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AND AT THE

DECEMBER 2014—
JANUARY 2015

THE VOICE OF PROVIDENCE

Featured story on page 3

St. Joseph
the Custodian

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Published By:

The Pious Union of St. Joseph
Patron of the Suffering and Dying
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,
Fr. Paul Oggioni, SdC, Tom Herron

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*© 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:

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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.

CHRISTMAS 2014

By Fr. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC



Christmas punctually arrives every year following the cycle of seasons, months and days. We are used to it. But Christmas means something different to each one of us.

For some it is the birth of Jesus who became man to save us through his passion, death and resurrection. For some others it is another religious celebration. For many it is a welcome winter holiday. For many others it is just a business opportunity. For the believers it is an invitation to consider an intimacy with the baby Jesus and to meditate the mystery of the love of God who became one of us to save us. The lights, the sounds, the colors, the gifts and the decorations sometimes distract us and we fall into the compromise to go with the flow and ignore the real meaning of Christmas. Man's redemption came about by Jesus in humility, suffering and poverty. If we want to partake of the redemption we must follow his example, not necessarily materially but certainly spiritually. On the Sunday after Christmas, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth. In fact, every crèche scene shows us Jesus together with the blessed Mother and St. Joseph in the grotto of Bethlehem. God wanted to be born in a human family; he wanted to have a mother and a father like us.

After Jesus' birth, the Gospel presents the Holy Family traveling the sorrowful road of exile, in search of refuge in Egypt. Joseph, Mary and Jesus experience the dramatic fate

of refugees, with the fear, uncertainty and uneasiness it brings (Matthew 2:13–15, 19–23). Unfortunately, in our time, millions of families encounter this sad reality. Almost every day the television and the newspapers carry news about refugees who flee from hunger, from war, from persecution or from other grave dangers, in search of security and a dignified life for themselves and their families.



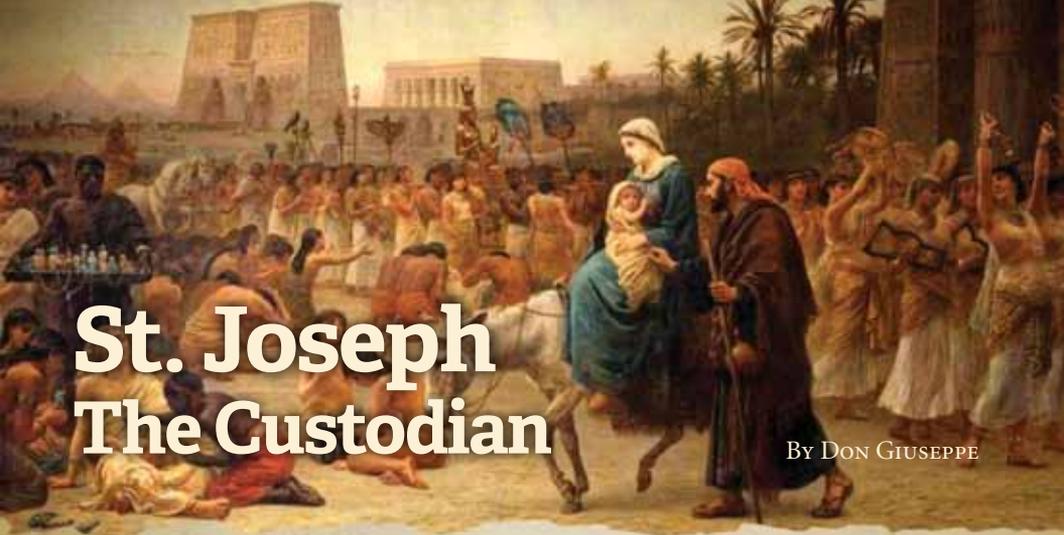
In distant lands, even when they find work, refugees and immigrants do not

always receive true welcome, respect, or appreciation of the values which they bring with them. So, when we look at the Holy Family of Nazareth in the moment that they become refugees, we think about the drama of those emigrants and refugees who are victims of rejection and exploitation, who are victims of human trafficking and slave labor. But among us there are other “exiles”: those exiles can be within our own family: the elderly, the handicapped, for example, who are sometimes treated as an inconvenience. An indicator of how a family is doing is how the children and old people in the family are treated.

Jesus wanted to belong to a family that experienced these hardships, so that no one would feel excluded from the loving presence of God. The flight into Egypt, caused by Herod’s threats, shows us that God is present where man is in danger, where man suffers, where he flees, where he experiences rejection and abandonment. God is also there where man dreams, where he hopes to return to freedom in his homeland, plans and decides about his life and dignity and that of his family.

The contemplation of the Holy Family lets itself be drawn also by the simplicity of the life they lead at Nazareth. It is an example that is very good for our families; it helps them become communities of love and reconciliation in which tenderness, mutual help and reciprocal forgiveness are experienced. Let us remember the three magic words our parents taught us when we were growing up: “please,” “thank you” and “I’m sorry”. In a family when you are not intrusive but say please, when you are not self-centered but say thank you, and when you realize that you have done something wrong and apologize, in that family there is peace and joy. The proclamation of the Gospel, in fact, passes first of all through families to then reach the different circumstances of daily life of each family member.

May you and your family experience the Joy of Christmas and the Redemption!



St. Joseph The Custodian

BY DON GIUSEPPE

The Gospel tells us that “Joseph did as the Angel of the Lord commanded him and took his wife” (Mt 1, 24). These words express the mission that God entrusted to Joseph, the mission of a custodian, protector and responsible father.

Of whom is he a custodian? Of Mary and Jesus; but it is a custody which embraces the whole Church, as St. John Paul II underlines in his document *Redemptoris Custos, 1* (Custodian of the Redeemer): “St. Joseph took loving care of Mary and gladly dedicated himself to Jesus Christ’s upbringing, he likewise watches over and protects Christ’s Mystical Body, that is, the Church, of which the Virgin Mary is the exemplar model.”

How does St. Joseph carry out this custody? With discretion and humility, silently, with a constant presence and total fidelity, even when he does not understand. From his wedding with Mary to the episode of the twelve year-old Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem, St. Joseph accompanies every moment with tenderness and love. He is there for Mary, his spouse, in times of serenity as well as in times of difficulty. From the journey to Bethlehem for the census, to the anxious and joyful hours of delivery; in the dramatic arrangement of the flight to Egypt to the passionate search for their son in the Temple, then in the everyday life in the house of Nazareth, to the shop where he taught carpentry to Jesus.

How does Joseph live his vocation as the custodian of Mary, Jesus and the Church? By constantly listening to God, being open to His will, and following God’s plan instead of his own. Joseph is the “Custodian” because he knows how to listen to God and to be guided. For this reason he is very sensitive to the people who are entrusted to him, he can read the meaning of each event, and he is attentive to his surroundings, knowing how to make wise decisions. In him we can see how to respond to God’s call,

with openness and readiness, but we also discover the center of the Christian vocation: Jesus Christ! We shall be the custodian of Christ in our lives to become the custodian of others and to protect creation.

The custody vocation, however, is not just a duty of ours as Christians. It is simply a human dimension



and everybody's concern. It regards the custody of all creation and its beauty, as told by the book of Genesis and preached and lived by St. Francis of Assisi. It means respect for every creature of God and the environment in which we live. It means the custody of people; taking care of every person with love, especially the children, the elderly, and the fragile ones who sometimes aren't always considered among the ones we love. It means caring for each other in our families: the spouses are custodians for each other; as parents we take care of our children, and in time the children become the custodian of their parents. Custody means living friendships with sincerity; as our friends become a reciprocal custody in closeness, respect and honesty.

“In the beginning,” everything was entrusted to the custody of man, and it is a responsibility which is everyone's concern. God wants us to be custodians of His gifts. When we fail this custodial responsibility, when we fail to take care of creation and our brothers and sisters, destruction will prevail and the heart dries up. In every historical generation, unfortunately, there are new “Herods” who plot deaths and destroy the dignity of men and women.

All people who are responsible in the financial, political or social arenas, all men and women of good will, should become “custodians” of creation, of God's design for nature, of the environment and of one another. We cannot afford to allow the signs of destruction and death to mark the path of our world. The first step of becoming “custodians,” is to take care of ourselves. We need to remember that hatred and arrogance soil our lives. “Custody” then means to keep our feelings and our heart under control: as both good and bad intentions come from the heart, the ones which build relationships and the ones that destroy them. We must not fear goodness and tenderness in our lives.

“And the Word became Flesh...”

In the book of Exodus, God gave detailed instructions on how to adorn the vestment that would be worn in His presence; at the hem, “bells of pure gold were also made and put between the pomegranates...” (Ex 39, 25). This was so that the tinkling could be heard as Aaron entered or exited the presence of the Lord. Thus there is a long legacy of bells ringing in honor of the Lord, and now at the Shrine of St. Joseph Angelus bells will ring daily at noon and 6:00 p.m. The chimes and bells would not be possible without the generosity of John and Joyce Goshorn who donated them to the Pious Union.

More good news at the Shrine is that the restoration of the south entrance is now complete and visitors with disabilities will have an easier time gaining access into the Shrine. Thank you to all of our generous benefactors for making this project possible.

Though we were all sad to bid farewell to Fr. Paul, we rejoice that Fr. Satheesh Alphonse, SdC has taken the role as Pastoral Director of the Pious Union. He is also joined by Sr. Ann Huber, DSMP as his Pastoral Assistant. Sr. Ann was previously acting as ‘housemother’ for women with intellectual and developmental disabilities at Mount St. Joseph in Lake Zurich IL.



On October 25, 2014, several of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence traveled to the Shrine with five individuals who pronounced their formal Promises as Guanellian Cooperators in honor of our holy Founder, St. Louis Guanella’s feast day. It is always a cause for celebration when the Guanellian family welcomes new members.

Stop by soon to see the Shrine beautifully decorated for the Christmas season and fill your ears with joyful bells calling us to contemplate Mary’s humble submission to the will of the Father; becoming the bearer of God’s greatest gift, Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.



**The Pious Union
of St. Joseph**

Mailbag

Dear Friends,

I have written before, about 3 years ago, and I asked for the booklet *The Holy Cloak in Honor of St. Joseph*. I like this devotion and I recite it every day. Now I would like to share it, so I would like you to send 3 more copies and Holy Masses offered for the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

Thank you and God bless you all,
Antonietta, Burlington ON

Prayer Request,

A female coworker/friend of mine named Kelly, who was about 45 years old, brought up Catholic and lost her way, took her life on August 28, 2014.

She was always so very eager to help others, so very generous. She had multiple degrees and certifications; trying out various things, and got involved in Buddhism some time ago.

I tried bringing her back around to the Catholic faith in subtle ways on numerous occasions, as far as what I said and things I gave to her, but with no apparent success. Kelly also had many significant health financial and relationship problems. She had ovarian cancer that came back and may have been told it was terminal.

I didn't find out that she passed away until yesterday, and did something I hadn't done in about 17 years, I cried. This was in front of my wife and three of my children at the dinner table. I told them that I don't cry when I hurt physically, but that it's ok for men to cry for someone. I don't know what my kids think of me now, but that's neither here nor there.

At about 4:00 a.m. today I was awakened by a vision, not something I dreamed up on my own, I think. I was made aware of the presence of Kelly's soul and I saw incense rising to her and the word 'sanctified' came to me.

I believed that to represent the Mass, so I resolved to offer a Mass up for her soul soon, and not put it off or make any bones about it.

Please pray that Kelly is in heaven now or will at least be there some day.

Sincere thanks,

Anonymous

Dear Fr. Oggioni,

I wish to thank you for the wonderful work you do for the sick and those close to death.

I live in a senior home where I am surrounded by elderly people; some are very sick and some are close to death. As for myself, I have also witnessed the death of my brother last year and this past July the death of my sister. I have only one surviving brother, both of us are in our 80s. We're trying to support one another since there are no children.

Some years ago, I was enrolled in the Pious Union of St. Joseph. By reading your letter, it sounds as though you don't have my name.

Enclosed you will find a check for 5 Gregorian Masses. Written are the names of my deceased father, mother, brother and my two sisters. I pray that God will bring them soon to His arms if they are not yet there.

Kindly keep me and my brother Robert in your prayers.

Gratefully yours,

Dorothy

Advent: Time of Hope, Celebration and Ultimate Exultation

FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

This year the liturgical season of Advent begins at sundown on Saturday evening, November 30, 2014. Advent culminates with the birth of the Savior at Christmas. The Advent season in its liturgical observance is devoted to the coming of God at the end of history when Jesus shall reign as king. The time is a celebration of “the coming of the Lord” in ultimate triumph. Advent confronts us and wakes us from our daze.

Advent, far from being a penitential time or a time of despair, is a time of rejoicing in hope and a time of patient waiting. As Christians we are invited to quietly prepare our hearts and our lives for the coming of the King of Kings in the flesh. For what or for whom are we waiting in life? What virtues or gifts are we praying to receive this year? What material things do we seek? The people, qualities, things we await give us great insights into who we are.

The coming of God’s Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the “First Covenant”. He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel.

Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming. (CCC 522). St. John the Baptist is the Lord’s immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way. “Prophet of the Most High”, John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last. He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother’s womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being “the friend of the bridegroom”, whom he points out as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. Going before Jesus “in the spirit and power of Elijah”,

John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through



“WHEN THE CHURCH CELEBRATES THE LITURGY OF ADVENT EACH YEAR, SHE MAKES PRESENT THIS ANCIENT EXPECTANCY OF THE MESSIAH, FOR BY SHARING IN THE LONG PREPARATION FOR THE SAVIOR’S FIRST COMING, THE FAITHFUL RENEW THEIR ARDENT DESIRE FOR HIS SECOND COMING.”

his martyrdom. (CCC 523-524). When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the precursor’s birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (CCC 525).

The mystery of our final salvation is developed in a twofold manner. Jesus has two births: one from God before the ages, the other from the Virgin at the end of all ages. He has two comings: the one is hidden and resembles the falling of the dew upon a fleece; the other, the future one, on the contrary, will be manifest. At his first coming, he was wrapped in linens and laid in a manger; at the second, light shall be his robe. In the first coming he endured the Cross, ignoring its shame; in his second coming, he will be in glory surrounded by an army of angels. Let us therefore not stop at his first coming but look forward to the second.

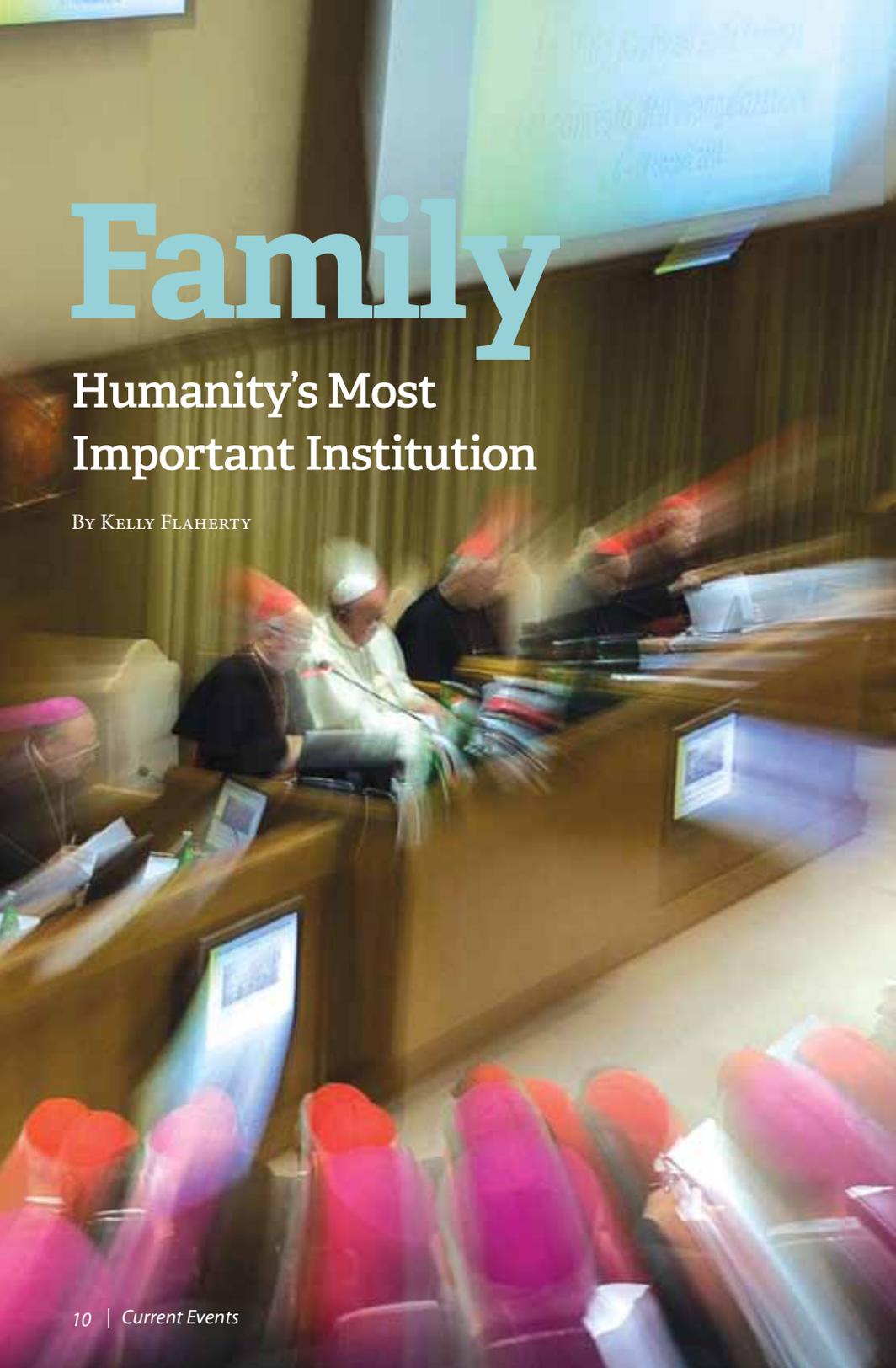
At his first coming we hailed him with the words, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” And we shall hail him in the same way at his second coming.

For we shall go out to meet the Lord and his angels, and prostrating before him, we shall cry, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’

Am I watching for Christ? People who are watching for Christ are sensitive, eager, confident, awake, alive, vigilant and prayerful. I am watching for Christ when I look for him in all that happens and who would not be surprised, agitated or overwhelmed, if they found that he was coming at once...

This then is to watch: to be detached from what is present, and to live in what is unseen, to live in the thought of Christ as he came once, and as he will come again; to desire his second coming, from our loving and grateful remembrance of his first.



A blurred photograph of a church assembly. In the foreground, the tops of several pews are visible, some with red and purple floral arrangements. In the middle ground, several people are seated at long wooden desks, some looking at laptops. In the background, a large projector screen displays text in a non-English language. The overall scene is out of focus, suggesting a candid or documentary-style shot.

Family

Humanity's Most Important Institution

By KELLY FLAHERTY

Family is so important that God Himself came and dwelt among us as part of a family. He wanted His Son to show us how to live in communion with others starting with the domestic church, the family.

We can learn by reading the Bible that the Holy Family, though set apart for their participation in salvation history, was not exempt from the difficulties that families living in the world face.

We can follow many earthly families throughout human history that have persevered through



periods of suffering, spiritual dryness and temptation to sin. Families today are no different. Many suffer from these problems and the destruction of traditional marriage, dissolution of the families of origin, individualism, hedonism, relativism and a loss of a sense of fear of God. The world seems to be spiraling downward to a moral death.

In the days of St. Louis Guanella, society was suffering greatly and he wanted the world to learn of the love and mercy that flows from the heart of Jesus, carrying the love of God from the heights of heaven down to each and every person who has been baptized into the family of God. He did not come by this desire by accident, he was raised in a family that was infused with faith, their daily, weekly, yearly rituals revolved around the sacraments, praying, Bible study and reading the lives of the saints. It is no surprise then that “the central element of the Guanellian charism is family spirit” (With Faith, Love and Competence 40). “The family is the natural environment where human life is born and develops... The members are united to one another by reciprocal affection and have an experience of communion” (Basic Document 54–55). The family is a proven model of relationships and human organization; every person has his origin in a family.

In this age, as in ages past, there are families that get torn apart by death, divorce and the inability for some members to forgive one another. Unfortunately, marriage and family life does not come with an operator’s manual; but if it did it might read like the Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission. “Everyone is respected, appreciated and loved in his own individuality. Daily life, with its problems and joys, its plans and resources, is shared in the enjoyment of being together” (Basic Document 55–56).

“Despite the many signs of crisis in the institution of the family in various contexts of the ‘global village,’ the desire for family remains alive. “ This point was number 2 in the document prepared by the 3rd Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme, “The Pastoral Challenges on the Family in the Context of Evangelization.” It was a special meeting held October 5–18, 2014 in preparation for the Ordinary Synod of Bishops planned for October 2015. The result of this meeting is a working document that will lead discussions throughout the universal church over the course of the year; helping the Church to address the pastoral needs of the family in context of the challenges of life in the world today.

The document has caused confusion and doubt amongst believers, but in the Guanellian spirit remember “that it is always better to use the preventative system, that is, to surround the person(s) in every circumstance of life with the affection of a father, to protect one against every danger of falling or meeting obstacles, so as to usher him (them) to the right path” (Internal Regulations of the SdC, 1029–1032). Saint Guanella



“wished that interpersonal relationships be marked by a true spirit of giving, which is demonstrated by profound respect and attention to the other’s needs” (With Faith, Love and Competence 41). This is how the Body of Christ will be strengthened, for “as a social unit, the family interacts with the society to which it belongs, participates in its life, and contributes to its development”(Basic Document 57). The Church needs to come together in the bond of charity so important to St. Guanella and begin to transform society rather than be transformed by it.

The family is the world’s last defense and the Synod of Bishops worked with great effort to come up with ways to improve the pastoral care of families, couples and individuals who are living in ‘unusual’ situations. Let the Church rise up together, step out from under the shadow of death of society at-large and gather the lost sheep of those living in ‘unusual’ situations; guiding them on the right path, the path to the love of the Father. Do not let your faith be shaken by the reports from the mainstream media. Keep in mind that we must love God with all our soul, mind and strength and love our neighbors, even those caught in sin, as ourselves. Keep your eyes facing toward heaven and know that because “its origin is in God, the family [domestic and universal] lives totally trusting in Divine Providence” (Basic Document 58) and the Good Shepherd never abandons His sheep.

The Immaculate Conception

Still a Misconception

BY FR. SILVIO DENARD, SDC

In the month of December the Catholic Church remembers and celebrates different feasts honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary by herself or with Jesus and Joseph: Immaculate Conception of Mary (Dec. 8), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12), the Birth of Jesus (Dec. 25); the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (Dec. 28); and the connected feast of the Divine Maternity of Mary (Jan. 1) and the Epiphany of Our Lord (Jan. 6).

We celebrate Mary, and her unique role in the divine design of salvation, in a strict unity with Jesus Christ. If the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity did not plan to become man, we would not have Mary as His mother.

To prepare Himself a worthy dwelling allowing Him to become a man, He invented Mary. The Church professes that she was born without

original sin, like Adam and Eve of old. Blessed Pope Pius IX, on December 8, 1854 proclaimed as a dogma that “the Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of God omnipotent and because of the merits of Jesus Christ the Savior of the human race, free from all stain of original sin.”



“Impossible!” some people contend. “How can original sin not be transmitted ontologically in every human conception? If that is true, then God goes against His own laws!”

Thank God that we already have an answer from Luke 1,28, “Hail, Mary, full of grace.” That text, together with Genesis 3,15, is the basis on which the Fathers of the Church taught the perfect sinlessness of Mary. How can God be born from a sinful creature, from a creature infected and affected by original sin? God is 1000% perfection and purity and He cannot be touched by anything that is sinful. To be born in such a way, He invented Mary. “Nothing is impossible for God,” says the Archangel Gabriel to Mary in the Gospel of Luke.

Mary is then a unique miracle of God. She is not a simple common girl from the obscure town of Nazareth who lent her womb to God. She was not a surrogate mother like we have nowadays. Jesus was not born in a laboratory as, unfortunately, many children were born. “When the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,” St. Paul wrote to the Galatians (4,4). Was He born from a woman? Of course, He was. He chose to become a man through a woman, but a special woman because He is special.

The Immaculate Conception is commonly confused with the doctrine of the Incarnation and the virgin birth of Jesus, though the two deal with separate subjects. The Catholic Church teaches Mary was conceived by normal biological means, but her soul was acted upon by God (kept “immaculate”) at the time of her conception.



Although the belief that Mary was sinless and conceived immaculate has been widely held since late antiquity, the doctrine was not dogmatically defined until 1854, by Pope Blessed Pius IX in his papal bull *Ineffabilis Deus*.

Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches

Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Christians often object to the dogmatic declaration of Mary’s immaculate conception as an unnecessary “over-elaboration” of the faith.

Protestantism

Martin Luther, who initiated the Protestant Reformation, said, “Mary is full of grace, proclaimed to be entirely without sin. God’s grace fills her with everything good and makes her devoid of all evil.” But in 1532 he denied Mary’s immaculate conception, declaring, “Mary is conceived in sin just like us.” Most Protestants reject the doctrine because it is not taught in the Bible. The formal pronouncement of Mary’s Immaculate Conception by the Catholic Church in 1854 alienated some Protestant churches partly due to its implication that not all have sinned.

Islam

With regard to Mary’s putative immaculate conception, while classical Islam holds the Qur’an to affirm Mary’s virginity and virtue, it repudiates the doctrine as it is known in Christianity. There is no inherited fault in the genesis of humans that requires any further form of salvation than moral repentance and an interior act of commitment and surrender to God.

The papal definition of the dogma declares with absolute certainty and authority that Mary possessed sanctifying grace from the first instant of her existence and was free from the lack of grace caused by original sin at the beginning of human history. Mary’s salvation was won by her son Jesus Christ through His passion, death, and resurrection and was not due to her own merits.

When God creates something, He creates it good. Mary, the creature who gave birth to her Creator, is the best creation ever.

“O, Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee.”









PRIESTHOOD: 24x7

BY FR. C. JOHN PAUL BRITTO, SdC

[Editor's Note: The ordination of ten young men, on a single occasion, in this time in our society is an uncommon sight. Father Britto, SdC shares the impressions of Father Arul, SdC at such an event at St. Joseph Seminary in Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu, India.]

The thoughts and feelings of Fr. Arul, newly ordained, help us to grasp the meaning of the priesthood to a young man who becomes an *alter Christus*, another Christ in God's service in the 21st century.]

It was a special and joyful moment to witness ten deacons ordained to the priesthood. This wonderful event took place on August 22nd, at St. Joseph Seminary in Cuddalore, India. The Most Rev. Dr. Antony Anandarayar, Archbishop of the Pondicherry–Cuddalore Diocese, ordained the ten deacons for the Servants of Charity. The Provincial Superior, Fr. Soosai Rathinam, SdC and two of his councilors were present. A large number of parents, relatives, friends, and benefactors as well as members of the Guanellian Lay Movement, priests, sisters and faithful crowded the church for the beautiful occasion.

Father Arul, one the newly ordained priests, on behalf of all of them, expressed his feelings and emotions that the great gift of the Priesthood has placed in his heart. These are the sentiments he expressed.

“I was asked the question how the Catholic priesthood is different from other professions in the world? Reflecting for a brief time, I replied that a priest is a priest forever, and it is neither a title nor a privilege. It is a way of life following the one and only master, Jesus Christ. Priesthood is a gift given by God, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. My newly ordained confreres and I are very grateful and happy to receive the precious gift from the Lord Jesus: the grace of following Him to serve in His kingdom. God has a plan of salvation for everyone. We have discovered this plan of salvation in our lives through the amazing gift of the priesthood. Our priesthood



is a vocation, not an isolated event, nor a profession. This commitment involves past, present and future. The Christ we love so dearly has called us to continue His ministry on earth. This ministry begins on the day of ordination and continues Jesus’ work until the whole universe is reconciled with the Father. Thus the priesthood we have received is the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ, the eternal Priest.

We ask for prayers from the people we will serve and the grace of God to remain faithful to our priesthood and the promises we made to God today through the Bishop. Priesthood does not fail the priest, priests fail the priesthood, because, priesthood belongs to Christ the eternal priest. With all this in mind, we have made resolutions today to secure and share the amazing gift of the priesthood.

Holy Mass will be the bright sun of our day. We will celebrate every Mass as if it were our first, the last and only Mass of our life. The Eucharist will transform our life into a continual Mass.

The Divine Office is the best thermometer of our priestly fervor. We will love it as a shield of our chastity. The Divine Office is a nuptial ring that binds us to the church, our spouse.

Confessions will save our priesthood from illusions, superficiality and distractions. Souls will be our one passion. Charity will be the soul and the style of our priestly life. Our homilies will be drawn from prayer and personal meditations and the gospels.

We are priests for the people of God and not for ourselves. We will be always, everywhere, with everybody, true priests. We are at the service and disposal of all. We will be men of God knowing well that if we want to follow Jesus we have to take up our cross and carry it.”

A Prayer for Priests

‘O Jesus, our great High Priest, Hear my humble prayers on behalf of your priests. Give them a deep faith, a bright and firm hope and a burning love which will ever increase in the course of their priestly lives.

In their loneliness, comfort them In sorrows, strengthen them In their frustrations, point out to them that it is through suffering that the soul is purified, and show them that they are needed by the Church, they are needed by souls, they are needed for the work of redemption.

O loving Mother Mary, Mother of Priests, take to your heart your sons who are close to you because of their priestly ordination, and because of the power which they have received to carry on the work of Christ in a world which needs them so much.

Be their comfort, be their joy, be their strength, and especially help them to live and to defend the ideals of consecrated celibacy.’

Amen.

If you would like to sponsor a seminarian in India, Vietnam or the Philippines for a dollar a day, please use the envelope in the center of the magazine and write ‘seminarian sponsorship’ on the memo line of your check.

JANUARY 1, 2015

World Day of Peace

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

Every year, on January 1, we Catholics observe the World Day of Peace. The Holy Father offers a spiritual and practical meditation. Many politicians indulge in their usual rhetoric for the occasion.

For the majority of people this day goes unnoticed. What is this peace? Our faith teaches us that in the heart of every man and woman is the desire for a full life, including that irrepressible longing for fraternity which draws us to fellowship with others and enables us to see them not as enemies or rivals, but as brothers and sisters.

Fraternity is an essential human quality. An awareness of our relating helps us to look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity, it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace. We should remember that fraternity is generally first learned in the family, thanks above all to the responsible roles of the father and mother.

The family is the wellspring of all fraternity, and as such it is the foundation and the first pathway to peace, since, by its vocation, it is meant to spread its love to the world around it.





Globalization, makes us neighbors, but does not make us brothers. The many situations of inequality, poverty and injustice, are signs not only of a profound lack of fraternity, but also of the absence of a culture of solidarity.

To understand more fully this human vocation to fraternity, we need to understand the sacred Scripture account of creation. All people are descended from the couple created by God in his image and likeness, Adam and Eve, (cf. Gen 1,26), to whom Cain and Abel were born. Abel is a shepherd, Cain is a farmer. Their identity and vocation is to be brothers. Cain's murder of Abel is a tragic rejection of their vocation to be brothers. Cain, jealous of God's preference for Abel who had offered him the best of his flock, killed Abel. In this way, he refused to regard Abel as a brother, to live in the presence of God by assuming his responsibility to care for and to protect others. By asking him, "Where is your brother?" God holds Cain accountable for what he has done. He answers, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4,9).

The story of Cain and Abel teaches that we have an inherent calling to fraternity, but also the tragic capacity to betray that calling. This is shown by our daily acts of selfishness, which are at the root of so many wars and so much injustice: many men and women die at the hands of their brothers and sisters.

The basis of fraternity is found in God's fatherhood. "For you have only one Father, who is God, and you are all brothers and sisters" (Mt 23,8-9). We are not speaking of a generic fatherhood. It is a fatherhood, which generates fraternity, because

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the welcomed love of God becomes the most formidable way of transforming our lives and relationships with others.

Fraternity is the foundation and pathway of peace. Christian solidarity presumes that our neighbor is loved not only as a human being, but as the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.



Many of our brothers and sisters have continued to endure the destructive experience of war, a deep wound inflicted on fraternity. Many conflicts are taking place amid general indifference. Many live in lands where weapons impose terror and destruction, where no one hears the cry of the poor, where in pain and suffering they live in fear, under hostility, abuse and violation of fundamental human rights. Fraternity extinguishes war and it is a prerequisite for fighting poverty.

International agreements and national laws are not sufficient to protect humanity from the risk of armed conflict. A conversion of hearts is needed to recognize in the other a brother or sister. Fraternity generates social peace because it creates a balance between freedom and justice, between personal responsibility and solidarity, between the good of individuals and the common good. And so a political community must support all people in a transparent and responsible way. Citizens must feel represented with respect by the public authorities. An authentic spirit of fraternity overcomes the individual selfishness, whether in the many forms of corruption, so widespread today, or in the formation of criminal organizations, local



or global. These groups tear down legality and justice, striking at the very heart of the dignity of the person.

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We Christians believe that Christ has come to the world to bring us the ability of sharing in his life. This entails a network of fraternal relationships marked by reciprocity and forgiveness.

“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13,34–35).

Every activity therefore must be distinguished by an attitude of service to people, especially those furthest away and less known. Service is the soul of that fraternity that builds up peace. May Mary, the Mother of Jesus, help us to understand and live every day the fraternity that springs up from the heart of her Son, so as to bring peace on earth.

The Birth of a Saint

By JOSEPH YEKULIS

Is it a coincidence that St. Louis Guanella was born in late December during Advent when we celebrate the birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ? And what of his humble beginnings, his parents, his family, his surroundings, and his culture?



Perhaps there are a number of similarities that go into the making of a saint? So as we embark on the 100th Anniversary of the death of St. Louis Guanella (October 24, 2015), let us begin this special year by exploring St. Guanella's birth and the beginning of his humble life in Fraciscio, Italy on December 19, 1842.

From a historical perspective, Italy wasn't even a country yet during the time of Louis' birth. His birth place of Fraciscio was in the Northern Alps and considered a part of the





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Swiss frontier of Grisons, and the territory of the Austrian Empire. He was born before the Industrial Revolution, and before the modern conveniences that we take for granted today. As an agricultural community at an elevation of 3,000 ft., families survived by raising cattle during the summer and during winter, the men traveled south into the urban areas to find work to feed their families.

Fraciscio is a small sleepy town on the Italian side of the Alps, and being there in the summer is like finding a piece of heaven on earth. It is so high up that you can still see the snow on the peaks of the mountains in June and July, and you feel as though you are standing in God’s presence. This was the land that gave birth to St. Louis Guanella; a cold, rugged, mountainous landscape, full of hardworking spiritual people.

And where did their spirituality come from? The families in this mountainous region were Roman Catholic, and their faith was the center of their lives. As we draw a connection between the birth of Jesus and the birth of St. Guanella, we can also draw a parallel to the Holy Family, with Louis' father "Papa Lawrence" filling the role of Joseph, and his mother Maria Bianchi, filling the role of Holy Mother Mary. "Papa Lawrence" was described by those who knew him as a "typical father figure." He was a man of the mountains, who had also become the first Mayor of Fraciscio. He was known for his "conscientiousness" and was the spiritual head of the family. Maria on the other hand was described as a "sweet and gentle" woman, who struck a family balance from the "rigidity" of her husband. Between the two of them, they raised thirteen children!

Louis Guanella was the ninth child born to Lawrence and Maria Guanella on December 19, 1842, and as a testament to their devout faith, baby Louis was baptized the following day in the parish church of St. John the Baptist in Fraciscio. For those who know the main character traits of Fr. Guanella, religious piety and steadfastness in his work for the Lord, one need only understand

his parents to understand the values of their son. Biographer Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi, SdC, said of "Pa" Lawrence, "He reared his children in virtue and sacrifice. Extremely observant of the practices of Christian piety, he sanctified feast days by assisting at all church functions and at home, reading passages from the Bible and pious books. Every evening, he himself recited the family rosary and woe to anyone who was absent!" Of



his mother, Mazzucchi said, "[She] understood that the Lord had given into her care a special child for His glory. Therefore, she often spoke to her child of holy things, leading him daily to practices of piety and guarding him from all danger. She blessed the Lord for all these gifts. Thus, Louis grew in divine grace as the seeds of virtue developed in his daily life through the encouragement of his parents."

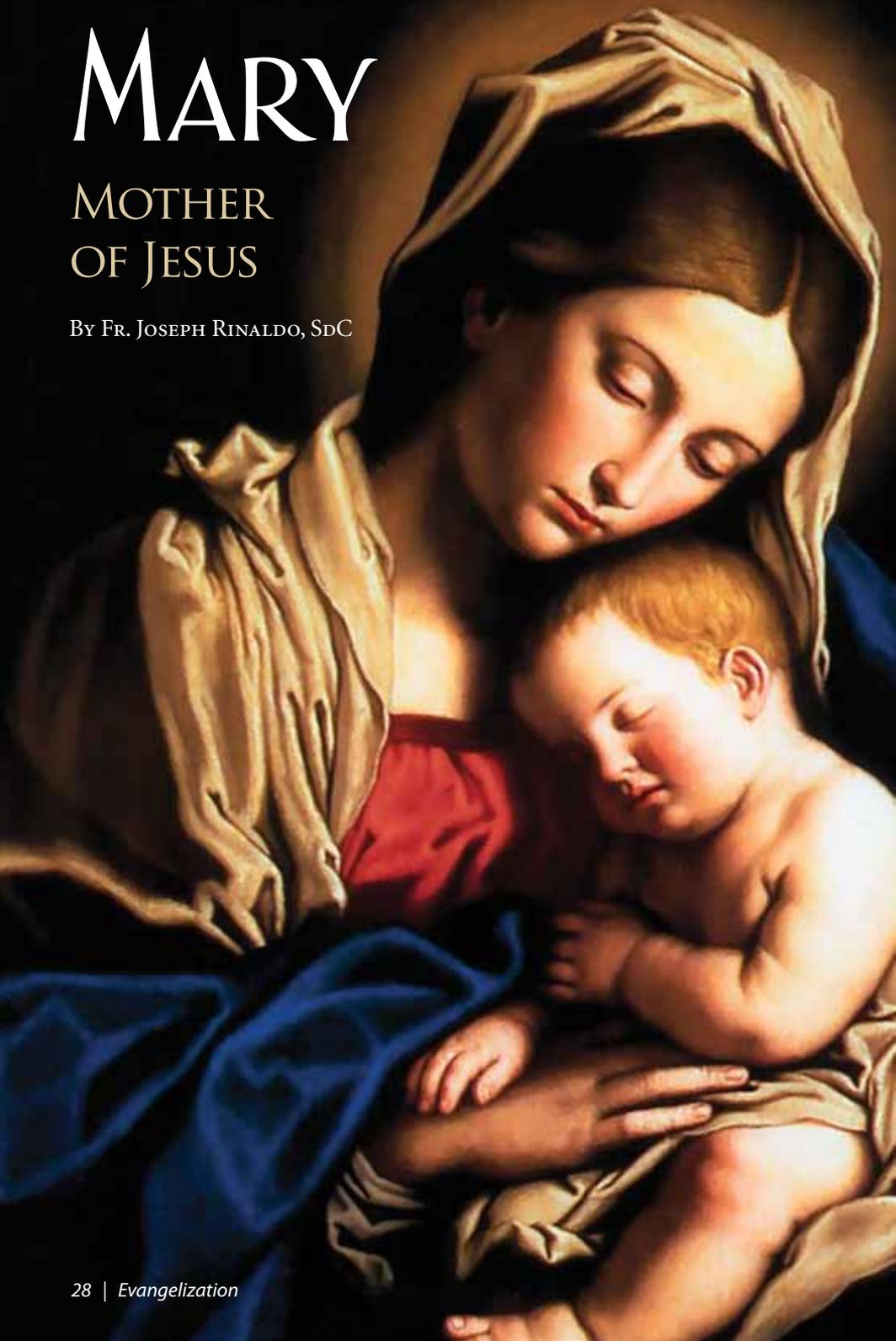
There is so much more to know about the life of St. Louis Guanella, but this was where it all began, on a cold December morning in the Northern Alps of Italy in 1842. A holy saint was born; destined to become a patron for people with disabilities and the frail elderly.

Source Material: *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Louis Guanella*, Fr. Leonard Mazzucchi, SdC., and *Fr. Louis Guanella, The Fascinating Story of a Contemporary Saint*, Vasco Lucarelli.

MARY

MOTHER OF JESUS

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC



INDIA IS A FASCINATING COUNTRY FOR ITS COLORS, SOUNDS AND ESPECIALLY FOR ITS PEOPLE. INDIANS ARE VERY SPIRITUAL, NO MATTER WHICH RELIGION OR SECT THEY EMBRACE. AS I MOVE FROM ONE TOWN TO ANOTHER, I DO NOT MISS VISITING THE MAJOR CATHOLIC SHRINES IN EACH CITY.

No matter what month I visit, I always find a whole series of feasts whose popularity seem to grow stronger with time. There are harvest festivals that date back to medieval India and earlier. There are feasts of goddesses and saints whose celebrations cut across conventional religion. Be they Catholic, Hindu or in between, popular devotions never seem to die. They appeal to something deep-rooted in the human soul, whether awe or wonder, and the urgent plea for blessings and healing. Popular religiosity is universal, and all the science and technology in the world has not suppressed it; only its external form changed. We can see the universality of some religious symbols at play in Bangalore, home to a popular shrine to Mary, which every day attracts numerous non-Catholic devotees. The Guanellian Sisters, Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, work at this shrine and are friendly with many visiting women. While there, I meet Hindu women single and married who come to the Blessed Mother shrine to pray. I asked these non-Catholic devotees what it was that brought them to pray to Mary. Doesn't Hinduism have many goddesses of its own? The responses to this question bore a common theme: "None of our goddesses carries a child, as Mother Mary does. She knows what a mother's worries are, our own goddesses do not."

No doubt about it, Mary's motherhood is her most attractive feature. It's always been so, and so it will be. Mary retains her central place in the Catholic imagination, though over recent decades in the West there has been a slight change in her image. We are experiencing a story of continuity and change. There has been a marked shift in Mary's



image, from an icon of motherhood, to the strong woman of faith. Social changes, both within the family as well as in cultural attitudes, have brought this about.

Today we can see that one of the transformations of Catholic consciousness after Vatican II was the neglect of ordinary forms of piety, especially Marian devotions. It is curious that, despite the liturgical and biblical renewal, today there seems to be a loss of faith in our Blessed Mother.

Perhaps this is because for many since the Council, faith has become an ideology, an action program, a matter of study, an abstraction. And abstractions don't need a mother. Liberation theology in Latin America made this mistake, and later scrambled to recover many popular practices it had rejected, when it was realized how much energy and power they hold.

At their root devotions are sacramental; that is, through external activities like vocal prayers, the singing of hymns, pilgrimages, processions a relationship is built with God and His saints, a relationship which is intensely personal, experiential and exemplary. The saints we pray to become not just our protectors but also our models.

This fact is made plain by the devotion to Mary displayed by so many non-Catholics in India. As we look up to emulate them, the saints gaze down upon us with benevolence. There's a connection that is instant and total. This is why popular religiosity is there to stay.

The devotion to Mary, however, is not just a popular devotion. Catholics and non-Catholics are rediscovering the true Mary of Nazareth. She is the Mother of Jesus and a strong woman as well. Mary's "let your will be done" at the Annunciation was as powerful as Jesus' "still not my will but yours be done" in the agony in the garden. The strong Mary becomes an object of rejection, ugly comments and innuendos, because she was pregnant before she was married. Mary becomes the mother "tiger" protecting her child on the way to Egypt and back. Mary becomes a model follower of the word of God. Who is my mother, my brother and sister? The ones who hear the word of God and follow it. Mary is the mother of the baby Jesus and the mother of Jesus on the cross. Humble and strong. Loving and determined. Ready to sacrifice and joyful in praising. The popular devotion to Mary, for a growing larger number of Catholics and non-Catholics, is becoming a personal relationship, a model, a confident and an inspiration. Mary is the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of God. She is the mother of martyrs and the mother of all newborn. In every occasion of her life, she points us toward Jesus: "Do what He says." The best way to understand and fall in love with Mary is the prayer of the Rosary. The Rosary is not a series of Hail Marys. Through the Rosary, we accompany Mary as she follows Jesus through His life, ministry and our redemption. The Rosary is a meditation Mary offers to each one of us. It is a meditation of love, sacrifice and spiritual growth. Hail Mary full of grace, pray for us, teach us to love Jesus your son, our brother and redeemer.

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Merry Christmas!

Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC

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Sacred Heart Church

Fr. Silvio De Nard
118 Taunton Ave.
East Providence, RI 02914
tel: 401-434-0326
vocations@servantsofcharity.org

Daughters of St. Mary of Providence

Sr. Brenda McHugh
108 Ridgeview Ct.
Grass Lake, MI 49240
sisterbrendam@gmail.com

Pious Union of St. Joseph

Fr. Sathesh Alphonse
953 E. Michigan Ave.
Grass Lake, MI 49240
tel: 270-556-7789
vocations@servantsofcharity.org



Prayer for Vocations

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



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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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