesus.

Jesus became one of us to show us how much the Father loves us and to love one another as he loved us.

The Gospel tells us that Mary "Gave birth to her firstborn son, she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger." (Lk 2, 7). The same words are repeated for Jesus' death. "After Jesus was taken down, he wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a tomb." (Lk 23, 53).

Jesus was born to die and rise from the dead. We are also born to die and rise with Jesus.

Christmas is a celebration of life and gratitude. It is a hymn to love and joy. However, it is also a reminder of our mortality. From birth, we pick up our cross and carry it all our life until we are reunited with Jesus.





Fatherhood, Gift and Mission

BY FR. TARCISIO STRAMARE

In years past, St. Joseph was recognized exclusively as the “Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

Although that’s perfectly true, Church teaching goes beyond this. John Paul II, in his work on St. Joseph “Guardian of the Redeemer,” calls the faithful to pay attention to the “fatherhood” of Joseph. “St. Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood. It is precisely in this way that he cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation and is truly a minister of salvation (n. 8).”



The late Pope introduced the “fatherly” figure of Joseph in the mystery of the Incarnation through the mystery of the Family of Nazareth. Within this family, Joseph is the father. His fatherhood was not one that derived from begetting off-spring, nor was it just a mere substitute for fatherhood. Rather, he shared fully in authentic human fatherhood and the mission of a father in the family. It is interesting to note the words that Mary spoke to the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple: “Your father and I have been looking for you.” These are not words said out of mere courtesy or humility on her part, but a clear acknowledgment of the rights that her husband had within the Holy Family. From the beginning Joseph accepted, with the obedience of faith, his human fatherhood to Jesus.

If the work of the Holy Spirit was great in Mary in order to make her worthy of her divine maternity, it follows that we should also see the same pattern in Joseph. The Holy Father writes: “Since it is inconceivable

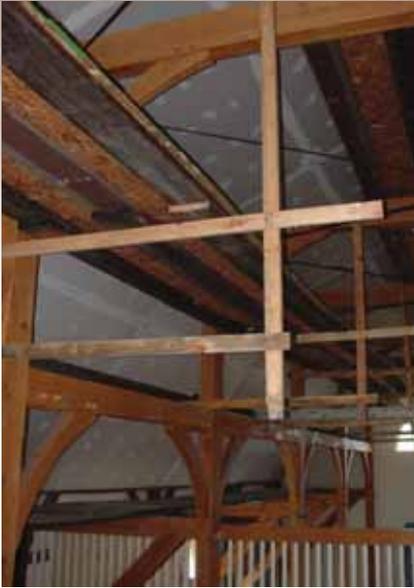
that such a sublime task could be matched by the necessary qualities to fulfill it adequately, we must recognize that, by a special gift from heaven, Joseph showed Jesus all the natural love and all the affectionate solicitude that a father's heart can know. Beside fatherly authority over Jesus, God also gave Joseph a share in the corresponding love, the love that has its origin in the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."

*"The title 'father,'
recognized as belonging
to Joseph in Holy Scripture
itself, was honored by
Jesus during his earthly
life through his
obedience (Lk 2, 5)."*

It is impossible to give a clear definition of the fatherly love of Joseph towards Jesus. It is impossible, because, it borders on the divine: he was the beneficiary of a love directly associated with the Father in heaven and with a love that was returned by the filial love of Jesus, the Son of God. How can we measure and totally comprehend divine love? Pope John Paul II adds: "Why should the fatherly love of Joseph not have had an influence upon the filial love of Jesus? And vice-versa, why should the filial love of Jesus not have an influence upon the fatherly love of Joseph?" The vocation and mission of Joseph created, in him, the heart of a father, in whom the Incarnate Son of God could have the opportunity to adequately see the love of his Father in heaven.

The great St. Augustine robustly argued against the idea that the absence of concupiscence of the flesh should be invoked as a reason to exclude Joseph from being a father to Jesus. Otherwise, he reasoned, the same logic could be invoked regarding the divine motherhood of Mary. She, too, gave birth to a son without the concupiscence of the flesh. What the Holy Spirit had done, St. Augustine says, he had done to both of them: to both he had donated a son. Both Mary and Joseph were worthy to be called parents of Jesus because of their conjugal love and fidelity.

The title "father," recognized as belonging to Joseph in Holy Scripture itself, was honored by Jesus during his earthly life through his obedience (Lk 2, 5). It was also honored by Joseph, himself, when he accepted a life of service to the mystery of the Incarnation and redemption while using his legal authority within the Holy Family as an offering of himself to Jesus and Mary.



St. Joseph Builders Craft a Beautiful New Ceiling in the Shrine

During the months of September and October, the Servants of Charity offered Mass in the Holy Family Pastoral Center at the Shrine of St. Joseph while tall scaffolding was built, statues were

wrapped and moved to a trailer, generously donated, and the Shrine became a construction site. The young “Josephs” worked in the rafters installing more insulation and a finished and beautifully decorated ceiling.

This project, although not as exciting as the building projects of the past few years, became a priority in 2008 when utility costs went sky-high in the heat of summer and the cold of the Michigan winter.



Some of the expense of the project was gathered from donations by members of the Pious Union of St. Joseph and friends, but now we are running the risk of having to use resources that are needed in the missions. These missions of the Servants of Charity in India and the Philippines suffer dire need, and we all must do everything we can to avoid using these resources.

An appeal was made to everyone attending Mass at the Shrine in September, which raised almost $\frac{1}{3}$ of the funds needed for the project. Sr. Margaret Mary said that she even received the weekly allowance of one of the children.

We must beg you, as individuals and families, to give whatever you can realistically afford to the support of the Pious Union of St. Joseph and his Shrine, where we are the beneficiaries of the Sacramental and devotional mission of the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

Please, Donate Today and Pray to St. Joseph for his Help in this! He Never Fails!





The Daughters of St. Mary of Providence begin their new ministry at the Shrine of St. Joseph

A Warm Reception Marks a Bright Beginning

Sr. Margaret Mary Schissler and Sr. Brenda McHugh, Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, were warmly welcomed to their new home by the local community at the Shrine of St. Joseph. All gathered at the Holy Family Pastoral Center after Sunday Mass to greet them and offer support.

As you will remember from earlier articles written by the Sisters in this magazine, their Congregation was founded by Blessed Louis Guanella, the same Founder of the Pious Union of St. Joseph and the Servants of Charity. Representatives from the whole Guanellian Family are now gathered at the Shrine for the first time since its establishment in the United States.

Sr. Margaret Mary is the Program Director. She will be planning all of the activities of the Pious Union and the Shrine. She is working with Fr. Fortunato, Fr. Joseph and the lay staff to spread devotion to St. Joseph and build up the Shrine in his honor.

Sr. Brenda is teaching religion to the young students at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in nearby Michigan Center and will be leading and participating in programs with families and young people at the Shrine in Grass Lake.

For all of you who enjoy corresponding, please write and introduce yourself to the Sisters. If you live nearby or are traveling in Michigan, come for Mass and greet them in person.



Photograph courtesy of Kelly Flaherty



The Making of a Saint

BY FR. NINO MINETTI, SDC

The news that Blessed Louis Guanella will soon become a saint has generated many questions by our readers and friends. What does it mean? It means that Blessed Louis Guanella will be officially declared a Saint and therefore presented to all faithful as a model of Christian life.

This official recognition is called Canonization: that is, the person so declared, will be listed in the Canon of the Saints. Canonization is the final step of a complex investigation of the life of anyone, Christian, priest, nun or Pope, who is presented to the Church for the honor of sainthood. Obviously, the Church inquires whether he or she is worthy of it. “Was the person a real saint, a faithful imitator of Christ?” A thorough investigation is placed in motion. The life, virtues, writings, talks and miracles attributed to the person are meticulously examined. If the results are positive, the Pope himself publically announces that the person is officially a saint and a witness of the Gospel to the world.

Blessed Louis Guanella has gone through the same process and he is very close to the conclusion.

The Diocesan Bishop conducts the first stage of this process. Through witnesses, he will establish if the local people believe that the person





lived as a saint. At the end of this information stage, he declares him or her a *Servant of God* or *Venerable*.

The Dioceses of Como and Milan, Italy, had the task to build up the case for Father Guanella. It lasted from 1923 to 1930. More than one hundred witnesses testified under oath that Fr Guanella's holiness was visible and inspired other people.

The second stage is called the Apostolic stage. It takes place in Rome by the Roman Congregation for the Saints. It is longer and more complex. The process begins with the examina-

tion of the Diocesan findings. For Father Guanella it took eight years, 1931 to 1939. The procedure also required an organized presentation of all the documents and an answer to all the objections advanced by the Defender of the Faith (The devil's advocate). The documentation was collected in two volumes of 1340 pages and entrusted to the examiners. Finally, the positive answer came on December 21, 1938. The following March 15, 1939, Pius XII approved the introduction of the formal process of sainthood for Father Louis Guanella.

At this time, the work of the committee concentrates on the virtues of Fr. Guanella. They have to establish that Fr. Guanella practiced the virtues in a heroic way, that is, in an eminent way, above the normal level among the faithful. In addition, he must have lived the virtues in a consistent and heroic way, in normal times and in time of difficulties, and suffering all for the sake of the Gospel.

This analysis dragged for 22 years, from 1940 to 1962. War World II was one of the reasons; another was the rule of the Church that required a 50-year span from the death of the person before the process could be started. The most difficult hurdle was the testimony of some witnesses

who were confused about the person and others who were poorly informed.

Pope John XXIII who had known Fr Guanella cleared all doubts and made the final decision. On April 6, 1962, he signed the decree that Father Guanella had lived the virtues in a heroic way and declared him Venerable.

“On April 6, 1962, he signed the decree that Father Guanella had lived the virtues in a heroic way and declared him Venerable.”

The process continued in Rome. At this point, the study begins over the miracles obtained through the intercession of the Servant of God, Louis Guanella, so he can be proclaimed *Blessed*.

Among the miracles attributed to the intercession of Fr. Guanella, two were presented to the committee: the complete healing of Maria Uri from an irreversible blood poisoning and the other of Teresa Peghin, quadriplegic from birth.

The scrutiny of the medical team followed by the theological commission took only two years with a positive outcome with almost one hundred percent of the votes. Pope Paul VI, on July 15, 1964, officially confirmed that the two healings were caused by divine intervention. The Pope also set the following October 25, 1964 for the solemn proclamation, at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, of Father Louis Guanella Blessed to the entire Catholic world. The last stage of the process began here. It has been the longest and it still goes on. The Church requires an additional confirmation before arriving at the Canonization.

Another miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Louis Guanella is necessary.

This miracle, we believe, took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 38 years after the Beatification and 79 years after the process began. Rome is still looking into it. On October 29, 2009, the final meeting of the Medical Commission took place. Meanwhile we pray and hope.

For more information about Blessed Louis Guanella, his work, his writings and his mission, please visit www.guanelliani.org, and click on the British flag for an English translation.



PART TWO

God's Providence Was Always My Vocation

BY SR. FLORINE LICAVOLI, DSMP

When I was in high school we had many opportunities to hear different orders of sisters talk about religious life. It wasn't until I was a senior that we were given the opportunity to go on a weekend retreat to contemplate our vocations. We all had the chance to speak with the retreat master about what direction we thought we might like to follow. Father was very good at explaining to me that, we are drawn by different works of mercy. Ministries vary, he said, and each order has different characteristics that attract a person who is discerning. The best way is to decide what we think God would like us to do to serve Him.



Photograph courtesy of Joe Yekulis

When the retreat was over I returned home, and all the way home I kept hearing His voice telling me about these sisters, Daughters of St. Mary of Providence. It seemed like a record was playing over and over, the name of the order, the name of the center, the address, and the type of ministry, all telling me I MUST NOT DROP THIS OPPORTUNITY. When I got home, I tried to explain this to my mom; I was excited and

confused all at the same time. Mom was so patient with me and sighed, “Oh I wish Father Solanus was here to guide you.”

The following morning I got the phone number and attempted to call. Soon a sweet voice answered, “Good morning, Our Lady of Providence, may I help you?” I almost panicked, but I squeezed out, “Yes Sister, my name is Florine Licavoli, I just completed a retreat and your order was recommended to me by the retreat master. I am considering a vocation to the religious life.” I heard a loud thump, like a phone dropping, and then I heard “I think there is a vocation on the phone.” My mom saw my mouth drop open and said, “What’s the matter?” I replied, “I think they are excited or something!” The Sister came back to the phone and apologized, “Today is Saturday, the day we always pray for vocations.” “Oh, that’s nice,” I said.

Sister went on and was more than gracious to help me make arrangements to come and visit. I was so nervous when I completed the conversation, I said to my mom, “I think they REALLY NEED ME!” Well when I went to Northville and finally met the sisters, what impressed me most



was their simplicity, their natural way of presenting themselves, and how they communicated with the developmentally disabled that were under their care. I could relate to each one and enjoyed their individual personalities. I kept remembering how great the ladies were and how much love and attention they received from the sisters and the lay people assisting them. It really made a deep impression on me and when I spent time that short weekend in the chapel, I looked at the tabernacle and said in my heart, “O Lord if you want me to serve you, these are the sisters who have touched my heart and soul, please guide me along this pathway, for only YOU know what you want for ME.”

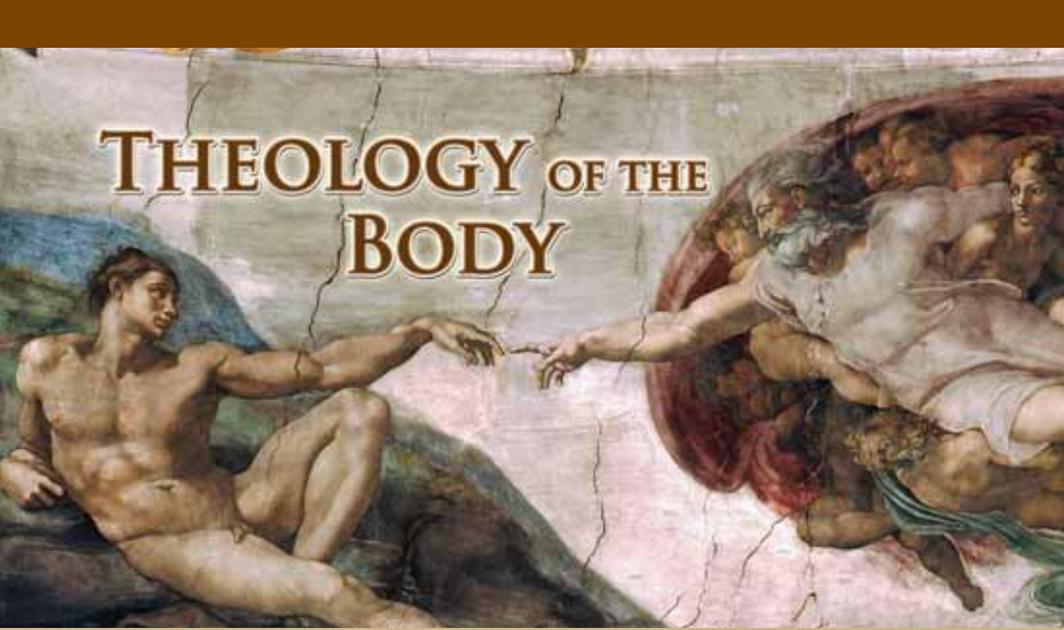
I followed up with more visits with the sisters and my desire grew stronger with each visit. On one visit I met the Mother Provincial, who was passing on her way to Pennsylvania. She was very kind, and spoke with me for a while as she asked many questions about why I wanted to

join the religious life. I think I passed her test, because she then invited me to Chicago to visit the Motherhouse. That July I did visit and made up my mind to enter. I spoke with Mother Provincial and set the date for October 7, 1960. I had just graduated in June and now was preparing to follow a new path that I was very excited about. My mom was a wonderful support, remembering Father Solanus' words that were now bearing fruit. My father had a hard time because we had grown so close; nevertheless, my mom convinced him that this was a gift to the family, and an honor for them as parents. Slowly it seeped in and he accepted my decision.

I had many wonderful experiences in my spiritual life, my life with my fellow sisters, and the work God asked me to do. I found that my vocation strengthened as time went on; there were ups and downs, as in all vocations, however, my faith always helped me to return to my original goal when I made my decision to follow Jesus. He never said it would be easy, but He did promise to always be with me on my journey. The secret is to listen, when the Lord says, "Come Follow Me." I hope with God's merciful grace, to celebrate my Golden Anniversary in four years, fifty years in my consecrated life, and am proud to say that every day is a blessing to learn and live for the Lord.



Photograph courtesy of The Vatican



THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

Christ Appeals to the “Beginning”

BY FR. DENNIS M. WEBER, SDC

As we travel on the first leg of the journey of the “**Theology of the Body**,” Pope John Paul II, in the first part of the catecheses which is titled the “**Words of Christ**,” insightfully references Christ’s words as He appealed to the “beginning,” in the gospels of Mt 19, 3-8 and Mark 10, 2-9, in answering a question from the Pharisees concerning divorce. The beginning, for the pope, is found in the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis. In the first chapter, the pontiff contrasts the original state of innocence with “historical” sinfulness, as he begins to “unpack” the meaning of the “theology of the body” by means of man’s original state of solitude, unity and innocence and introduces a foundational principle for this theology with the concept of the “spousal meaning” of the body.

Pope John Paul II, touches on man’s original state of innocence and links that with “historical” man’s fallen nature. He says: “The emergence of sinfulness as a state, as a dimension of human existence, has thus

from the beginning been linked with man's real innocence as an original and fundamental state, as a dimension of being created "in the image of God." This point applies not only to the case of the first man, male and female,...but also



to the entire historical course of human existence...While in every historical man this sin signifies a state of lost grace, it also carries a reference to that grace, which was precisely the grace of original innocence...He (historical man) is thus not merely shut out from the original innocence due to his sinfulness, but also at the same time open to the mystery of redemption realized in Christ and through Christ..." Man's original innocence as one created in the "image of God" and connected to the redemption won for us by Christ, in spite of man's "historical sinfulness," is fundamental for the "theology of the body."

When harkening to Christ's words which refer to the beginning, the Holy Father quotes from Gn 2, 18: "The LORD God said: 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.' This introduces his audience to the notion of "original solitude." Man is not alone as it relates to the "visible world" but he is alone in reference to the other living beings of the world. This leads to some remarkable insights by the pope: "Man is 'alone' because he is 'different' from the visible world, from the world of living beings. Man is 'alone' through his own humanity, through what he is, he is at the same time set into a unique, exclusive, and unrepeatable relationship with God himself." The recognition by man that he is alone, but that he is a person; the statement of God that "it is not good for man to be alone"; the affirmation that man is "set into a unique, exclusive, relationship with God"—is entirely significant for the building of this theology.

The Pope then links original solitude with the concept of original unity through the verse of Genesis that Jesus quotes to the Pharisees—"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the

two of them become one body” (Gn 2, 24). The Holy Father says that “solitude is the way that leads to the unity that we can define as communion of persons” and that “through the communion of persons... Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion.” The pontiff then cites the importance of this for the theology of the body: “This is obviously not without significance for the theology of the body, but constitutes perhaps the deepest theological aspect of everything one can say about man... On all this, right from the beginning, the blessing of fruitfulness descended, linked with human procreation” (cf. Gn 1, 28). This affirms then and today God’s intention for the relationship between man and woman as a “communion of persons”—one of love, of marriage and of “fruitfulness” of human procreation.

Finally, in further giving meaning to the “beginning,” the Holy Father refers to the text of Gn 2, 25, “The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.” and develops a central theme of the theology of the body—the “spousal meaning of the body.”

He says: “Nakedness” signifies the original good of the divine vision...The original meaning of nakedness corresponds to the simplicity and fullness of vision in which their understanding of the meaning of the body is born from the very heart, as it were, of their community-communion.

We will call this meaning “spousal.” The “spousal meaning of the body” is reflective of man and woman as created in the image of God and of original solitude, unity and nakedness (innocence) that is manifested in a reciprocal gift of self in which Vatican II asserts that man cannot “fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self” (Gaudium et spes 24, 3). This, in short, is the “theology of the body” from the “beginning.”

“THE MAN AND HIS
WIFE WERE BOTH
NAKED, YET THEY
FELT NO SHAME.”

(GN 2,25)







Grace and Healing

BY FATHER JOHN HEDGES

While on pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi I experienced a wonderful miracle of healing. A young wife and mother was restored to health in a miraculous chain of events involving the Nine Hour Novena of Grace to the Infant of Prague and the intercession of Venerable Father Solanus Casey. The prayers of this novena are from the promises of Jesus in the Gospels: “Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. Padre Pio used these same Gospel prayers in his efficacious novena to the Sacred Heart.



The Infant of Prague

Traveling through Rome, Assisi and Loreto, we prayed the novena continuously after hearing that a young mother’s life was threatened by cancer. At the same time we were praying for her in Rome, she visited the tomb of Father Solanus Casey in Detroit, and while there, she experienced a dramatic change in her body. The next day, the doctor conducted more tests, and found no trace of cancer anywhere!

The Divine Infant Jesus teaches us profound lessons in His infancy: humility, meekness, detachment from the world, awareness of the invincible realities of angels and the supernatural world, innocence, purity of heart and simplicity.

These virtues of spiritual childhood are exemplified in the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and closer to our times, St. Therese of the Child Jesus

and St. Faustina Kowalska. The Infant Jesus also teaches us complete and utter dependence on Mary. When Christ taught us that the kingdom of heaven belongs

to the child-like; and that unless we become as little children, we will not enter the kingdom of heaven, He was directing us to do what He did so perfectly: making himself totally dependant on the Virgin Mother in humble trust and confidence.

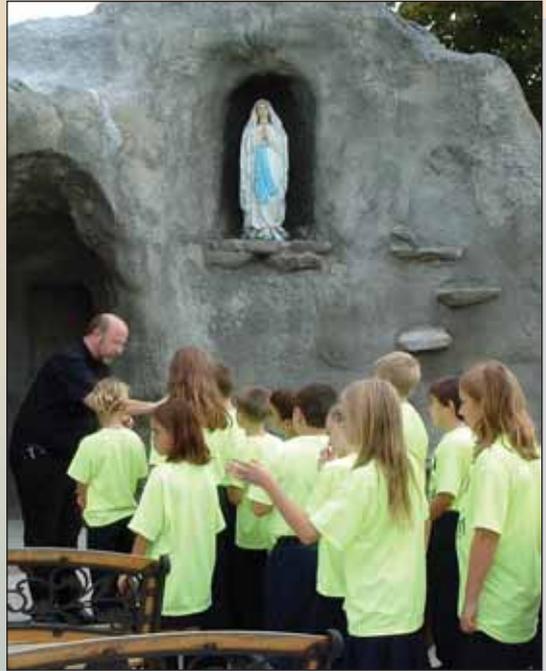
How can we best imitate the virtues of spiritual childhood we experience in the Infant Jesus? Live our perfect and total consecration to Mary for just as Mary and the Holy Spirit formed Jesus, the God-Man, so Mary and the Holy Spirit may form Christ within us.

In difficult times, we become anxious and fearful. We consume so much time in needless worry. We lack confidence in God and the intercessory power of Mary. This year make a resolution to live more perfectly your consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Take as your special companions, St. Therese the Little Flower, and St. Faustina, the secretary of Divine Mercy. Both of these saints have much to teach us about confidence and trust in God.

Let us pray with them in humble, childlike trust: Jesus, I trust in you!
And, My Mother, my confidence!

Amen.



Fr. John Hedges is the pastor of St. Stephen's in New Boston Michigan. In his devotion to the Spouse of Mary and Foster Father of Jesus he brings the children of St. Stephen Catholic School on Pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Joseph in Grass Lake.



2010—96th World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Reflecting on a Message of His Holiness, Benedict XVI, about the Migrant Family

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

...Looking at the Holy Family of Nazareth, icon of all families, I would like to invite you to reflect on the condition of the migrant family. The evangelist Matthew narrates that shortly after the birth of Jesus, Joseph was forced to leave for Egypt by night, taking the child and his mother with him, in order to flee the persecution of King Herod. (Mt, 2, 13-15) Making a comment on this page of the Gospel, my venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God Pope Pius XII, wrote in 1952, *“The family of Nazareth in exile, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, emigrants and taking refuge in Egypt to escape the fury of an evil king, are the model, the example and the support of all emigrants and pilgrims of every age and every country, of all refugees of any condition who, compelled by persecution and need, are forced to abandon their homeland, their beloved relatives, their neighbors, their dear friends, and move to a foreign land.”*

In this misfortune experienced by the Family of Nazareth, obliged to take refuge in Egypt, we can catch a glimpse of the painful condition in which all migrants live, especially, refugees, exiles, evacuees, internally displaced persons, and those who are persecuted. We can see the difficulties that every migrant family lives through, the hardships and humiliations, the deprivation and fragility of millions and millions of migrants, refugees and

internally displaced people. The Family of Nazareth reflects the image of God safeguarded in the heart of every human family, even if disfigured and weakened by emigration.

...The migrant's family meets many difficulties. The distance of its members from one another and unsuccessful reunification often result in breaking the original ties. New relationships are formed and new affections arise. Some migrants forget the past and their duties, as they are subjected to the hard trial of distance and solitude. If the immigrant family is not ensured of a real possibility of inclusion and participation, it is difficult to expect its harmonious development.

...The Church encourages the ratification of the international legal instruments that aim to defend the rights of migrants, refugees and their families and, through its various Institutions and Associations, offers its advocacy, which is becoming more and more necessary. To this end, it (the Church) has opened Centers where migrants are listened to, houses where they are welcomed, offices for services offered to persons and families, with other initiatives set up to respond to growing needs...

...Aside from giving assistance capable of healing the wounds of the heart, pastoral care should also offer the support of the Christian community, which is able to restore the culture of respect and have the true value of love found again. It is necessary to encourage those who are broken inside to recover trust in themselves. Everything must also be done to guarantee the rights and dignity of the families and to assure them housing facilities according to their needs.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, may the World Day of Migrants and Refugees become a useful occasion to build awareness, in the ecclesial community and public opinion, regarding the needs and problems, as well as the positive potentialities of migrant families.

The words of the apostle Paul, "*caritas Christi urget nos,*" (2 Cor 5, 14) urge us to give ourselves preferentially to our brothers and sisters who are most in need. With these sentiments, I invoke divine assistance on each one and I affectionately impart to all a special Apostolic Blessing.





Guanellian Family

The Role of the Laity in the Church and the World

The 4th Annual Guanellian Lay Movement Weekend was an on-going call inspired by the Holy Spirit toward our charism. Having received this call; laity, religious, and clergy arrived from New York, Canada, South Dakota, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Illinois to hear God's voice through the Guanellian charism.

A brief welcome was given Friday night at Mt. St. Joseph where the Sisters made everyone feel welcome and at home. After a delicious meal there was a brief explanation of the programs at Mount St. Joseph, Queen of Peace, and that of the Order's cemetery, where we hold dear the memories of the saints who have gone before us.

Saturday morning found us at St. Mary of Providence for Holy Mass and the remainder of the conference. As Fr. Guanella always instructed us to give "Bread and the Lord," we were fed by the fervor of Fr. Joseph Rinaldo and Fr. Dennis Weber on the Holy Eucharist, the Word of God, and our Guanellian Charism.

Christ came to reveal God the Father's love and tender Providence, and sent the seventy-two disciples ahead of him to announce, "The reign of God is at hand!" In the Guanellian Lay Movement we are also called to go into the world and announce the "Good News" that "the Kingdom is at hand." The Guanellian laity has a vocation in their own right in the Church, distinct from the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and the Servants of Charity.

Reinforcing this concept, our main speaker, Juan Francisco Lopez, M.D. stated, "We are all called into the vineyard to spread the kingdom. There is no time to waste because the times call for action."

His three points of reflection were, “Dignity, Communion, and Mission.”

1) Dignity: In our Baptism we are all made children of God. This makes all equal; priest, sister, and laity. The laity plants the seeds in the world, becoming the light to the world; sanctifying the world with their presence. They too have the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ, and are called to be saints.

2) Communion: Jesus said, “I am the vine you are the branches,” meaning a strong bonding with all persons. The Church is communion, a communion of saints, all to benefit the Church. If there is a charism in the Church such as the Guanellian charism, there MUST be a lay faithful.

3) Mission: Co-responsibility is an essential element that consists of going forth and bearing fruit for the Kingdom. The whole Church is called to the service of charity.

The remainder of the day brought group reflections and reports. Some of the most salient points were “How can we effectively live this charism?” Is there a membership list? What’s the difference between Guanellian Cooperators and Guanellian Lay Movement participants? Is there a job description, or a mission statement?

There was also discussion about the formation process, and a “Committee for Formation” was developed. Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, Fr. Dennis Weber, Sr. Sharon Williams, and Laura Garratty will meet in early November to begin work. By that time we will have researched all of the formation programs currently in use.

The last item discussed was “Future Planning” facilitated by Al Zangara. The five key points of emphasis were: 1) What does being a lay Guanellian mean, 2) What is expected by individuals who become lay Guanellians, 3) What benefit or gain will be obtained by the Servants of Charity or the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, 4) What is the long-range objective for the Guanellian Lay groups, 5) Why is it important, at this time, to solicit and obtain Guanellian Lay groups?

Recalling the simple and humble beginnings of Fr. Guanella in Pianello, Italy, let us allow the Holy Spirit to blow where He wills and let us be simple as doves to listen and follow.





Christmas in Manila, Philippines!

SR. BARBARA MOERMAN, DSMP

I have been in the Philippines since November of 2007 and have been truly blessed by God that He has given me an opportunity to come into contact with the Filipino culture. They have many prominent traditions and customs that have truly touched my heart and I would like to share these with you in this article. How I wish that everyone on earth had an occasion to experience Christmas here in the Philippines!

One tradition is that the Filipinos begin to decorate their homes and their trees starting in September! The Christmas music begins to play in the stores and in the homes of all the Filipinos. The joy and happiness that I have seen on the faces of the Filipinos as they prepare for Christ's birth is such an awesome sight.

The stores are full to capacity with people who are buying gifts for their loved ones and of course for the children.



The children are so precious when it comes to Christmas for their eyes just light up when they know that there is a celebration soon to be enjoyed by all.



Another tradition that the Filipinos observe during

Christmas is “Simbanga Bi” which consists of nine days of Masses before Christmas day beginning at 4:00 a.m. every morning. The church is filled with people from infant to elderly every single morning. One has to get to church by 3:15 a.m. just to locate a seat. All the parishes have the most beautiful choirs that are “just out of this world.” They start practicing for “Simbanga Bi” around October. You feel like you are in heaven when you hear the choral group singing in harmony.

The parishioners then come together after these Masses for breakfast and socializing. There is such enthusiasm and delight. They are such gentle, gracious, and loving people, and so respectful towards others.

Christmas day begins with families coming together to participate in the Mass. Then they gather with extended family members, whom they do not have a chance to see too often throughout the year, to share food, drink, laughter and the opening of gifts.

The vicinity is so quiet on this day for the Baby Jesus is born and families unite to show how blessed they feel that Our Savior has come into the world.



A Little Girl's Triumph

BY SR. MARY LYNN RAKOWSKI, DSMP

The second of a two-part story of the triumph of love when a couple's first child is born with multiple physical problems. The first part of this story appeared in the October/November issue and details the difficulties Jane and Mike faced during the pregnancy and birth of Myra who is deaf, legally blind, and has a tracheostomy.

Jane's greatest source of strength came from Mary and Jesus and the example they set of a mother/child relationship. They were with her continually, enabling her to be with Myra in her overwhelming needs. Jane did not want to miss one second of Myra's life and accompanied her for all her tests, lab work, etc. Jane's mother and her pastor had organized prayer circles, which were a great source of support.

Myra had received educational services at home until she was three. The educational team then felt that Myra should attend the school-based program and started her in pre-school for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. It was tough for Jane to see her little girl turn and wave good-bye, toting a backpack as big as she was, but Jane saw Myra was hungry for more challenges and could not ignore how happy it made Myra. Myra has been mainstreamed off and on, depending on her medical condition. She has a longer attention span than most children her age, but still spends 2–3 hours after school and all day Saturday on homework. Her hard work was rewarded with an A average for her seventh grade year.



Jane and Mike had lost two babies after Myra, but when Myra was in kindergarten Jane became pregnant again. Some people were surprised that they were having another child, but Myra thought it was cool. She wanted a brother, but accepted her little sister Hali with delight. Things became a challenge when the baby and Myra both needed care at the same time. Myra felt the baby should come first and her own suctioning could wait. Jane explained to her that the baby would be fine while she attended Myra's needs. The baby wouldn't die from crying, but Myra could die from not breathing. So, reluctantly, Myra accepted the help she needed. As Hali grew, she adored Myra. Now she wants to be with Myra all the time, so Myra is learning to be patient.

The most trying time occurred when a care-giver coming to their home thought she knew what was best for Myra. She tried to remove Myra from her home. However Jane and Mike fought this and won. Then in third grade Myra had a teacher who did not understand her and she became depressed and developed diarrhea and behaviour problems. At that time she could only retain 40–60% of what she was taught. Two days after school ended that year Myra's diarrhea stopped. In fourth grade she had a new teacher and was on the A honor roll and has been on it ever since.

Jane stated that Myra's birth has enriched her life and helped her realize her dream of motherhood.

Myra has strengthened her parents' marriage because both Jane and Mike had to pull together during many crises. Recognizing that they were her only true advocates helped them focus on Myra's needs, instead of their own wants. Jane still has to struggle at times to set healthy priorities, but she has developed skills she never thought were possible. Even when Myra was recuperating from her many surgeries, or suffering from migraines, she never felt sorry for herself. Instead she would minister to others. She lives life passionately and reaches out to anyone she meets who is suffering.

By sharing Myra's story, I hope to encourage any parent who is facing the prospect of caring for a special needs child; I hope to encourage anyone facing life decisions to choose life always. But most of all I wanted readers to know the beauty of God reflected in Myra.



Learning From Hope

BY FR. OTTAVIO DE BERTOLIS, SJ

In a world, notorious for God's supposed absence, we must face our daily challenges.

In his encyclical "Saved in Hope," Pope Benedict XVI asks us to look behind appearances and he offers some points of reflection. His words help us to establish a contact with God through grace, a God who is present in our human history, a God who sustains us in our journey toward eternal life.

"The first essential setting for learning hope is prayer. When no one listens to me any more, God still listens to me. When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God. When there is no longer anyone to help me deal with a need or expectation that goes beyond the human capacity for hope, He can help me. When I have been plunged into complete solitude...; if I pray I am never totally alone." (32)

Pope Benedict recalls the story of a Cardinal who spent many years of his life in prison because of his Catholic faith, and had enlightened his solitude with constant prayer. His is an example that comforts us today. In our world there are many kinds of prisons: poverty, sickness, misunderstanding, ingratitude, fear, isolation, our suffering body, and many conditions known only to ourselves. Our problem is not suffering and solitude but the lack of sense in it. Prayer makes sense of what we are going through. Turning to God is not—as some think—a projection of our desires, a vain escape from reality through what the atheist philosopher called the "opium of the people." In meditating upon the Word of God and contemplating the Passion of Jesus Christ, it becomes the way to give sense to what we do, to what we suffer, and to what we must endure.

Only through the suffering of Jesus can we make sense of our own suffering. Only through His passion can we renew and review our own human passion. St. Paul sets it right when he says, "In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church." (Col 1, 24)

“IN HIM, “WHO BORE
OUR INFIRMITIES;
WE MAY HEAL
OUR WOUNDS.”

To find sense in a life that seems to have lost its meaning, we must locate the door to God’s house; prayer and meditation on the life of Christ is that door. Only through Him can we reach that ‘extra sense’ that explains what we are going through in this life.

Prayer is absolutely not an escape. In prayer, we do not take refuge in an illusory world. On the contrary, prayer is precious. Prayer enlightens our minds and we begin to think in

a different way regarding our suffering. Prayer unites us to the life of Jesus, the true paradigm of our own life. Jesus, asking forgiveness for his persecutors, becomes a model in forgiving our own persecutors. Jesus, cruelly suffering in his body, causes us to contemplate our own wounds in his wounds. In Him, “who bore our infirmities,” we may heal our wounds. In Jesus, commending his life to the Father, we find the door, which opens into the beautiful dimension of existence that is our trusting dependence on the Father. It is a trust filled with faith, hope and love, a complete abandonment of ourselves to the Father, through the Passion of our Lord, who said, “Whoever sees me sees the Father.”

Jesus, offering his life and death, enables us to live our own life and death as an offering, acceptable to the Lord by the passion of Christ. Near to death, we may contemplate Christ who descends into the tomb with us. He is the source of our meditation. To the place where we will descend alone and inevitably enter alone we know that God, in Jesus Christ, has already entered for us and with us. There, where no other would be found, I will find Him. This is the answer the Lord gives to our question: why is there suffering and death in the world? Death only appears to deny the existence of a loving God. Death is really the place where He makes himself present. He, who is Life itself, went through our same experience of death so that we might have everlasting life in Him.

Pope John Paul II said, “Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. Death is not the end of everything; it is the beginning of everything.”

Suffering, in this world, changes into hope through prayer.



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Let Us Go to the Father

We recite the Our Father many times, and memorized it when we were in grade school or even earlier. Unfortunately, routine decreases the significance of many things in our life. So it is with the prayer of the Our Father. We pray it so often and we go through it without even thinking of what we are saying. It does not mean much anymore; it is just a prayer.

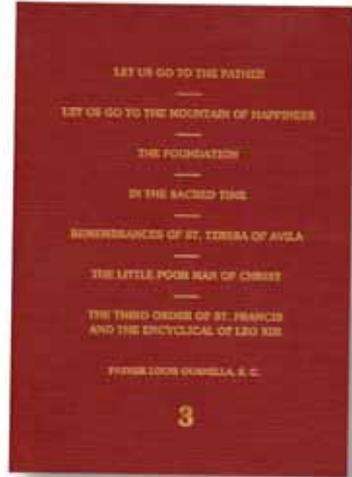
In Volume 3 of the Guanellian collection, Blessed Louis Guanella invites us, “Let us go to the Father,” through the prayer of the Our Father.

The Our Father is not just a Prayer; it is a longing that came from the Heart of Jesus for His Father and our Father.

Blessed Louis Guanella leads us to understand the love of Jesus for His Father and invites us to feel and to savor the sweetness of the paternity of God the Father, creator and provider. He invites us to feel as Jesus felt, calling His Father by the tender names of Abba, Dad, Papa.

Let us know your experience of rediscovering the Our Father, the prayer of prayers.

Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC



Let Us Go to The Father is available through the Pious Union of St. Joseph office. Send your request and a donation to The Pious Union of St. Joseph, 953 E. Michigan Ave., Grass Lake, MI 49240.

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