

The Voice of Providence

now HOUR
AND AT THE

PUBLICATION OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY



February 2010–March 2010

Featured Story: *Josef's Death*, page 2

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The Holy Cloak of St. Joseph

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, Lauren Hill, Kelly Flaherty,
Sr. Margaret Mary Schissler DSMP

CONTRIBUTORS: Fr. Enzo Addari SdC,
Fr. Dennis Weber SdC, Fr. Charlton Viray
SdC, Fr. A. Adaikalam SdC, Fr. Paul
Oggioni SdC, Fr. Silvio DeNard SdC,
Fr. Satheesh Caniton Alphonse SdC,
Fr. Nino Minetti SdC , Fr. Dominic
Saginario SdC

PHOTOS: Servants of Charity, Servire,
Marek Czarnecki, Kelly Flaherty,
Joe Yekulis

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 Blessed 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.

Lent

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

We all grew up with knowledge of the *Discipline of Lent*. Our Pastors and parents made sure that we gave up something for Lent.

A few years ago, traveling along the Pennsylvania turnpike, I stopped to eat lunch and get a cup of coffee. A couple next to me were eating hamburgers. It was Friday. When the young man realized I was a priest, he looked at me, embarrassed, but recovered quickly with an old time joke.

- Father do you think God will send me to hell for eating meat on Friday?
- No, but if you keep eating those hamburgers on Friday, you may change the balance!

The Church does not make rules to send us to hell; it makes rules to help us go to heaven.

The Church is a wonderful mother and a great teacher. It makes rules to strengthen our character and build our spirit. Eating meat or not on Friday has nothing to do with heaven or hell; it has a lot to do with our ability to learn to say yes to goodness and no to evil. The ability to say *no* or *yes* to small things will arm us with the ability to say *yes* or *no* to greater things and habits.

After Vatican II the Church is even inviting us to make adult choices. You can eat meat on Friday but make other choices as long as you substitute with even greater sacrifices.

This ability will give us the strength to endow our character with willpower, consistency and the perseverance needed to make choices for good, for God and, at the end, for our own good and salvation.

This is the goal of all repeated prayers, devotions, novenas and religious observances. The grace of final perseverance is the supreme object of the just man's assiduous prayer.

"Whoever has persevered to the end will be saved." (Mt 10, 22).

JOSEF'S DEATH

AS DESCRIBED BY A GERMAN JEW

AS TOLD TO
GERO LOMBARDO

Jesus came home.

He hesitated by the threshold and appraised the room. The feeble light of the lamp rendered the shadows even deeper.

His mother, seated by the bed, held her husband's hand, gently rocking and praying with such intensity that she did not even notice the presence of her son.

Jesus sat down taking in the whole scene. His mother showed signs of weariness. Her oval face was drawn and marked by deep lines, with eyebrows and lips tight in concentration. He thought that darkness sometimes was beneficial because it softened the effect of age from the human face and smoothed its wrinkles.

The young man felt the gaze of his father on him.

Josef was looking at him with wide eyes, aware and attentive. They revealed a serene and wise resignation, one that inspired admiration and trepidation because it is fruit of an experience born by the evaluation of the past and the future; of what has been done and of what never ends.

His white beard was trembling, perhaps a reflex of his emaciated face in the effort to force his lips to say something. Maybe it was because of a



burdensome thought that he did not want to reveal, or the joy of leaving behind human life, even if he would have been grateful to recover his health.

Jesus came close to his bed and leaned over the patient who smiled. With his smile, he let his son understand that what he could read from the motion of his lips was the total acceptance of God's will.

Miriam stopped praying, looked at Josef, but did not ask any questions because, like her son, she had understood the meaning of that smile. She got up and went to prepare supper.

Jesus sat at the bedside, and like this day was as any other day; he started to talk to him, as he did every evening, about the events of the day.

He talked about common episodes, light issues, positive decisions.

He narrated humorous situations of people and events, while Josef, as tired as he was, was listening with interest and understanding. Jesus was at the end of the stories while Miriam was cleaning dried fish, when suddenly the carpenter reclined his head on his chest and lost consciousness. He laid there with his mouth open, his face pale.



The woman dropped the plate and ran toward her husband. She helped Jesus to straighten him and settled him properly in bed. They moved, confused, and mechanically knelt to wet his lips, neck and forehead.

Josef opened his eyes and moved his lips. A little color came back to his face and he appeared comfortable. Miriam was not sure whether that break meant the Angel of Death's temporary reprieve or its final success. She knelt by the pillow of her husband and kept caressing his head. Meanwhile, Jesus picked up the fish and the pieces of the plate from the floor. He was calm and pensive and after he put everything in order and revived the lamp, he went to sit down on the floor at the foot of the bed.

However, even when he was busy with the house chores, he noticed that his father was looking at him, sustained by an ingenuous trust in a happy recovery. Despite his weakness, the carpenter's faith was expressing a desire to live and enjoy life again. He kept looking at his son who was not his son.

Who was then, this son of his? Who was this young man who had never laid his eyes on the girls of Nazareth? Who was this wise young man, capable of drawing the invisible out of the visible; the learned young man admired by all for his wide and deep knowledge of the Scriptures, who refused to study with the Great Gamaliel in Jerusalem? Josef kept looking at Jesus and was taken by the memories of his long time ago engagement, his dreams of a large family, of grandchildren and nephews, of his dismay as he discovered that the young Miriam was pregnant.

Ashamed for his fear again, he extended his hand to Miriam and whispered, "Forgive me woman, my wife."

Miriam, who did not understand why she needed to forgive him, just nodded. Josef closed his eyes; with his hand he made a gesture of surrender as if he could not fully understand the Mystery; however he was happy to have been a part of it in body and soul. Then his features relaxed, expressing a total serenity and youthful freshness. He was handsome again. Miriam saw him again as he was when he used to run toward her through the hills, dodging rocks and holes. He used to call her name from far away. A name that, for him, smelled like myrrh spread on the palms of her hands.



Then the time of the Annunciation came.

Miriam bowed her head and thought back to the dialogue with the Messenger. Despite the many years gone by, she could still see his figure clearly. At that time, she thought she had seen him for the first time; now, after so many years, she knew that he had been next to her or even inside her, even long before his visit, spiritual and visible at the same time in the small room of Nazareth.



She also remembered Josef's anguish.

Rather than remember it, she perceived it, because Josef never mentioned his apprehension, as never did the good Zechariah, blessed be his memory.

No, Josef had suffered in silence.

When he had come to her, pale and humble in his distress, Miriam's heart was totally in love with him, a love so great she wanted to throw herself at his feet and ask for forgiveness, even though she was pure and immaculate.

He remembered that expression of pain and joy at the same time, when, full of hope, he had invited her, "Come under my roof, my Miriam."

Now she felt the need to bow to the sacrifice of her husband and ask him for forgiveness, despite the logic and the true course of events, for that difficult happiness that Elohim had reserved for him.

She bent down and kissed Josef's frail hand and whispered, "Josef, my husband, forgive me." Josef did not know what he had to forgive and nodded. Suddenly with a fading voice he asked for water, took a few sips and lifting himself up without help murmured, "Kneel down."

They knelt down. Josef's hands, warm and sweaty laid on the head of Jesus, a son who was not his son. He bowed down his head as low as he could, because the first words of his blessings, healing as soothing oil, appeared to come from the very mouth of Elohim.

However, the blessing that Josef was offering was not a traditional one. It was the realization of everything that had happened, the closure of the mysterious circle of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who, on the day of bar mitzvah had spoken through the words of the son. It was the acknowledgement of the design and the realization that for Elohim are the same. Time, waiting and listening are only a human measure but also a human privilege.

The dying man was praying. “God of Abraham, God of Jizhak, God of Jaakov, who have made of Jeshua the Light, the Love, the Goodness and the Wisdom, give through Him the Grace of Light, of Love, of Goodness and Wisdom to the people of Israel forever. Amen.”

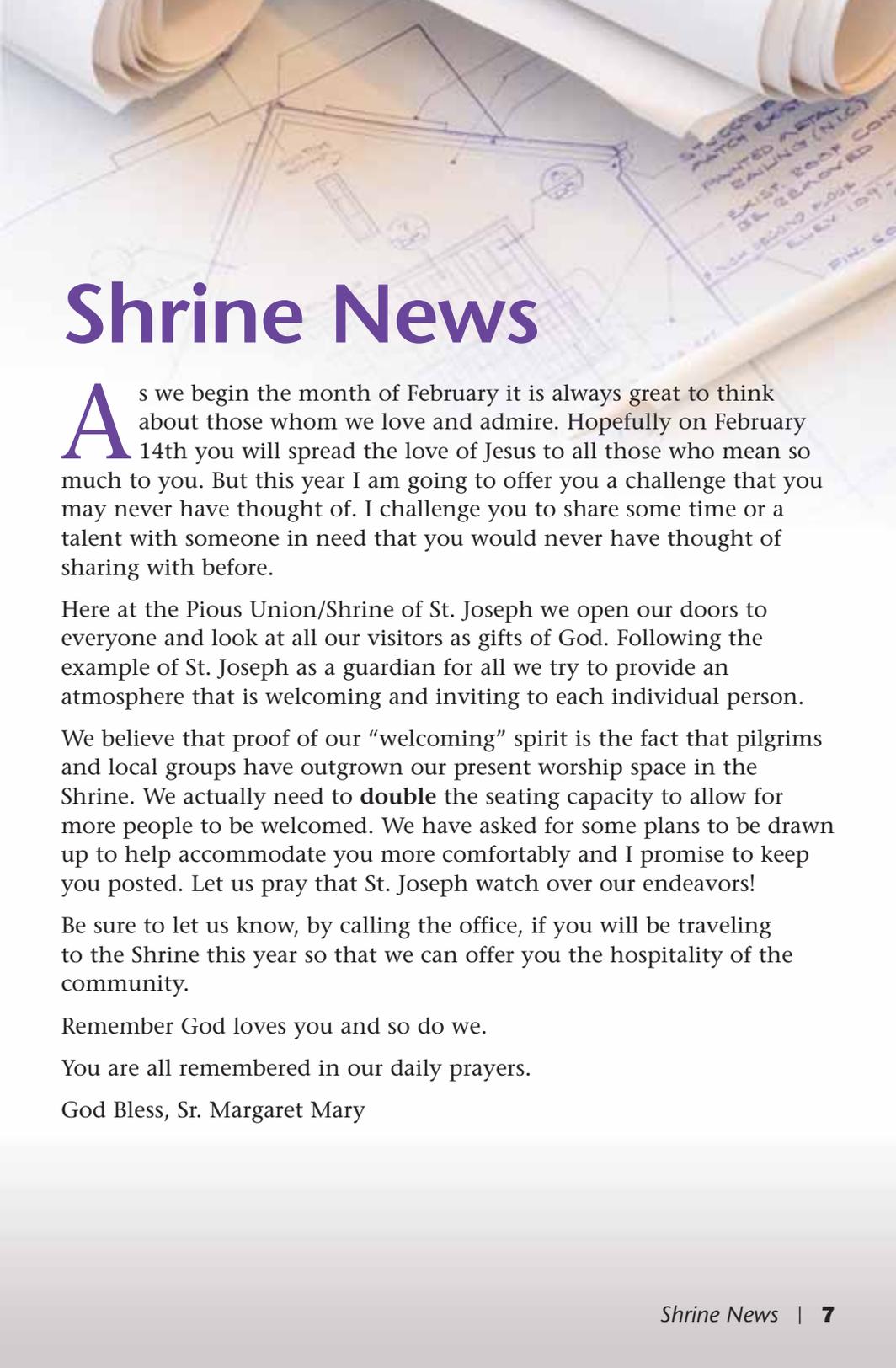
Then he laid his hands over the head of the woman and said, “God of Abraham, God of Jizhak, God of Jaakov and God of Israel, watch over this woman who walks on your path and has been the crown of my life. Give her happiness, a peaceful old age, daily bread and the joy to see her son until the end of her long life. Cover her with the wings of your angels as you did once with Rebecca and Sarah, Rachel and Leah. Amen.”



Josef's hands waved in the air. Jesus hugged him and held him. The dying man out of breath started the prayer *Shema Israel*, but could not finish it. His words were choked by a cough and he rested on the arms of his son, who was not his son. He died.

Jesus closed his eyes and mouth. Then he got up and lifted his arms in prayer. “Blessed, exalted and sanctified is the name of the Most High in the world that He has created according to His will. May his Kingdom govern your life through all your days and the life of the house of Israel, now and forever. Amen.”

Miriam broke into tears, not tears of bewilderment but of acceptance.



Shrine News

As we begin the month of February it is always great to think about those whom we love and admire. Hopefully on February 14th you will spread the love of Jesus to all those who mean so much to you. But this year I am going to offer you a challenge that you may never have thought of. I challenge you to share some time or a talent with someone in need that you would never have thought of sharing with before.

Here at the Pious Union/Shrine of St. Joseph we open our doors to everyone and look at all our visitors as gifts of God. Following the example of St. Joseph as a guardian for all we try to provide an atmosphere that is welcoming and inviting to each individual person.

We believe that proof of our “welcoming” spirit is the fact that pilgrims and local groups have outgrown our present worship space in the Shrine. We actually need to **double** the seating capacity to allow for more people to be welcomed. We have asked for some plans to be drawn up to help accommodate you more comfortably and I promise to keep you posted. Let us pray that St. Joseph watch over our endeavors!

Be sure to let us know, by calling the office, if you will be traveling to the Shrine this year so that we can offer you the hospitality of the community.

Remember God loves you and so do we.

You are all remembered in our daily prayers.

God Bless, Sr. Margaret Mary

Blessed Louis Guanella and the Cooperators

A Multidimensional Charism

BY FR. DOMINIC
SAGINARIO, SDC

Blessed Louis Guanella, like all founders of Religious Orders and Congregations, was not a lone ranger. He was born and raised in a large family. The need and the joy of being together were implanted inside him like the iris for the eye and

love for the heart. One of the most cherished memories of his childhood was gathering around the fireplace during the winter evenings. After supper, while the grown-ups cleared the table and the kitchen, pa' Lorenzo started the hearth that warmed up the whole house. All the family would gather around it to listen, tell stories, and then close the day with prayers. On Sundays, they added Bible readings and the Rosary. Those were family times of warm intimacy.

On these grounds grew his vocation to the priesthood. This vocation is automatically multidimensional, like that of an orchestra conductor. Ordained priest, Father Guanella wanted to be a good shepherd among his people to announce the Gospel and with them walk together in God's way.

When thinking about the dynamics proper to any Founder's charism, the concept of a family of sons and daughters around him easily comes to mind. A Founder is not a loner. He thinks and acts collectively in terms of a group. Ideas and movements accompany him. He is a spring, naturally running; sharing and to be shared. He is a natural bridge to connect and inspire communication.



When Father Guanella finally was allowed to dedicate himself to the poor, his first thought was that of establishing a religious family, which would guarantee stability and continuity to the work with the poor. Right after, knowing that he needed to share his charism with energy and commitment, he felt the urge to connect as much as he could with all available people, energies and facilities. He opened the first institution when he was still a pastor. The whole parish was called to share in that project of brotherly love.

Without the help of his people, it would not have been possible to open and continue the activity of the House of Providence.

All of Father Guanella's foundations show the same pattern. The relationship between the poor housed in his homes and the caring and operative presence of the people of God was the key to success. When the little ones prayed, "Our Father in Heaven... give us this day our daily bread," the compassionate Father passed on this prayer to the heart of His friends and to their eyes and then entrusted to their hands the bread for the little ones. Thus, around Father Guanella gathered many benefactors, friends, cooperators and vocations.

Two thousand years of Church history are witness to this community vision of Christian charity. Jesus saves individuals by gathering them together as people of God. All charitable activities, large and small, grow and prosper only if they follow the rules of community and solidarity. Father Guanella used to say, "One piece of wood gives you smoke, two give you light, three will give you fire." This was Father Guanella's life experience. Faced by situations of the rejected poor, he would go into high gear pulled by a mandatory sequence of actions: the call of the poor, the answer of the heart and the search for help. In all this reactive concern, a large part was due to his personal sensitivity that set him on fire. However, he would think immediately of his support system to come up with meaningful assistance. If in this process, anytime and anywhere, something blocked this transmission of energy, the work of bringing daily bread could not start or would stop.

The power of charity is a multidimensional charism. It is like a match that starts a fire; however, without additional fuel it will quickly die. Jesus came to start the fire of love and wants it to grow and inflame the world, which is desperately in need of love.

Blessed are they who joyfully live and spread through their life the fire of the Gospel that energizes, gives life and saves the world.

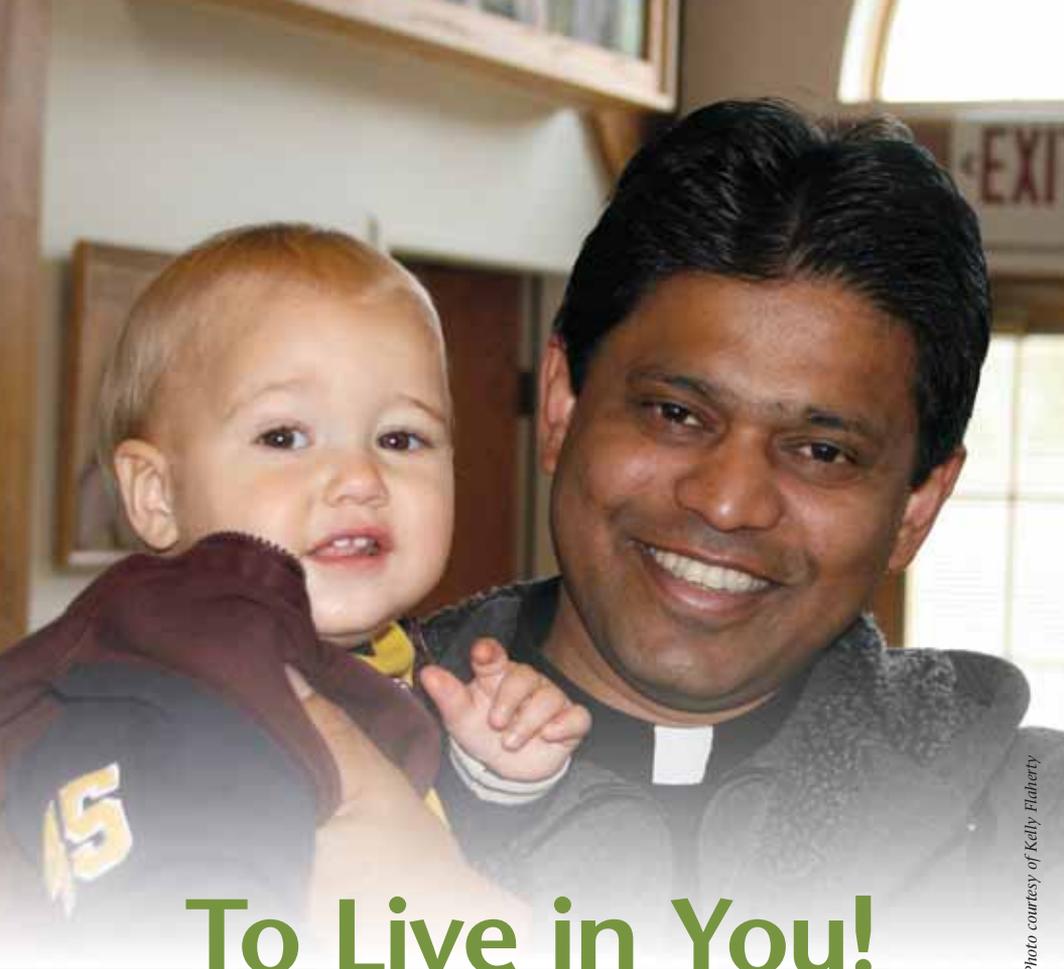


Photo courtesy of Kelly Flaherty

To Live in You!

FR. SATHEESH ALPHONSE, SDC

"It is God Who Does." Blessed Louis Guanella

Everything connected with my vocation journey is still fresh in my mind since all the events are so precious to me. The first step in the path of following Jesus in the Guanellian way happened to me with the connection that my parents had with priests and religious. Even when I was as young as ten or twelve, priests came to visit our family through some friends and they wondered whether one of the boys would become a priest. My mother would bring me in and encourage them to talk to me about the priesthood. But my mother was not sure whether I would become a priest since I was so mischievous. One of the most wonderful memories that I have was when one priest smilingly said that

he was like me when he was a boy. God changed him, and he was a priest before he knew it. My mother told me several times in my life that she prayed that I would be a boy, even when I was in her womb, and that God would call me to be a priest.

I strongly believe that the call to priesthood and religious life is from God. Of course, vocation to family life is also from God. But talking



about the priestly and religious life, the call of God has a special place, since it is a call to love God and nobody else. We love others since we love God more than anything and anyone.

As I read and studied the call of God in the Scripture, I began to understand the depth of

God's call in my life. As I stepped into formation, I doubted whether I would fit into this life since I was not as perfect as I wanted to be. But assurance came from many priests who were my spiritual directors. They always said that God does not call the perfect person to be a priest or religious. Now, I come to think that St. Paul had a deeper meaning when he said, "Where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more," (Rom 5, 20). God calls sinners to repent, and the prophets were the least expected to be the "Voice of God" in their time.

Life in the seminary was a wonderful experience even though I had to struggle with discipline and not doing the right thing all the time. There were moments when I was misunderstood by formators and companions. But as one of my spiritual fathers said, "Life is beautiful in spite of a few troubles." I think that without those struggles and misunderstandings, it would have been difficult for God to shape me into what I am today. In the same way, we have to go through difficult times in life in order to grow more gracefully.



Photo courtesy of Joe Yekulis



As I look back on my initial formation days, there were moments of doubt. But overall, I have been deeply happy within myself for choosing to follow this life. The question that I ask myself whenever I face a difficult moment is: “Am I joyful in this life?” The answer has always been very positive, since there have been many occasions where I

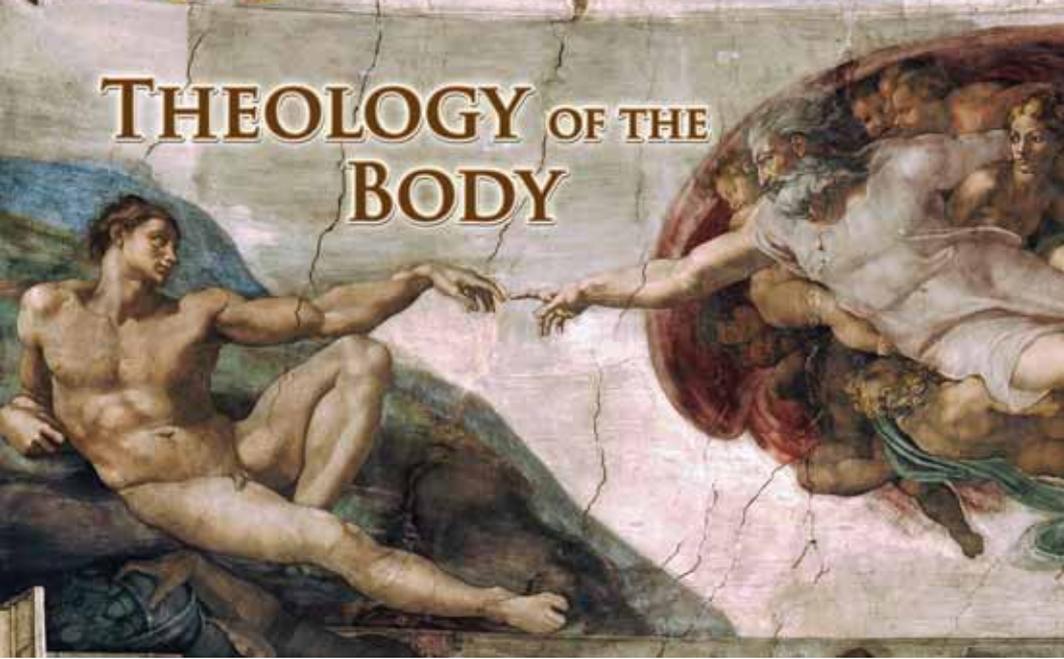
was able to give unconditional love to many who came in contact with me in this vocation. With the grace of God and with the prayers of many of my dear and near ones, I was ordained a priest on July 24th 2002 with the motto, “To live in you.”

After seven years of my priestly life, have I changed a lot? Not much. But I am convinced that I am converting and God plays a major part in that process. I strive to respond positively to this invitation of permanent conversion in my life. In closing, I would like to say that God calls us and we have to respond positively to God’s call. It doesn’t stop with one for all but it is a constant process of being called to life in God, and our choice in life is to act in response to God’s call.



Pictured (L to R): Fr. General Alphonse Crippa, Provincial Treasurer Fr. Rinaldo and Fr. Satheesh.

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY



Christ Appeals to the Human Heart

BY FR. DENNIS WEBER, SDC

In the second chapter of Part One of Pope John Paul II's catecheses on the "Theology of the Body," the Holy Father again references the words of Christ to help us understand his teaching. Jesus said, in Matthew's Gospel during the Sermon on the Mount, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you: Whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her *in his heart*," (Mt 5, 27-28).

With these words the pontiff says that "Jesus brings about a *fundamental revision of the way of understanding and carrying out the moral law of the Old Covenant*" a revision in which Jesus affirms that he has not come to "abolish the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill it," (Mt 5, 17). The Sermon on the Mount and, in particular, Christ's appeal to the human heart places us, the Holy Father says, "at the heart of ethos...the soul... of human morality." Pope John Paul II sees the heart as "*the dimension of humanity with which the sense of the meaning of the human body, and the order of sense,*

is directly linked.” The meaning of the human body is “generative” or “procreative” and “spousal” or a reciprocal gift of self in love, and this dual meaning is linked by the heart. This aspect of the theology of the body is significant for us in a culture that seeks to undermine, diminish or discount entirely this understanding of the human body.

From this introduction to Jesus’ appeal to the human heart, the Holy Father then reflects on the commandment itself, “You shall not commit adultery”, and introduces us to concupiscence and its connection to Christ “clearly identifying adultery as sin.” Concupiscence is that inclination or tendency toward sin and the disordering of the human passions as a result of original sin. It is concupiscence that causes one to “look at a woman to desire her” and leads one to committing “adultery with her in his heart.” It should be mentioned that the pope makes a distinction with respect to desire. The desire referred to by Jesus is one that is “reductive” or “disordered” which attacks the “sincere gift of self” in love or the communion of persons and leads to a depersonalizing of the person, making the person an object for the other and reducing the attraction between man and woman to “utilitarian dimensions.” This type of desire is in contrast to a desire which honors the “communion of persons” as a partnership of love and “the whole of life” and also a desire in which the married couple is fully open to the transmission of human life, the generative or procreative meaning of marriage.

As the pontiff proceeds in this second chapter, he directs us, through Christ’s words that appeal to the human heart, to the concepts of ethos, eros and redemption of the body, which are all significant to his “theology of the body.” With regard to “ethos” the pope states the following: “...On the basis of Christ’s words in the Sermon on the Mount, the Christian ethos is characterized by a *transformation of the human person’s consciousness and attitudes... such as to express and realize the value of the body and of sex* according to the Creator’s original plan, placed as they are at the service of the “communion of persons...” He then defines *eros* as the “inner power that “attracts” man to the true, the good and the beautiful” and then links them in this way: “It follows from these reflections that “ethos” is connected with the discovery of a new order of values. It is necessary continually to rediscover the spousal meaning of the body and the true dignity of the gift in what is “erotic”... so that what is “erotic” also becomes true, good, and beautiful. It is, therefore, indispensable that ethos becomes the constitutive form of eros.” Finally this ethos, which is connected to “eros”, is all made possible because of the “redemption of the body” achieved for us by Jesus Christ, the “Word made flesh.” The reflection on ethos, eros and the

redemption of the body is what makes his teaching revolutionary and so necessary and transformative for our times.

Finally, in this second chapter, the Holy Father masterfully links the words of Christ in appealing to the human heart and the teachings of St. Paul in his various letters to one of the beatitudes spoken by Jesus during the Sermon on the Mount. The beatitude, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God,”* becomes for the Holy Father a “flowering” of the theology of the body that truly speaks to the human heart and that theology, in relationship to God. He summarizes this connection in this way:

“Therefore glorify God in your body (1 Cor 6, 20). Purity as a virtue or ability of “keeping one’s own body with holiness and reverence”, allied with the gift of piety as a fruit of the Holy Spirit’s dwelling in the “temple” of the body, causes in the body such a fullness of dignity in interpersonal relations that *God Himself is glorified*. Purity is the glory of the human body before God.”



ישוע נאזרתי בן מריה יוסף מדין
IHSVS NAZARENVS BANI AVEVS IOSVMAICVS
IHSVS NAZARENVS REX IVDVORVM





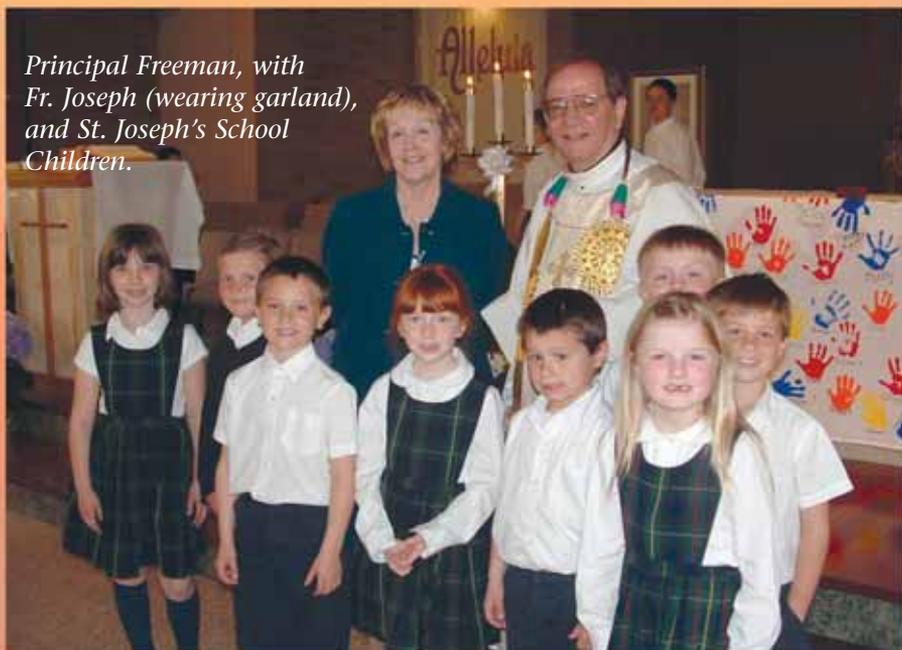
Michigan Children Raise Funds for India Missions

By JOE YEKULIS

“Whoever refuses to listen to the cry of the weak, will in turn plead and not be heard.” (Proverbs 21, 13).

The children of St. Joseph’s Catholic School in Howell, Michigan heard the cry of the poor three years ago through a homily delivered by Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC., and responded with enthusiasm, kindness, and generosity to the children of Cuddalore, India.

It all began when Mark Martell and his family, regular volunteers at St. Louis Center in Chelsea, some 25 miles away, asked the principal of St. Joseph’s Catholic School if their Middle School children could take on a volunteer project to assist St. Louis Center. The project would involve stuffing approximately 11,500 mailing envelopes with requests for financial assistance for the Annual Thanksgiving Fund Drive.



Principal Freeman, with Fr. Joseph (wearing garland), and St. Joseph's School Children.

Photo courtesy of Joe Yekulis

When the students of St. Joseph's School learned of St. Louis Center and the Servants of Charity, they invited Fr. Joseph Rinaldo to come and say a special Mass in 2007. It was during that Mass that Fr. Joseph talked about the Servants of Charity Missions in the Philippines and India, and from that talk, the



Photo courtesy of Joe Yekulis

Entryway of St. Joseph's School.

entire St. Joseph School community was inspired to act. Several of the children remarked to Principal Katherine Freeman, "That was the best Mass ever. It's great having Fr. Joseph say Mass for us!"

The children came up with the idea of conducting a year-long "Bake Sale," and partnering with parents, teachers, and administrators; they were able to deliver a check of \$1500 to the Servants of Charity at the end of the school year. According to Mrs. Freeman, "Our students are very compassionate and take on monthly service projects. The first year we did this project, the bake sales took place all year long to raise money. Everyone participates in our service projects, and no one is excused. It wasn't just my efforts that made this happen; it was the effort of the whole parish school community."

Fr. Joseph credits Principal Freeman for her leadership efforts in teaching her children the importance of caring for others in the world who have very little. "How the Principal can influence the minds of children to use their gifts from God to do good for



Photo courtesy of Joe Yekulis

Principal Katherine Freeman accepts the garland as a gift of the Servants of Charity from Fr. Joseph.

others who have so little is a remarkable thing. Our priests in India were grateful, because it was American children thinking of children from another country that they'd never met before. The money was used to buy clothing, and each of the children at our Boys Home in Cuddalore received a new shirt and a pair of pants. We took care of 120 boys all together with their donations," said Fr. Joseph.

Mrs. Freeman remarked that, "It's a pleasure to know that the money is being used; and used well. It means a lot when it goes to 'Fr. Joe's Kid's'. In the second year we raised \$600, and we hope to have Fr. Joseph back for another Mass early next year."

In the meantime, Fr. Joseph returned to St. Joseph's Catholic School in Howell on April 29, 2009 with a wonderful gift for the children from India. Following Mass, Fr. Joseph presented Mrs. Freeman and the children in attendance with a garland necklace, which in India is a special honor reserved for dignitaries. "This is our way of thanking you for the wonderful gift of friendship you've given to the Servants of Charity and the people of Cuddalore, India." In turn, Fr. Joseph's gift to St. Joseph's School is mounted next to the entryway doors of the school with a plaque that reads, "Presented to St. Joseph School on April 29, 2009 by Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, St. Louis Center. On behalf of the Fr. Guanella Boys Home, Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu, India."

"Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap; because the standard you used will be the standard used for you" (Lk 6, 38).



Photo courtesy of Joe Yekulis

Mounted garland at St. Joseph's School.

A Year for Priests

BY LAUREN HILL, GUANELLIAN COOPERATOR

In only a few months, on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the "Year for Priests," which the Holy Father taught was **“meant to deepen the commitment of all priests to interior renewal for the sake of a more forceful and incisive witness to the Gospel in today's world,”** will come to an end.

In his letter to priests Pope Benedict XVI, with fatherly encouragement, reminded them of the **“immense gift which priests represent, not only for the Church, but also for humanity itself.**

I think of all those priests who quietly present Christ's words and actions each day to the faithful and to the whole world, striving to be one with the Lord in their thoughts and their will, their sentiments and their style of life. How can I

not pay tribute to their apostolic labors, their tireless and hidden service, their universal charity? And how can I not praise the courageous fidelity of so many priests who, even amid difficulties and incomprehension, remain faithful to their vocation as 'friends of Christ,' whom he has called by name, chosen and sent?"

For the laity, this year has not been so much about our continuing prayer for more priests, but for praying in gratitude and support for each and every priest that God has called to Himself, remembering and even perhaps relearning what the vocation to the priesthood really is.

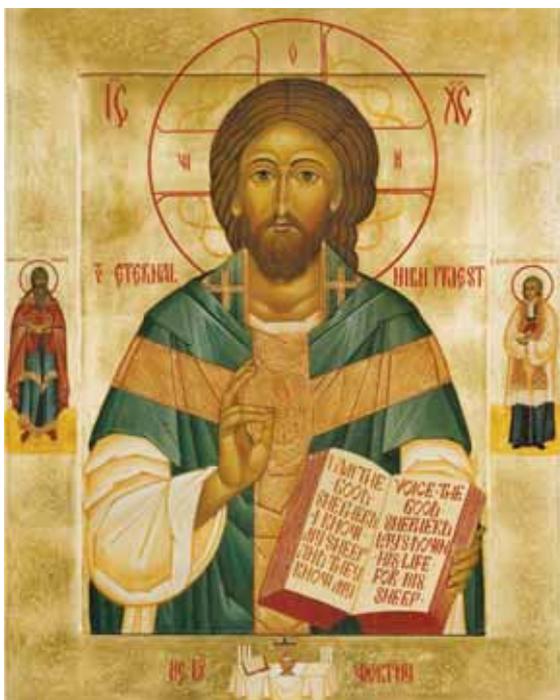


Image courtesy of Marek Czarniecki (www.seraphicrestorations.com)



The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that the Sacrament of Holy Orders “configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ’s instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king.” Without recognizing Christ in the dignity of the vocation of the Priest, we cast ourselves in the same role of those who stripped Christ of his garments at Calvary, who were close enough to touch him and had no recognition.

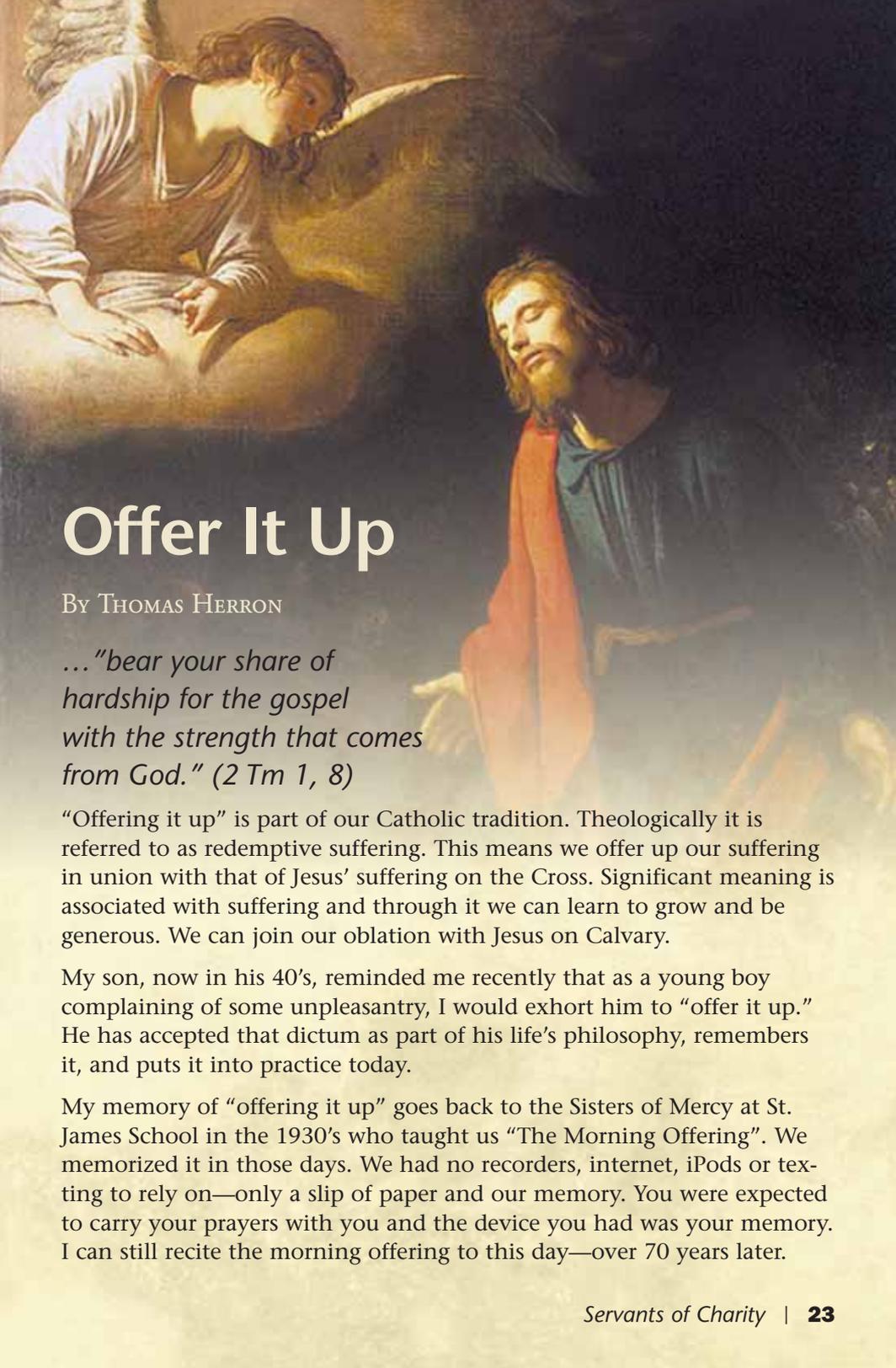
St. John Vianney, patron of priests, intoned: "Without the Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priests), we would not have the Lord. Who put him there in that tabernacle? The priest. Who welcomed your soul at the beginning of your life? The priest. Who feeds your soul and gives it strength for its journey? The priest. Who will prepare it to appear before God, bathing it one last time in the blood of Jesus Christ? The priest, always the priest." In our daily expressions of love, in prayer and action, and our recognition of the dignity of the priest, we express our love for Christ, himself, and our deep gratitude for the Sacraments, which he instituted through His holy priesthood.

Turning to the Catechism again we learn that “priests and laity together make up the one priestly people and in virtue of their ministry, priests live in the midst of the lay faithful, that they may lead everyone to the unity of charity, ‘loving one another with mutual affection; and outdoing one another in sharing honor.’” (Rom 12, 10)

This year is a potent reminder to laypeople to support our priests through prayer and remembrance of Christ, to whom they are wed and with whom they offer their sacrifice.

Lord Jesus, bless all priests and give them grace to do your great work on earth. Keep them, Lord, close to your heart and under the shadow of your protection. Bless their labors for you and grant that their harvest of souls may be a source of joy and consolation to them during life and may merit an everlasting reward for them in death, that having led many souls to you they may see you face to face. Amen

From the prayer book of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence



Offer It Up

BY THOMAS HERRON

...“bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God.” (2 Tm 1, 8)

“Offering it up” is part of our Catholic tradition. Theologically it is referred to as redemptive suffering. This means we offer up our suffering in union with that of Jesus’ suffering on the Cross. Significant meaning is associated with suffering and through it we can learn to grow and be generous. We can join our oblation with Jesus on Calvary.

My son, now in his 40’s, reminded me recently that as a young boy complaining of some unpleasantry, I would exhort him to “offer it up.” He has accepted that dictum as part of his life’s philosophy, remembers it, and puts it into practice today.

My memory of “offering it up” goes back to the Sisters of Mercy at St. James School in the 1930’s who taught us “The Morning Offering”. We memorized it in those days. We had no recorders, internet, iPods or texting to rely on—only a slip of paper and our memory. You were expected to carry your prayers with you and the device you had was your memory. I can still recite the morning offering to this day—over 70 years later.

“O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you all my prayers, works, joys and sufferings of this day, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world, in reparation for my sins, for the intentions of all our associates, and in particular for the intention recommended this month by our Holy Father the Pope.”

This was my first introduction to “offering it up”. But the good sisters had other ways of teaching us to “offer it up.” Each year as Lent was approaching we would be encouraged to discover something we could give up. After all Jesus died on the cross for us so we could join him by denying ourselves some little thing. This was our introduction to mortification though the word was never used. As we progressed through grade school our self-denial advanced from giving up candy for Lent to staying away from the Saturday afternoon western movie and the Flash Gordon serial at the Oak Park Theater, which was an important event in our childish culture at the time. Oh how we looked forward to Easter, for the return to our self-indulgence with sweets and the cowboy movie. But, nonetheless, instilled in us was the concept of “offering it up.”

As we started to mature in high school we began to understand Matthew 16, 24, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” The Benedictine sisters carried us a step further. We learned the Lenten offering should be more substantial,



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related to character, and we should hone in on the development of character by practicing virtue or the Corporal Works of Mercy. So “offering it up” became a way of life both in concept and in practice.

Consider the saints. The Blessed Virgin Mary experienced seven great sorrows. St. Alphonsus in his *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament* and the Blessed Virgin Mary reminds us that our life belongs to Jesus. “I offer you [Jesus] in sacrifice my will, my thoughts, my actions, my sufferings.” Some of the saints like St. Faustina, by the grace of God, have offered their personal sufferings in union with Christ for others. So did the Fatima children, Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco, who at an early age understood and offered their sufferings for other souls.

Nevertheless, “offering it up” does not preclude us from helping others to alleviate the physical or mental suffering they may incur. We need to comfort those suffering so they know they are not alone. Nor should we neglect ourselves in this regard if it is needed. The middle way is generally the best way for most of us. As an example of comforting the afflicted remember Isaiah 66, “For thus says the Lord...as a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you.”

But we in our small way can offer our daily inconveniences, the irritations that afflict us, the moments of hurt pride, disappointments, failures, flashes of sadness and regret as well as infirmities to be in union with Jesus on the Cross for the salvation of those we love or for whatever intention we are disposed toward at the moment.

“Offering it up” allows us daily to join Jesus on the Cross and to reflect on the agony he undertook for our salvation and that of the world. We offer our life, however it turns out each day, to Jesus. With the Psalmist we can say, “This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.”



Suffering and Dying Transformed into Miraculous Living

BY: SR. MARGARET MARY SCHISSLER, DSMP

When you last went running, rollerblading, or skiing did you ever think that you might not make it home? Could you ever even dream that the very sport that you loved to participate in would be the very cause of severe suffering and possibly even the cause of your death? Probably not and neither did William Glisson.

On Friday, March 15, 2002 in the late afternoon William Glisson went rollerblading with his friend John down the Baltimore Pike in Pennsylvania. William was 21 years old and he considered rollerblading “as one of the few things he was naturally good at in life.” In his spare time he loved going out with his friend, trying to skate faster and faster. This day started out like all other days with the two friends playing around and skating down various streets. At one point William started rollerblading backwards and was getting further and further away until John finally yelled, “Slow down, I can’t catch up to you.”

As many young men would do, William went even faster to prove that he could do it and got even further away from John. Unfortunately, at high velocity and rollerblading backwards, William risked that split-second that brings disaster. A small pothole in the pavement stopped his forward movement and shot him eight feet up into the air catapulting him ten to fifteen feet from the spot where he first hit the pothole. Filled with shock John watched the horrible event, skating as fast as he could toward his friend William.

With great force, gravity brought William to the ground dropping him hard on the back of his head. Without helmets, almost any fall would



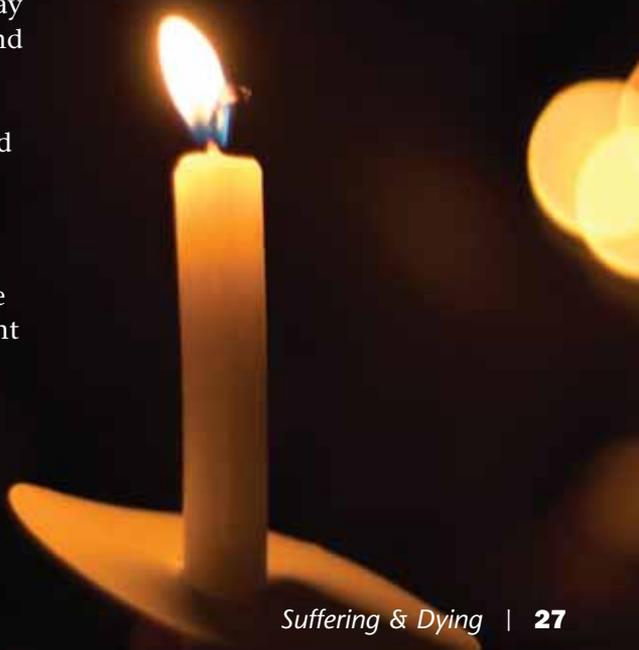
have been dangerous for the two friends, causing a closed head injury, but with the speed and impact of Williams fall his horrific accident seemed bound to be fatal. William was knocked unconscious.

John called for help and stayed with his friend trying to arouse him. When the ambulance arrived William's eyes were open but he could not respond verbally to his friend who asked, "How you doing," but William gave his friend a 'thumbs up.'

The EMS team rushed to Crozer-Chester Medical Center where William was admitted at 7:05p.m. in "critical" condition with subdural and epidural hematoma along with a basilar skull fracture. After much evaluation and medical assessment the doctors scheduled an emergency brain surgery to relieve some cranial pressure through a craniotomy. He seemed to pull through the surgery okay but pressure in the brain was building at another spot. After critical monitoring and evaluation another emergent surgery was scheduled the next day, the 16th, to relieve the new pressure point in the brain.

After the second surgery William's mother, Donna, received two relics of Blessed Guanella from a friend and placed one of the relics on him on the Feast of St. Joseph, the 19th, and prayed everyday for her son's recovery with the other one. His condition was assessed at every moment through electrical monitors. Not much change occurred but on the 22nd his assessment read, "Patient may have cognitive difficulties and secondary brain injury." All this time he still remained unresponsive while being fed by a gastrointestinal tube.

On the 25th of March, the Annunciation, a break through occurred and as the medical chart stated, "Patient starting to wake up ... Does open eyes to very loud verbal cues." Our Blessed Mother was hard at work on William's behalf.





The day we commemorate the announcement of new birth in Mary's life now will be a special day also in William's life.

For the next two weeks William had some ups and some downs and his mother was praying incessantly while holding another relic of Don Guanella. William needed a few more surgeries and procedures performed to keep him in stable condition. On April 9th he was transferred to Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital where he began receiving some various therapies to promote his healing.

Day by day William was making little strides and his mother felt each improvement was a gift from God and a fruit of her prayers to Don Guanella. After many months had passed, William was able to begin leading a normal life and recovered from that closed head injury that the doctors diagnosed would leave him with probable brain damage.

Williams's case was presented to the Medical Commission in Rome to attribute his healing as a miracle through the intercession of Blessed Louis Guanella. On November 12, 2009 the Medical Commission stated that William's healing was a medically unexplainable event and attributed to Blessed Louis Guanella as a miracle.

All of William Glisson's suffering and dying events led to his miraculous living today.

Let us continue to pray for the Canonization of Blessed Louis Guanella.

Mailbag...



Dear Father Rinaldo,

When the August—September 2009 issue of *The Voice of Providence* arrived I immediately paged through it with the intention of really reading it when I had more quiet time. However, I paged back and stopped to read *Short Prayers* by Thomas Herron.

This brief article gave my heart a lift and brought joy to my soul. In my hectic, busy life, I struggle to find quality time for prayer. As a longtime participant in perpetual adoration in my community, I am well aware of the beautiful graces received from our gracious God when we give ourselves to Him in prayer. My prayer life seems to come in bits and pieces: a brief prayer at the 3 o'clock hour; an Our Father walking from my car to the office, my beloved St. Joseph prayer, etc. Herron's article reaffirmed the way I pray and blessed me with lovely peace of mind, as I continue to pray, "*All for Thee, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, all for Thee, All that I say and do this day, I offer with love to you.*"

You remain in my prayers; please keep me in yours.
God bless you all and your many good works.

GK in Georgetown

Fathers of the Pious Union of St. Joseph,

I pray daily to St. Joseph, who is indeed the Saint of the suffering and the dying. I have been suffering with a spinal condition for 26 years while taking care of my quadriplegic husband for 16 years. My beloved passed away two years ago and I miss him dearly but he is still and forever in my heart. It hasn't been easy, but pain is never easy. My devotion and love for Jesus and the care of His Blessed Mother, praying the daily Rosaries (I call them my security blanket) and devotion to St. Joseph and all of Heaven to give me the strength and courage to continue to persevere. I'll be 79 years old in January.

There are so many encouraging stories in your little booklet – especially the beautiful center picture. I place it in my scrapbook; a collection of prayers, holy pictures of Saints, Jesus, and the Blessed Mother. I've filled three large books. Each time I say that's all, but I always find a picture in your booklet and I keep going.

It's been a hobby for the last twenty years. You are all in my prayers.
God bless you all, and may our Holy Mother surround you all with her angels.

PW in Pulaski



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



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

Send email to piousunion@pusj.org.

The Holy Cloak of St. Joseph

The Pious Union of St. Joseph has published, ready for distribution, a booklet of forty pages containing one of the dearest and oldest devotions to St. Joseph: *The Holy Cloak of St. Joseph*.

St. Joseph is the Patron of the Universal Church, the Guardian of Jesus and Mary, the Protector and model of every Christian.

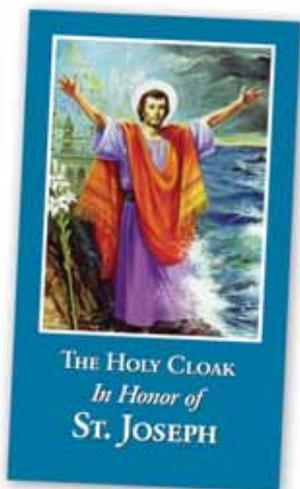
Through this prayer and our perseverance through it, we ask St. Joseph to open his Cloak and provide a shield to us for protection, guidance and spiritual growth.

In history, the cloak has been a powerful symbol of belonging like a flag, a uniform or a banner. When we take refuge under the Holy Cloak of St. Joseph we become members of his Family with Jesus and Mary. We belong to the Holy Family. We are protected, guided and sheltered from all evil.

This devotion leads us to meditate and understand St. Joseph's virtues and role in the history of salvation for the Church and each one of us.

This devotion is perfect for the month of March dedicated to St. Joseph and anytime we feel the need of special assistance from St. Joseph and want to be members of the Holy Family.

Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC



The Holy Cloak In Honor of St. Joseph is available through the Pious Union of St. Joseph office. Send your request and a donation to The Pious Union of St. Joseph, 953 E. Michigan Ave., Grass Lake, MI 49240.

Call the office at 517-522-8017 for more information or for purchasing quantities of more than ten copies.

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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. David Stawasz

16195 Old US 12, Chelsea, MI 48118

tel: 734-475-8430 – fax: 734-475-0310

frdave@stlouiscenter.org

► **Pious Union of St. Joseph**

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
Chennai – 600 056
Tel: 044/26274795
Email: guamaj@yahoo.co.in

► Cuddalore

Fr. Paul Arockiar
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

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Centerville Subd – Pasong Tamo
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Shrine of St. Joseph Sacraments and Hours of Devotion

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

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

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

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

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

Confession: Before and after Mass, upon request

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

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