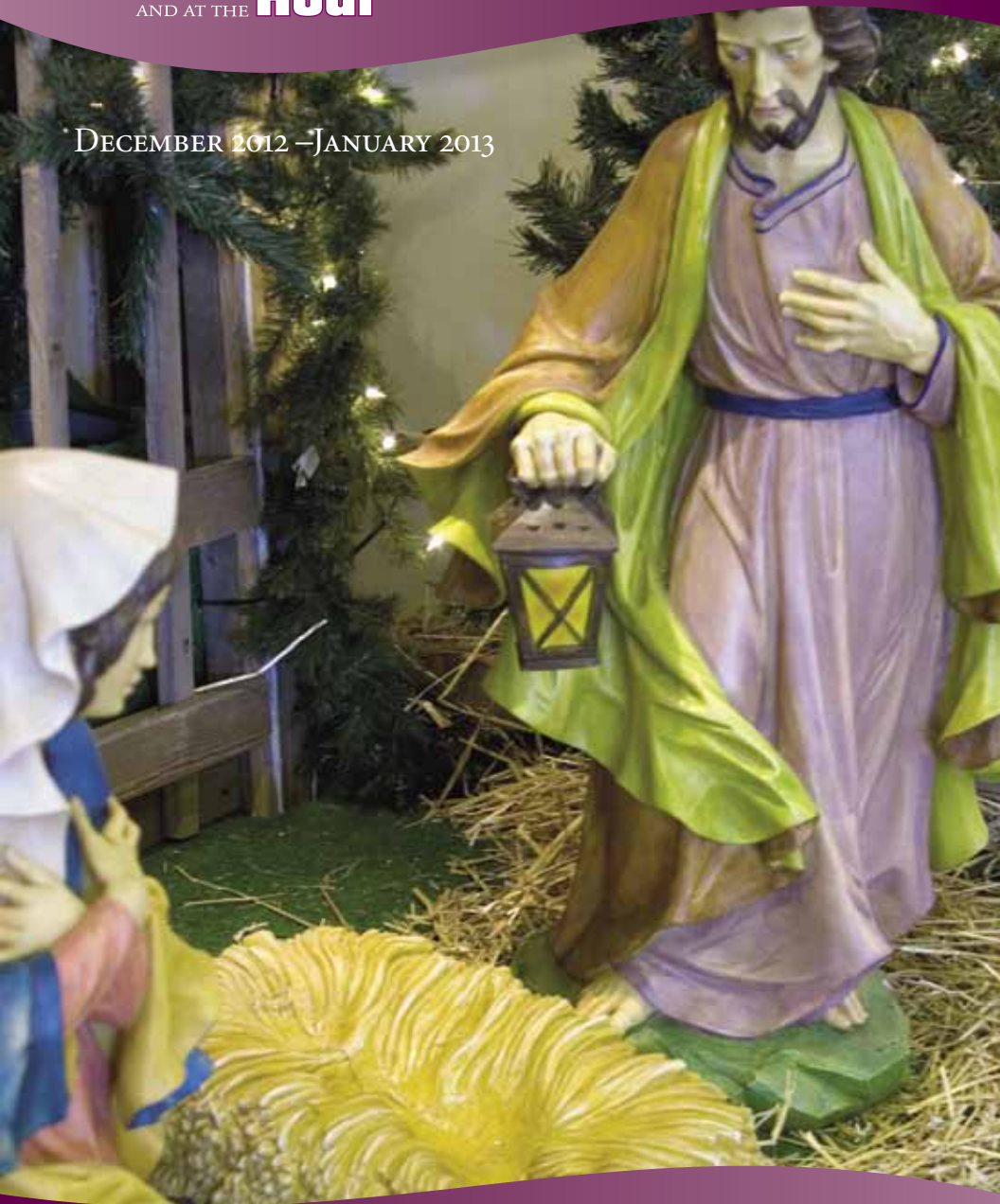


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DECEMBER 2012 – JANUARY 2013



Featured Story: The Christmas Creche Novena, page 9

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953 East Michigan Avenue
Grass Lake, Michigan 49240-9210

517-522-8017 voice 517-522-8387 fax

PiousUnion@pusj.org
www.servantsofcharity.org
www.pusj.org

Editor In Chief: Fr. Joseph Rinaldo SdC

Editing Team: Joe Yekulis, Kelly Flaherty,
Sr. Margaret Mary Schissler DSMP

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

The Voice of Providence:

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

Mission:

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

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



Christmas: The Experience of God

REFLECTION BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

Every relationship starts with a spark or message which pulls one person toward another. This spark can be like an evening breeze or as powerful as lightening. When the spark is acknowledged and accepted, a sense a pleasure develops and a relationship is born. God operates with the same dynamic. In the Annunciation, did He offer the Virgin Mary a “gentle breeze,” was it an invitation, was it in a calm setting? On the other hand, He struck Saul of Tarsus with lightening. Mary and Paul accepted the message, experienced God and developed an extraordinary relationship with God. In his endless love, God constantly sends us a range of sparks and messages; it is up to us to accept his invitations and start a relationship.

In our Christian life there are many occasions when God gives us an opportunity to start a conversation and a relationship with Him. The birth of a child is an experience of God. God is the giver of life, we are only the instruments. The miracle of a birth should be an experience of God not just for the parents, but for everyone who loved that child even before he or she was born. First communion is another experience of God, not just for the child who receives Jesus in his heart, but for the whole family who accompanied the child to his first encounter with God. Marriage, Ordinations and Funerals are also powerful messages from God. Marriage and Ordination change people and their relationship with God. Funerals are bringing people closer to God and one another, but we need a reason to remain close to God. Sometimes God touches us with sad events like illness, accidents, losses, separations. All these messages from God either change us, if our heart recognizes God's voice, or affect us only superficially. We receive the message, we even make resolutions, but there is no follow up and the initial proposal dies away. Little by little our relationship with God fades away to the point that we do not pray anymore and stop going to church. This happens today especially to youth.



We all need an experience of God in our life, an experience that bonds us to Him and gives us motivation to develop that relationship to the point of falling in love with Him. Once we fall in love we do not want to be separated from Him anymore. He will give us the energy to go through our human adversities and troubles in life. When a man and a woman fall in love with one another, they want to be together all the time and enjoy each other's company. The same forces are at work with God. The more we love Him, the more we want to spend time with Him.

We are celebrating Christmas. I don't want it to be another Christmas but a special Christmas, one that changes my life. The Birth of Christ is a powerful experience of God. When Jesus was born, the Virgin Mary took Him in her arms and called Him, flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, my Son and my God. The mystery of the Incarnation is beyond understanding, as beyond understanding as the infinite love of God for us. This Christmas I want to get closer to the Baby Jesus and call Him my brother and my God, my redeemer and my companion. I want to stay closer to Him and walk with Him because He told me, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Happy Advent!

SR. MARGARET MARY SCHISSLER, DSMP

Are we all caught up in the making of lists, sending cards, purchasing gifts, putting up decorations, planning parties, and baking? Even though Advent is a time of waiting and watching in hope we usually lose our patience in all the busyness of the season. Amid all the activity around us I ask you to find a way to pray and reflect upon the great Feast of the Birth of Jesus. You will experience a difference in your life when you do !

Let us look to St. Joseph as our example for the season. He was a man who waited anxiously for God's lead. Joseph surrendered himself ready to answer every call. He had placed himself in the hands of God and listened always and obeyed.

Joseph's example was willing obedience, a man who serves. It never enters his head to question God's commands. He makes all necessary preparations and is ready when God's call comes. Willing, unquestioning service is the secret of his life. This is his message for us.

As Christmas approaches I pray that you may experience new birth within your own life. Whether this newness is spiritual, physical or relational I am sure you will be open to whatever the Spirit leads you to do. And just as Mary was accepting of the New Birth within her own life we too must be open to whatever newness is before us to experience this renewal ourselves.

Here at the Pious Union/Shrine of St. Joseph we pray daily for our members so they may always experience the love of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. If you are looking for a way to help others experience this newness of life remember that the greatest gift given is the gift of prayer. Have a Mass offered for your loved ones and feel the grace given by God.

**Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year!**





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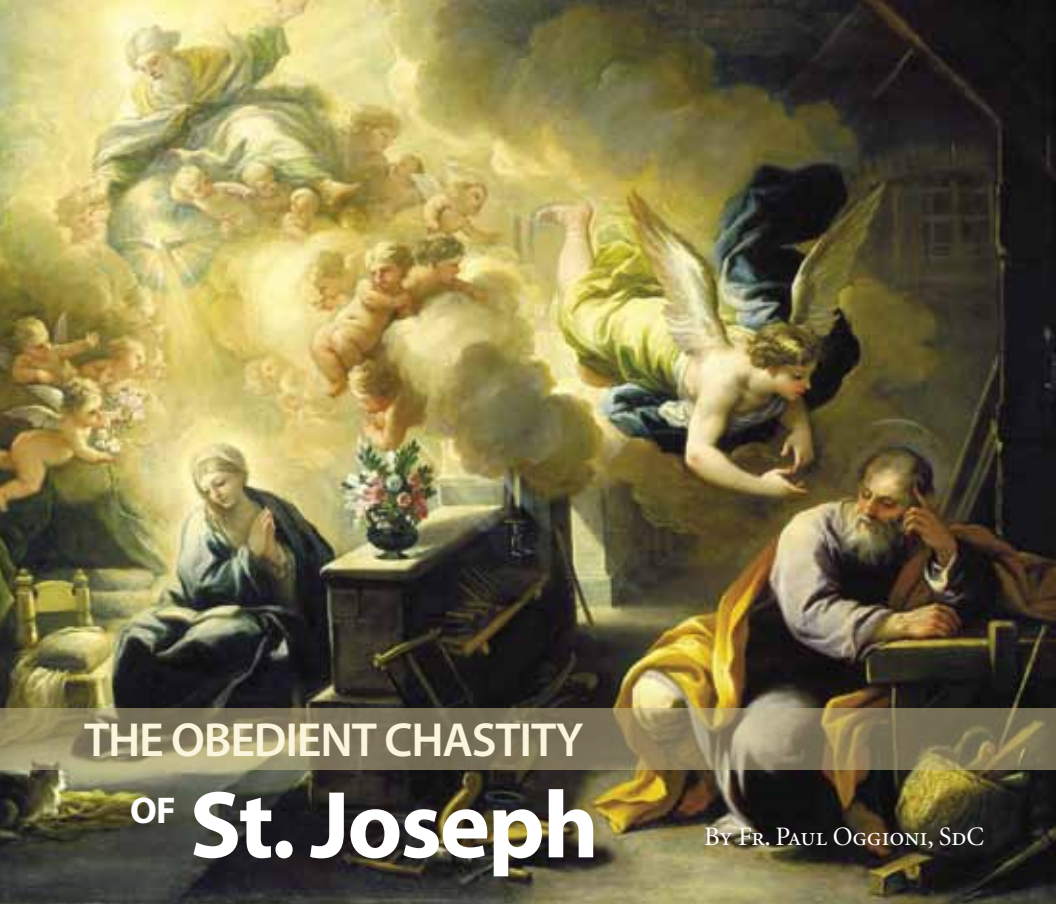
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THE OBEDIENT CHASTITY

OF St. Joseph

BY FR. PAUL OGGIONI, SdC

Several times in the Bible the Lord cries out through the prophets, “Hear, O Israel!” He reminds the Israelites that He is always present in their midst. But at the same time, He invites them to faithfully carry out His divine plan, a plan that will be fulfilled once the Savior comes.

The act of listening implies that a counterpart should be disposed to carry out God’s requests, that is, to be obedient, a word so difficult to put into practice. Obedience comes from the Latin ‘ob-audire’, that means to listen to, to be in front of. Obedience means to pay attention to the person talking to me.

Holy Scripture has plenty of pages showing God talking, asking, invoking, reprimanding, and even threatening. His purpose is to attract the attention of His people so that they may be firm in believing that salvation comes solely from Him. It is by listening that faith develops among those chosen to be the light of the nations and the place where the sun of justice will arise.

“Hear, O Israel!” How many times Mary and Joseph had heard and meditated that call when in prayer at the Synagogue and when invoking the Almighty to show them his will!

Mary, a virgin in body and soul, is betrothed to Joseph. She listens to God, who, through the annunciation of the angel, requests her to become a mother. She trusts in Him. Though being a virgin, by her obedience she becomes mother: in her the Word of God became Man.

Something similar happened to Joseph. He planned to marry Mary. Like her, he too was waiting and praying for the coming of the Messiah. While maternity became a physical event in Mary, the great and unconditional faith of Joseph made him a ‘father’ (Lk 2, 33). Being legally a father did not diminish his being a true father to Jesus. Joseph believed in the Annunciation’s fulfillment embraced chastity out of obedience. Because of that he “did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him” (Mt 1, 24).

There are four instances in the Gospel showing Joseph’s obedience: three times to the angel appearing to him in a dream, and one time to the Romans calling for a census. He never objected. He just obeyed.

The Lord’s way of communicating with Joseph was through dreams. But who could assure him that those dreams were not an illusion of a mind infected by the religious fanaticism of false prophets and messiahs who were appearing here and there inciting the Israelites to revolt against the Romans?

On the contrary, the Gospel describes Saint Joseph as a ‘righteous man’, a man following the way of the Lord, a man rooted in faith and of great humility, strongly believing that God is the origin and end of our life. In fact, faith and humility are the two virtues that help discern what comes from God and what does not. Joseph is not a robot. He recognizes what is God’s will. He freely gives his assent to it and obeys. He acts. By obeying, he becomes creative, in the sense that he generates. He becomes a father.

Joseph does not object to the mandatory census that forced Mary, ready to give birth at any moment, to travel. He could have reached Bethlehem by himself and registered his family. No, he had given his word to take care of mother and child, to be at her side in good times and in bad. He had promised his virginal love to his virgin spouse from whom the Word made Man was to be born. Together they obeyed and embarked on the journey to Bethlehem. There, together with the shepherds and Magi, they would contemplate God’s wonders already foretold by the prophet Micah, “You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel (Mt, 6).”

At the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Mary and Joseph did not fully grasp the meaning of Simeon’s words. Yet, they grasped that God was going to act with power and glory in that little Child.



When years later they returned to Nazareth from Jerusalem, where Jesus got lost in the temple, they understood that their Child was not only advancing in wisdom, age and favor before God and man, but also that He was doing His Father's will through human mediations, by obeying as they were obeying.

What a great example is Saint Joseph! He let the Lord take possession of him and the Lord led him into mysterious things. Joseph did not understand what was going on. He just made a leap of faith and obeyed God. That decision made him righteous in front of the Lord, and the Lord favored him with the special grace of contemplating in the Word made Man the salvation granted to those whom He loves.

THE CHRISTMAS CRECHE NOVENA

BY SR. ESTHER LEROUX, DSMP

DECEMBER 16TH – AUTHORITY OF GOD THE FATHER IN JOSEPH

OPENING PRAYER: (USE THIS PRAYER AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH DAY)

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
send Your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces
to hear Your voice each day.
We who are anxious over many things
look forward to Your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the complete joy of Your Kingdom
We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of Your Presence.
We are Your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.
To You we say, “Come, Lord Jesus! Come among us!”

(From The Lord Is Near booklet)

SONG: COME THOU LONG EXPECTED SAVIOR

GOSPEL: (MT. 21, 23-27)

“By what authority do you do these things? And who gave You this authority?”
Jesus answered them, ‘I also will ask you a question; and if you tell Me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From Heaven or from men?’ And they argued with one another, ‘If we say, “From Heaven” He will say, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “From men”, we are afraid of the crowd, for all hold John a prophet.’



So they answered, ‘We do not know.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“The virgin of Nazareth was a descendant of David’s lineage, yet she was a very poor woman, with no special difference from the common, poor folks. She had to work from morning until evening, day after day. Her spouse, Joseph, who also was of the lineage of the same King David, was not better off: he earned his living by the sweat of his brow.”

(Writings, vol.5, p. 213, In the Month of Flowers)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Joseph was given authority, as head of the Holy Family, of both the Blessed Virgin and the very Son of God, Jesus. Yet, like Jesus and unlike the Pharisees, he did not wield his authority, lording it over others, nor did he use it to make his life easy. He exercised it with great humility. Today, as we place the statue of St. Joseph in the manger scene, let us pray for the humility of St. Joseph, the silent Saint and especially let us pray for the humility of those in positions of authority

CLOSING PRAYER: (USE THIS PRAYER AT THE END OF EACH DAY)

Lord our God, help us to prepare worthily
for the coming of Christ, Your Son.
May our blessed Founder, St. Guanella,
help us also, so that Jesus may find us waiting and ready,
in joyful prayer, in fraternal unity, in peaceful love.
We ask this through the same Christ, Your Son,
who lives with the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever.
Amen.

SONG: DAGLI ASTRY OR SOME OTHER APPROPRIATE SONG

DECEMBER 17TH – WAITING FOR CHRIST WITH MARY, IN SIMPLICITY

SONG: SEE HOW THE VIRGIN WAITS

GOSPEL: (MT.1,16)

“Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary. It was of her that Jesus, who is called the Messiah, was born.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“The Messiah Savior was the most desired of all the earth: the prophets watched for Him with the liveliest anxiety; the patriarchs, after having waited for Him for many years, lamented having to descend into the tomb without first having seen Him. The Hebrews and the infidels both, the priests and the philosophers, crying out, exclaimed: ‘Come and do not delay, hurry or we will die.’ O Holiest Heart of my Jesus, I cannot love You as much as Blessed Mary, and I weep... At least, O Lord, make me love You with simplicity...”

(Writings vol. 1, p. 1161, 1164, In the Month of Fervor)



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Today we place the statue of Mary in the crèche. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and our Mother, loved her Son with a love that was exceptional! Let us reflect a moment on the love that is within each of us as children of our heavenly Mother and how that love should flow out of our hearts into the hearts of others. Let us, throughout this day, pray to Mary, that we become more like her in loving Jesus with our whole mind, heart and soul, and our neighbor for His sake.

DECEMBER 18TH – THE MESSENGERS OF GOD BRING US CONFIDENCE

SONG: PEOPLE LOOK EAST

GOSPEL: (MT.1,18-20, 24)

“Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When His Mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with Child through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, an upright man unwilling to expose her to the law, decided to divorce her quietly... when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream and said to him: ‘Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child’... Joseph arising from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary as his wife.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“These and a thousand other examples should serve to stimulate our confidence in the mission assigned to us by God, and to increase our trust in proportion as we recognize our unworthiness. It is obvious. If God wished something from me, and I do not know how to do it, He Himself is obliged to do my part; therefore I am bound to succeed if I place all my confidence in Him.”

(Guide, p. 367)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

As we place the angel in the crèche, it should remind us of the plan that God has for each of us just as He had for Joseph and Mary. St. Joseph’s obedience to the will of God teaches us to have complete confidence in God the Father, no matter what mission He has entrusted to us. Let us take a moment to reflect on our attitude towards the mission assigned to each of us at this moment, no matter what our vocation, as well as our attitude toward what may be in the future.



DECEMBER 19TH – THE LIGHT SHINING THROUGH ST. JOHN GUIDES US

SONG: ON JORDAN’S BANK

GOSPEL: (LK.1,13-17)

“The angel said to Zechariah: ‘Do not be frightened, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife

Elizabeth shall bear a son whom you shall name John. Joy and gladness will be yours, and many will rejoice at his birth; for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“We gain much when we admire the example of John. He was, and who does not know it, great at the side of God. Thus the angel has announced him to Zechariah... meanwhile, [the people] hailed him as prophet, they bowed to him as Messiah. John... ran from all these honors. He contented himself by saying: ‘I am a voice crying out in

the desert!’ But precisely because John confessed himself to be simply a voice, or rather because he protested humbly, God exalted him to become the true precursor of the Savior.”

(Writings vol. 1, p. 415, The Bread of the Soul II)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

The star we now place above the crèche reminds us of the light of John the Baptist who pointed out the way of the Lord. St. John’s humility and faith won him the admiration of all people and of Jesus Himself. Let us reflect a moment on how our light shines for all to see and what our contribution is to bringing the peace and joy of Christ to all around us.

DECEMBER 20TH – THE HANDMAID PREPARES FOR HER LORD

SONG: O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL

GOSPEL: (LK.1, 28-33, 38)

“The angel said to Mary: ‘Hail Full of Grace. The Lord is with you, Blessed are you among women... Do not fear, Mary. You have found favor with God. You shall conceive and bear a Son and give Him the name Jesus. Great will be His dignity and He will be called Son of the Most High.’”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“Up there in Heaven the Word of the Father, True Son of God, waited almost anxiously for the consent of Mary. As soon as He heard it, quickly the Son of the Eternal descended from Heaven to enter the womb of the Virgin. With the flesh and blood of the Immaculate, He clothed Himself with a human body, and thus, without ceasing to be True God, He began to be also true man. He is the Word Incarnate, the Savior, and Mary is His Mother and Co-Redeemer. Happy are they who recommend themselves to Mary!”

(Writings vol. I, p. 48, Oh Father! II)



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Today we put the empty crib in its place. Mary's womb, like our little crib, was prepared for the coming Christ with humility and love. Let us take a moment to quiet our hearts and so ready them to receive the Savior who waits almost anxiously to enter them.

DECEMBER 21ST – HUMILITY AND CHARITY CARRY US CLOSER TO OUR COMING SAVIOR

SONG: O COME,
DIVINE MESSIAH

GOSPEL: (LK.1, 39-42)

“Mary set out, proceeding in haste into the hill country to a town of Judah, where she entered Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby stirred in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and cried out in a loud voice: ‘Blessed are you among women and blessed is the Fruit of your womb.’”



FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“Observe, thus, Blessed Mary. She already had with her the Author of Grace, and, thus, of Charity... But as soon as the voice of the Lord speaks to her she hurries to help her cousin Elizabeth, who would receive much good from a visit from her. And look, Mary rises and hurries. She doesn't worry about the discomfort of the voyage nor of the concerns of her family. She walks and with the wings of charity soon finds herself near Hebron and the house of Elizabeth.

O how her heart beat within Blessed Mary!... ‘Jesus, You have loved me greatly, now how could I live without doing at least what good I can to others?’

(Writings vol. I p. 946, In the Month of Flowers)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

As we bring up the donkey, we recall Mary's journey to Elizabeth's home. Let us reflect on the love that spurred her on to the aid of her older cousin and ask for the grace to also come to the aid of our neighbors in need, especially those who may be older.



DECEMBER 22ND – THE LOVE OF GOD LIFTS UP THE LOWLY

**SONG: CREATOR OF
THE STARS**

GOSPEL: (LK.1, 46-47, 49-51)

“My being proclaims the greatness of
the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my

Savior... God who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is His name; His mercy
is from age to age on those who fear Him. He has shown might with His arm; He has
confused the proud in their inmost thoughts.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“O Mary, O Mary! We cannot think of anyone greater than you. We read that in making
the heavens and the earth God used the strength of one finger, in making the soul of
Mary He employed the power of His arm. What shall we say of you, O Virgin? The
measure of love that God carries for you is the same [as that for] Christ. Jesus Christ,
immense and infinite, works in your heart all the accumulation of goodness that He
could, using the arm of the Most High.”

(Writings vol. I, p. 43-44, Oh Father! I)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Now, as the sheep enter our nativity scene, we pause to reflect on the power of God
who cares for the small and humble. Today, let us think often of the tenderness of our
almighty Father and let us beg Him to grant us a strong, yet tender, love for all.

DECEMBER 23RD – JOHN’S BIRTH ANTICIPATES THE JOY TO COME

SONG: HE WILL COME

GOSPEL: (LK.1, 59-64)

“When they assembled for the circumcision of the child on the eighth day, they
intended to name him after his father Zechariah. At this his mother intervened, saying,
‘No, he is to be called John.’ They pointed out to her, ‘None of your relatives has this
name.’ Then, using signs, they asked the father what he wished him to be called.





Confess

He signaled for a writing tablet and wrote the words, ‘His name is John.’ This astonished them all. At that moment his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“Jesus, a Child still enclosed in the womb, saluting His brother, blesses John in the encounter they had through Blessed Mary and St. Elizabeth. Thus, the child exults. He responds then with lively accents: ‘Your presence has won my heart. I will not leave You ever, O my Beloved and my Savior.’ The child whom Elizabeth bore, and who then was called John, is sanctified before he is born. Zechariah, her husband, who was deaf and mute, in one moment acquires the gift of being able to hear, the favor of being able to speak. And together with the spirit of Elizabeth, they rejoiced as in a sea of ineffable sweetness.

(Writings vol. 1, p. 1250, In the Month of Fervor)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

As we bring up the shepherds, let us ponder the ineffable love of Jesus. Let us pray today, that, like John, Zechariah and Elizabeth, we may be grateful for the love of Christ for each of us, and that, like the shepherds, we may not fear to approach Him with our humble songs of praise.



DECEMBER 24TH – WAITING WITH PATIENCE FOR HIS FINAL COMING

SONG: COME THOU ALMIGHTY KING

GOSPEL: (LK.1, 68-70, 72-73)

“Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, He has come to His people and set them free. He has raised a horn of saving strength for us in the house of David His servant, as He



promised through the mouths of His holy ones, the prophets of ancient times... He has dealt mercifully with our fathers and remembered the holy covenant He made, the oath He swore to Abraham our father He would grant us.”

FROM FR. GUANELLA:

“The time will come, and is perhaps not far off, when Jesus, no longer a poor baby but a benevolent Judge and loving Father, will come to meet you. What joy then! Then you will exclaim: ‘I have waited for my God and now He is present!’... How fortunate are you if you do not lose time in following Jesus humble in the crèche. If you are not ashamed to stand by Him in the humility of Bethlehem, you will rejoice one day to be near Him in the glory of Paradise.”

(Writings vol. I, p. 4-5, Oh Father! II)

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

The final day before we celebrate the long awaited coming of our Savior, we bring forward the ox and place him in the manger scene. Let us reflect on the patience of this beast of burden as he, day by day, labors, all the while waiting for the day of liberation. We wait the day of the coming of the Liberator, Jesus Christ. Let us pray for the virtues of patience and zeal in our labors as we too work for the second coming of Christ and His Kingdom on earth.



CHRISTMAS AMONG LATINOS

BY FR. PAUL OGGIONI, SdC

FOLLOWING THE STAR AND JOURNEYING WITH JESUS

Among their different ministries, the Servants of Charity also operate among the Latinos of Delaware County, Pennsylvania. To Latinos, Christmas is a great celebration that fills them with a particular joy for it is an integral part of their culture. They are called “pueblo amante de Maria”, people in love with Mary. In fact, they connect the Savior’s birth to the feasts of the Immaculate Conception and of the Virgin Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe, which are celebrated a few days before. During the apparitions to St. Juan Diego in 1531 in Mexico, the Blessed Mother appeared as a woman expecting a baby. It is Mary who announces the coming of the “new sun of justice”, the One that saves the poor from being a nobody. Christmas, therefore, becomes an explosion of joy because, through the new born Jesus, the least members of the human family find

dignity and worth in society. It is to them that the Magi bring the gifts that open a happy window for a moment in the midst of the trials that clutch their life of hardships, the same life that Jesus, Mary and Joseph knew very well.



With Mary, the Mother most pure, the Defender of Life and Mother of the Pilgrim People, the Latinos walk to Bethlehem. During the nine evenings of the Novena, groups of different nationalities move from house

to house like Mary and Joseph anxiously looking for shelter where Baby Jesus can be born in safety. The representation of the event becomes prayer with the family that hosts the small procession, and the family returns the favor by offering them what little they have. On Christmas Eve, all national groups gather together in church. All accompany Mary and Joseph who hold the statue of Baby Jesus that will be put in the Nativity scene arranged in the church.

Before reaching the crib, the statue is rocked by all the participants, kneeling on the floor. It is a beautiful opportunity, a moving gesture to show their love to their Savior.

On Christmas afternoon, a tradition that year-by-year raises more interest and appreciation among the local people, is a parade that winds through Upper Darby, which is comprised of immigrants from 80 countries, most of the time non-



Catholic. More than a thousand people participate in the parade that is a show of a culture very much rooted in the Catholic faith and spirituality. They want to keep their faith alive that was sown centuries ago. That precious inheritance they want to pass on to their children, the new generation, who run the risk of discarding that spiritual patrimony under the strong influence of the rampant materialism, consumerism and modern efficiency of Western societies.



Impressive is the way they celebrate Christmas on the streets: a long procession of people and decorated cars leading to the parish church. There are representations of the Holy Family, numerous images of Baby Jesus, angels, shepherds, music and dancing, a celebration that begins at 1:00 pm and ends in jubilation at 8:00 p.m.

The Christmas readings underline the fact that, in time past, God spoke in various ways to our ancestors. On this solemn day, He speaks to us through his Son, who makes us all children of the same Father.



It is this awareness that sustains us, Servants of Charity, in our pastoral work among the Latinos. We strive to help them to understand that an aspect of their inheritance is to be missionaries of hope in their social environment; a hope that brings new energy and sustains their faith as pilgrim people.

Several documents of the South American Church remind us that the evangelization of the local culture is of primary importance. This style of celebrating Christmas becomes a way to evangelize our North-American culture by announcing that Christian life is a true celebration, with decorations, warm participation, passion, and heart.



ST. JOSEPH, HUSBAND AND FATHER

BY SR. MARGARET MARY SCHISSLER, DSMP

In this Year of Faith proclaimed by Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, we have a great example of one who lived his life completely by faith, St. Joseph, husband and father.

God entrusted Joseph with an astonishing responsibility leading, protecting, and providing for the Holy Family. Joseph indeed was the chosen one to be the earthly father of Jesus just as Mary was the chosen mother. Joseph gave his entire self to Mary and Jesus. He had the privilege of being married to the most grace filled woman that God could provide as mother for His Son. Joseph was united with her forever in the bond of marriage and must have shared in her deep interior life and virtues.

God equipped Joseph with the gifts He knew would be needed for his mission of caring for Mary and Jesus. God's divine plan was revealed, and Joseph, even though he wasn't the natural father of Jesus, assumed the responsibility of becoming the living reflection of God the Father. In this way, Joseph's mission was like the mission of every father on earth today...to become the living reflection of God the Father!

Just like any other father of a family, St. Joseph wanted to provide the best for his wife and his son. He depended greatly on his faith in God to help him fulfill his responsibility. He knew that God could and would fill in everything that was lacking on his part to be a good husband and father. St. Joseph gives a great example to fathers of today in his great trust in our Heavenly Father who provides for each of us.

He was a husband and a father first before he thought of his career. What an example for fathers today.

Just as God gifted Joseph with the talents and virtues he needed to fulfill his mission, God gives every father the talents and virtues needed. St. Joseph is always willing and able to guide us in using our gifts. Joseph is the “master-craftsman” who will show each person how to use with precision his own gifts. You need only to ask for his help. He is ready to show dads how to do their job, how to use their God given talents and to raise their children properly and to be a holy spouse.

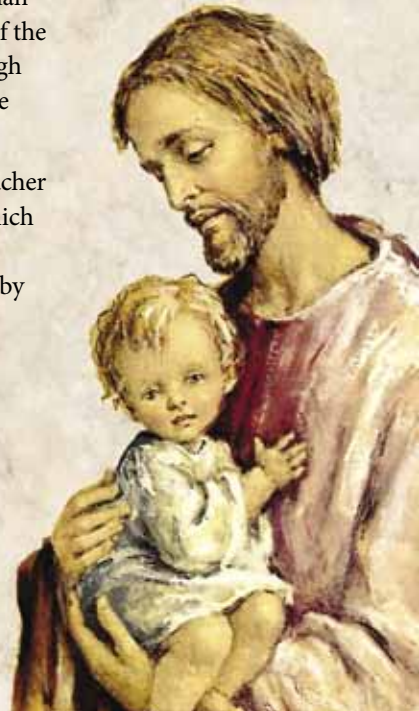
Joseph was entrusted with the task of fostering the human growth of Jesus, “in wisdom, age and grace”. “We must recognize,” writes Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptoris Custos* (1989), “that Joseph showed Jesus by a special gift from heaven, all the natural love, all the affectionate solicitude that a father’s heart can know.”

Pope John Paul II continues, “Joseph is a model for manhood. Nothing he ever said was recorded but his life speaks eloquently enough. He is referred to as the Guardian and Patron of the Universal Church. He has these titles for he was guardian, protector and patron (provider) of the Church in the earliest stage, when the “Church” was just Jesus, Mary and himself. But since the Church is the mystical Body of Christ, in protecting and providing for Jesus he was doing that for us, for we are in Christ as members of his body. Men especially do well to imitate St. Joseph and invoke his patronage in all their endeavors as husbands, fathers and providers.

Joseph accepted with the “obedience of faith” his human fatherhood over Jesus. And thus, following the light of the Holy Spirit who gives himself to human beings through faith, he certainly came to discover ever more fully the indescribable gift that was his human fatherhood.

May St. Joseph become for all of us an exceptional teacher in the service of Christ’s saving mission, a mission which is the responsibility of each and every member of the Church: husbands and wives, parents, those who live by the work of their hands or by any other kind of work, those called to the contemplative life and those called to the apostolate.”

May St. Joseph, the man chosen by God to be head of the Holy family, help each of us to grow in grace this Year of Faith proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI.





THE TESTIMONY OF A RAPE VICTIM

By FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

A few weeks ago I was invited to a conference sponsored by a local Right to Life organization. I was supposed to conclude with a few words and offer the closing prayer. I arrived toward the end of the conference and I greatly regret missing the messages and the testimony given to the audience. I arrived while a lady was being introduced by name as a mother who regretted her abortion.

The conference was actually a gathering and a time of remembrance for all the victims of abortion, including the children who are aborted, and their mothers.

“Rachel” walked to the podium holding a sign which I could not read until she turned around to face the audience. It said in big bold black letters: I Regret My Abortion. Without hesitation, and looking straight at the audience, she started to speak loud and clear.

“Many years ago, I was raped. I was choked, and I knew I was going to die in the next minute so I let him have his way with my body. Then I found out much later I was

I am proud to be part of a large movement of people who still believe in the dignity of life. We have been fighting for women's rights all these years, but it's time we start fighting for the rights of children, because they deserve protection. They have nobody to stand up for them.

pregnant as a result of it. It was not until the final moments before the abortion that I came to the realization that I was a mother of a baby in my womb. I mentioned it to the nurse, and she mentioned it to the abortionist, and the abortionist started yelling at me. He said: 'Hadn't you signed the paper already downstairs?' I was numb; I was just frozen. He stretched out my arms, and put a needle in my arm to make me go to sleep. When I awoke I was told that I was rid of my 'problem,' but it began a nightmare. I was now the mother of a dead baby.

"I can't even speak about the pain I felt, especially with every passing Mother's Day. I couldn't have children for many years, and I was always remembering that I was a mother, but of a dead baby. And then later, when my two grown children that I have now – who on Mother's Day would come around my bed with flowers and gifts and breakfast– I would always know I was the mother of more. I have deep regrets of killing my own child, my first born. Even with my children now, I cannot say 'you're my first born.' It's always difficult."

"Sometime following my abortion, I entered into a relationship, and became pregnant. He insisted that I get rid of the baby or he would say goodbye. At that time, I'd had my abortion experience, which was a nightmare, and there was no way I was going to do that to another baby. And so I chose my baby. I was very glad, very happy. Tragically, I suffered a miscarriage. As I was bleeding, and not knowing anything about fetal development, I attempted to gather the remains so as to give my child a dignified burial. However, on the way to the hospital I passed out and woke the next day to discover that any remains left were thrown out with the garbage by the hospital staff.

“Now, I have erected a monument to my two children I named Mary and Martha. I made two models of my children and I buried them there with two Bibles. At least I have acknowledged them with names, and they’re part of my life, and I’m no longer in denial. I see among you some people crying and others stunned, I love you all and I feel loved by you all. I am proud to be part of a large movement of people who still believe in the dignity of life. We have been fighting for women’s rights all these years, but it’s time we start fighting for the rights of children, because they deserve protection. They have nobody to stand up for them.

“I’m just an ambassador for the unborn now. As an adult, I learned that I was in fact conceived as a result of violence. My mother tried to kill both of us when I was six months in her womb, but did not go through with it. I’m so grateful that she did give me life, and that I’m now able to be here, to stand here today, and talk about the value of each and every person.

“It doesn’t matter how you’re born, whether you’re created with wine and roses and love, or whether you’re created in violence. We all have the same right to life, and the right to make something of our lives. Our lives are not dependent on how we were conceived, but it depends on what we make of life.”

There was not a dry eye in the audience, including mine. People clapped hands, jumped to hug her, started singing. It went on for a long while. I did not want to spoil that time with my concluding words and final prayer. The whole speech was a prayer and the conclusion was saved in each of our hearts.

Need Help? Alternatives to abortion:

Call 1-800-712-HELP

Text “Helpline” to 313131

Visit www.optionline.org

Project Rachel:

Post-abortion Reconciliation and Healing

www.hopeafterabortion.com

www.silentnomoreawareness.org

25th Anniversary of the Pious Union of St. Joseph

The Pious Union of St. Joseph was born from the love of St. Louis Guanella for the suffering and dying.

He understood that the last hours of people's lives were the most important for every human being. In these hours, all dying persons make the decision to abandon themselves to the mercy of God or reject His love. The Pious Union of St. Joseph was officially approved by Pope St. Pius X, on February 17, 1913, and extended to the whole world on February 12, 1914. The Michigan branch of the Pious Union of St. Joseph was approved



by the Bishop of Lansing, MI, on August 3, 1987. Since then, thousands of priests offer a Mass and millions of members offer their prayer for the dying of each day. The Pious Union will mark this anniversary with a special Mass presided by the Most Rev. Earl Boyea, Bishop of Lansing, on Saturday, December 1, 2012, at 11:30am. The Mass will be followed by a lunch at the St. Louis Center.

All the members of the Pious Union of St. Joseph are invited to participate in this event and in a special way to offer their prayer to St. Joseph for an increase of faith and members in the Pious Union, "O St. Joseph, Foster Father of Jesus Christ and true spouse of the Virgin Mary, pray for us and for the suffering and dying of this day."





Mailbag

Dear Father Rinaldo,

I am writing to thank you for your article, “The Other Side of Technology.” Never had I read an article so ‘right on’ and so needed today. The fact you could write so little and yet say so much on the subject just blew my mind!

Having my own problems with porn, I appreciated your ‘steps.’ I never had internet nor cable TV since I know the danger there for me.

With St. Paul, I have always said I must live with my cross (The thorn in my flesh). Please send me 5 copies of the Holy Cloak.

Thank you,

John, West Deptford, NJ

Dear Sister Margaret Mary,

I wanted you to know that St. Joseph has answered my prayers. It didn’t happen the way I thought it would, but he knows best. Please take this money as a physical way of thanking St. Joseph for helping. I thank him everyday for giving me the financial opportunity to finally go and be with my husband in Arizona. It will be tough getting started there but I hope to be able to find work as soon as possible. Please keep me in your prayers. I’ll send donations as often as I can in hopes you can keep your good work going.

God Bless You,

Josephine, Eloy, AZ

The Pious Union of St. Joseph's Library

Christmas is a gift from God to humanity. From this truth comes the tradition of exchanging gifts with one another. You will find inspiring, durable, spiritual gifts in the library of the Pious Union of St Joseph. Surprise a relative or friend with a unique gift this Christmas. At this time the library can offer:

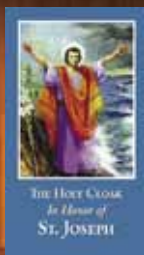
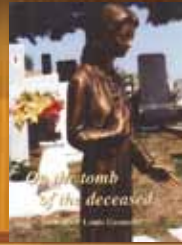
1. A Biography of Saint Louis Guanella:
 - a. Samaritan Priest
 - b. A Priest from the Mountain
 - c. His Brother's Keeper
 - d. He Went About Doing Good
 - e. The Life, Spirit and Works of Father Louis Guanella
2. Works of Blessed Louis Guanella on:
 - a. On the Tomb of the Deceased
 - b. Oh Father, Oh Mother: Meditations for the Liturgical Year
 - c. In the Month of Fervor
 - d. Bread for the Soul, Vol. 1, 2 or 3
3. The Spirituality of Blessed Louis Guanella
 - a. The Figure, the Thought and the Action of Fr. Louis Guanella in His Writings
 - b. Prayer and Suffering
 - c. The Heart of a Father
4. Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission
5. The Holy Cloak in Honor of St. Joseph
6. The Guanellian Way to Pray the Rosary
7. The Biography of Blessed Clare Bosatta

Please call, write or email the Pious Union with your request. Your donation for shipping will be appreciated.

Merry Christmas!



Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC



IS GOD CALLING YOU TO SERVE OTHERS?

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

The **Servants of Charity** Priests and Brothers, **Daughters of St. Mary of Providence**, Cooperators and hundreds of members of the greater Guanellian family serve over a million brothers and sisters while offering comfort, consolation and support.

There is room for many others; those needing help and those who want to help.

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

UNITED STATES

► **Servants of Charity Formation House**

Fr. Dennis Weber
1795 S. Sproul Rd.
Springfield, PA 19064
tel: 610-328-3406
fax: 610-328-1019
fr.dweber@chs-adphila.org

► **St. Louis Center**

Fr. Satheesh Alphonse
16195 Old US 12
Chelsea, MI 48118
tel: 734-475-8430
fax: 734-475-0310
frsatheesh@stlouiscenter.org

► **Daughters of St. Mary of Providence**

Sr. Brenda McHugh
953 E. Michigan Ave.
Grass Lake, MI 49240
srbrenda@pusj.org

INDIA:

► **Bangalore**

Fr. Samson Rajasekaran
Guanella Preethi Nivas
Geddalahalli, Kothanur (PO)
Bangalore – 560 077
Karnataka – India
Tel: 080/28445501
Email: gpnbangalore@yahoo.com

► **Chennai**

Fr. A. Adaikalam
Don Guanella Major Seminary
Karayanchavadi, Poonamallee
Chenn – 600 056
Tel: 044/26274795
Email: guamaj@yahoo.co.in



► **Cuddalore**

Fr. Paul Arockiara
St. Joseph's Seminary
Samupillai Nagar
Cuddalore 607 001
Tamil Nadu – India
Tel: 04142/296788
Email: sjseminary@yahoo.co.in



► **Vatluru – Eluru (A.P)**

Fr. Charles Boromeo
Guanella Karunalaya
Vatluru, West Gothavari
(Dt) 534 007
Andhra Pradesh – India
Tel: 08812/244474
Email: gkarunalaya@yahoo.com



PHILIPPINES:

► **Servants of Charity House**

Fr. Charlton Viray
Centerville Subd – Pasong Tamo
Tandang Sora –
1107 Quezon City
Tel: 2-931-5549
Email: coviray@yahoo.com



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



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

Shrine of St. Joseph Sacraments and Hours of Devotion

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

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

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

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

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

Confession: Before and after Mass, upon request

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

Pious Union of St. Joseph
953 East Michigan Ave.
Grass Lake, MI 49240
Phone: 517-522-8017
Email: piousunion@pusj.org

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