

# The Voice of Providence

**now** HOUR  
AND AT THE

PUBLICATION OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

October–November 2009



**FEATURE STORY:** *Fr. Fernando Delatorre Visits Migrant Worker Religious Program*

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### **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 Fr. 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.



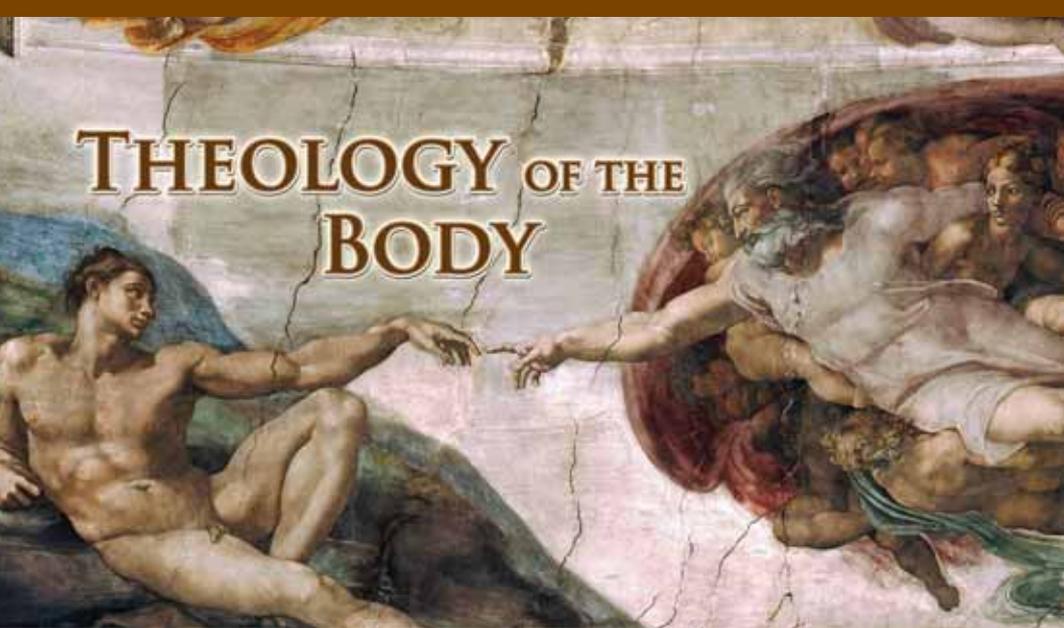
# Gratitude

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

Last May on my way from the airport after a trip to India, I learned that a dear friend had suffered a heart attack. It was late by the time I found his room. I opened the door and started to say something, but before I even opened my mouth, my friend shouted at me “Look what your God has done to me!” It was like somebody had punched me in the stomach and took my air, my spirit and my soul. I froze and coldly replied, “When was the last time you thanked my God for everything you got!” I just turned around and left. I did not sleep that night. Why is it that God is my God only when everything goes my way and the same God becomes someone else’s God and a cruel God when things go wrong?

But I knew I had behaved poorly. The next morning, I went back to the hospital ready to apologize. My friend instead welcomed me with a big smile and a big hug. “Don’t say a word,” he said, “You brought me back to reality. I’ve been feeling sorry for myself, and driving everyone crazy! Thank you for giving me the honest opinion I needed.” I still felt miserable but our friendship grew even stronger.

Gratitude is the acknowledgement of a favor received from someone, God first of all, and it includes religion, piety and observance. Gratitude is a moral obligation and depends chiefly on one’s heart. God is our Creator, Redeemer and Provider. Life, in all its forms, is such a great gift, we can never be grateful enough for it. Jesus made up for us through His death. Our gratitude shows our dependence on God. Our debt of gratitude to God, relatives and neighbors never becomes onerous because it flows from the debt of love.



# The “Journey” of the “Theology of the Body”

BY FR. DENNIS M. WEBER, SDC

In the last issue of *The Voice of Providence*, I introduced our readers to what I described as a unique, monumental, and some might say, revolutionary perspective on marriage and the family, human sexuality and the very meaning of life, known as the Theology of the Body.

**A**s mentioned, this was a series of 133 addresses, or catecheses, given by Pope John Paul II beginning on September 5, 1979 and ending on November 28, 1984. With this article, I would like to begin the “journey” of unfolding and unpacking this epic teaching of the Holy Father in which he birthed, nurtured and matured the concept that he called the “Theology of the Body.”

Admittedly, I cannot even begin to think that I can thoroughly, or even partially, capture all that the pontiff expressed in these catecheses.

However, I hope to give you some sense of the gift that Pope John Paul II has given, not only to the Church but to our global society and to our world today, by presenting the key concepts held within his gift.

I suggested that this is a journey, and as with many journeys, one needs a roadmap to navigate. Pope John Paul II essentially provided this roadmap for us in an unpublished manuscript that he wrote entitled “Man and Woman He Created Them”

which he completed before his election as Pope in 1978. “Theology of the Body” was the alternate title, based on the text of this book, given by John Paul II to the series of catecheses, which comprised the 133 General Audiences on this topic. Cardinal Karol Wojtyla’s (the future Pope John Paul II) book was divided into six chapters and the structure of the catecheses generally follows the “roadmap” of the book.

With this in mind, the series of catecheses can be seen as being divided into two parts with three chapters in each part, a structure offered by Michael Waldstein, a translator of the 133 General Audiences. Therefore, I will in a series of six articles attempt to “break open”, this gift that is John Paul II’s “Theology of the Body.”

However, before doing this, I will allow the words of the Holy Father to preview the two parts of the “Theology of the Body.” In the last General Audience of Part 1, July 21, 1982, he said: “To understand all that “the redemption of the body” implies according to Romans, an authentic theology of the body is necessary. We have attempted to build one, appealing first of all to the words of Christ. The constitutive elements of the theology of the body are contained in what Christ says when he appeals to the “beginning” concerning the question of the indissolubility of marriage (see Mt 19:8), in what he says about concupiscence when he appeals to the human heart in the Sermon on the Mount (see Mt 5:28), and also in what he says when he appeals to the Resurrection (see Mt 22:30).

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It is because the Holy Father references the words of Jesus that the first part is titled “The Words of Christ.”

Part 2, which is titled “The Sacrament” was summarized by the pope in his last audience of November 28, 1984:

“The reflections about the sacrament of marriage were carried out in the consideration of the two dimensions essential to this sacrament, as to every other sacrament, namely, the dimension of covenant and grace and the dimension of sign. Through these two dimensions, we continually went back to the reflections on the theology of the body that were linked with the key words of Christ.”

Finally, again in the words of Pope John Paul II during that final audience, he captures the essential meaning of the “Theology of the Body” while connecting the two parts of the catecheses: “The whole of the catecheses, that I began more than four years ago and that I conclude today can be grasped under the title, “Human Love in the Divine Plan,” or with greater precision, “The Redemption of the Body and the Sacramentality of Marriage.”

So please join with me, in the next six issues, on this journey with our beloved John Paul II, regarding the “Theology of the Body.”



# All Are One In Jesus Christ (Gal 3:28)

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

**A** couple of years ago, I went to St. Louis, MO, for a convention. During a break, I decided to pay a visit to the Cathedral. I have never been in St. Louis. I asked for directions and took a bus that was supposed to drop me three blocks away from the Cathedral. When I got off the bus, I felt like I was in another world. Dilapidated houses, garbage everywhere, and rusty smashed up cars in front of every house where people sat on the steps. Kids everywhere. Oh my God! Fear! I started sweating. What do I do now? People stared at me. I was the ugly duckling.

“Hey man, what’s up?”

“I am looking for the Catholic Cathedral.”

“I am Catholic!”

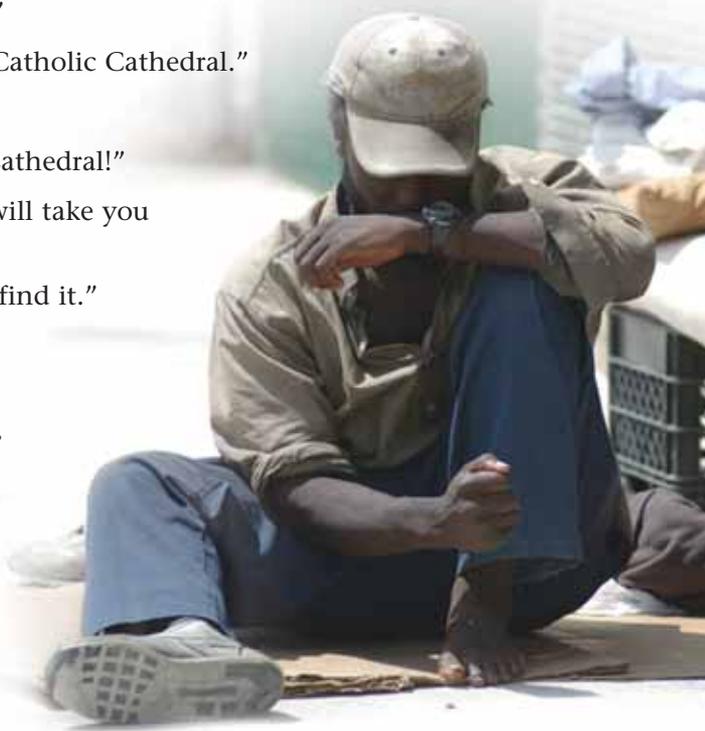
“But you are not the Cathedral!”

“You are funny, but I will take you there.”

“That’s all right, I will find it.”

“No, you won’t. I will show you.”

“Is he going to kill me, assault me, rob me, and hurt me?” I thought. He did not. He was a real gentleman, proud to show me the church where he worshiped every Sunday and more.



He showed me around, and told me all about its history and its beauty. Afterwards he introduced me to his family; we had a beer and he put me back on the bus. Am I a racist? I didn't think so, until reality smacked me in the face. I am prejudiced and to a certain extent, I probably always will be, despite any improvements and self-assurance.

Racism is an evil that endures in our society and in our church. Despite significant changes the reality of racism remains. In large part, only the external appearances have changed.

Racism and economic oppression are distinct but interrelated forces that dehumanize our society. We are entering a period marked by limited resources, few jobs and dwindling revenues. In this environment, racial minorities and the poor are bearing the heaviest burden of our current economic reality. In our country, men, women and children are being

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denied opportunities for advancement because of their race. The educational, legal and financial systems impede people's progress because they are Black, Hispanic, Native American or Asian.

Racism is a sin. A sin that divides the human family and violates the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father. To the extent that racial bias affects our personal attitudes and judgments, as long as we allow another's race to influence our relationship, we but close our heart for our brothers and sisters in need, we are called to renew ourselves in love and justice.

As individuals, we should try to influence the attitude of others by expressly rejecting racial stereotypes, racial slurs, and jokes. We should influence the members of our families, especially our children, to be sensitive to the true human values and cultural contribution of each racial group in our country. For people of faith, it is important to meditate on the message of the great parable of the Final Judgment. “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, all nations will be assembled before Him. Then He will say to those on His right, ‘Come. You have my Father's blessing! For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me’” (Mt 25:31-40).



# Fr. Fernando Delatorre Visits Migrant Worker Religious Program

By JOSEPH YEKULIS

One of Blessed Guanella's popular phrases is; "The Whole World is your Homeland". The Servants of Charity exist in twenty countries around the world, and serve "those who have no one." This summer, we have had the privilege of getting to know a member of their congregation from Spain. He is Rev. Fr. Fernando Delatorre, from the community of Palencia, northwest of Madrid, Spain.

What is Fr. Delatorre's mission? Fr. Delatorre is the Administrator of Villa St. Joseph in Palencia, Spain, where he has run a program for twenty-two developmentally disabled residents during the past six years. He came to Michigan this summer to assist with the Hispanic Ministry that the Servants of Charity began several years ago. As a part of this ministry, Fr. Delatorre works with Dr. Juan (Paco) Lopez, a leader in the Guanellian Lay Movement, to provide spiritual support to migrant workers in southeast Michigan during the warm weather months. Most come from Texas and Mexico, and there are few opportunities for them to practice their faith in the presence of a Spanish speaking priest. While working with Dr. Lopez, Fr. Delatorre says Mass, delivers the Sacraments, and works as a spiritual guide for the migrants in the area.



Juan Lopez



According to Fr. Delatorre, “It was difficult at first, because they didn’t know who I was, and so I had to gain their trust. But the longer I was here, the friendlier they became. They are happy to see that there are people in the local community who are willing to bring them Communion and the Lord’s blessings. It’s not easy for them. They work all day, and then come to Mass in the evening.”



Juan Lopez

Fr. Delatorre’s path to the United States began twenty-two years ago when he was ordained a priest in the Servants of Charity on August 22, 1987. During the first six years, he was assigned to a formation house in Spain. Then in 1993, he was sent to Nigeria. The resources were very limited there, but they cared for people and provided food, medical care, and employment. Fr. Delatorre’s biggest challenges there were learning English and dealing with poverty.

He returned to Spain and was assigned to a parish in St. Juaquin, where he worked with two other Guanellian priests to provide after-school activities, a catechism program, first communion and confirmation training. They also worked with the disabled in their community. Finally he returned to Palencia, where is now the administrator of a residential care program with fourteen men and eight women. He manages two facilities, one outside of the city, and the other within.

Fr. Delatorre enjoyed Michigan, and says “speaking English here has been a lot easier than I thought it would be. I’m happy that I’ve been able to accomplish my goals, which have been to; perform my pastoral work here with enthusiasm, observe a facility similar to mine in Spain and, practice my English skills.” Spain is a part of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Province, consisting of Spain, Mexico, Guatemala, and Columbia.

# Memories of an Old Priest

BY FR. SILVIO DENARD, SDC.

**J** was a novice in 1967, and with the rest of the Guanellian seminarians of Barza d'Ispra Seminary, I attended

a celebration at one of the Houses run by our Sisters. I do not remember if it was Livraga or Belgioioso, however, Father Guanella in Northern Italy, Pavia Province, founded them both. From that trip I have only one memory, an unforgettable meeting with an old priest, (to me he was ancient), while visiting the nearby Cathedral of Vigevano. Five or six of us were looking around, on the right aisle of the church, when an old priest entered through a door who recognized us as Servants of Charity seminarians because of our religious habits. "Come here, boys! I have something to tell you." We, obedient novices, surrounded him.

"I have met your Founder," he continued, "many years ago. When I was your age, my friends and I were visiting the city of Como. It was a gorgeous day, filled with sun and a cool breeze from the lake. Sooner than we expected, the evening came and with it a certain unkind rumbling from our stomachs. We were hungry. Every penny had been spent to pay a boat fare for touring the lake. The train home was scheduled for late at night. What to do now? Going to a restaurant was out of the question.



No money, no food! Meeting a police officer, we asked where we might go to find something to eat for free! He understood our situation and sent us to Tommaso Grossi Street a few blocks away. We were to ask for Father Louis Guanella. The officer was confident this priest would meet our need. In a short time we reached the door of, we read, Divine Providence House. At our knocking, a tall, big and smiling priest appeared. 'Are you looking for Father Louis? Come in, come in! I will go to catch him. In the meantime take a seat.'

After hearing the reason why we were there, he disappeared behind a door. We waited. After a few minutes, there he was, the same big priest, carrying an unimpressive loaf of bread, a basket of walnuts, and even some wine. 'This is all that I have found. But you are so many. It's not enough... not to worry. Divine Providence will take care. Oh, by the way, I am Father Louis.' Happy and relieved to have found such good fortune, we began to talk and laugh while eating walnuts. Father Louis, two tables away, was cutting slices of bread. There were more than ten of us hungry young men. We ate bread and walnuts. And we ate more bread and more bread and more bread.



Suddenly one of us stood up and observed, 'Father, where is all this bread coming from? You have a single loaf!' A lightning bolt through our head would have been less powerful than what we suddenly realized. Father Louis was multiplying bread under our very eyes! Half the loaf was still there...

Visibly embarrassed, Father Louis hid the rest of the loaf inside his cassock, and joining us, he tried to minimize what had just happened. We were simply without words

and almost paralyzed by amazement, fear, happiness, and who knows what? What I still remember is the fire in his eyes while he was telling us about how powerful and good Divine Providence is to those who trust in Him.”

“BOYS... I MET A SAINT.  
I SAW A MIRACLE. I AM  
A PRIEST BECAUSE OF  
YOUR FOUNDER.”

“Boys,” the old priest concluded, “I met a saint. I saw a miracle. I am a priest because of your Founder. After so many years, the eyes of your Founder are still in front of me, smiling and happy like those of a boy at the end of one of his jokes. What a joke! It was a miracle! The same one Jesus did to feed five thousand people. Listen to this old priest. Be as holy as your Founder, trust Divine Providence as your Founder, be bread of life to your poor, and God bless you.”

The priest disappeared through the same door he came in, and we looked at each other in utter amazement at what we had just experienced. This is what I heard on that day. Many did and do not believe me because I cannot corroborate the story through other witnesses. I do not know who the old priest was, he never told us his name and we did not bother to ask, and I do not remember the faces and names of the seminarians listening to him with me. No superiors of ours were around, and the priest did not ask us to call one of them. This event is not recorded in the biography of the Founder written by Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi. It is however briefly mentioned, five words, in one of the Founder’s biographies written later on. I never heard any of my formators or superiors talk about this miracle and have never heard it spoken of since our meeting with the old priest. True or false, I do not know. I just thought I’d share with you what I heard many years ago.

# Guanellian Lay Movement

One of the treasures of John Paul II's legacy is the Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* (The People of God), with the subtitle, *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World*.

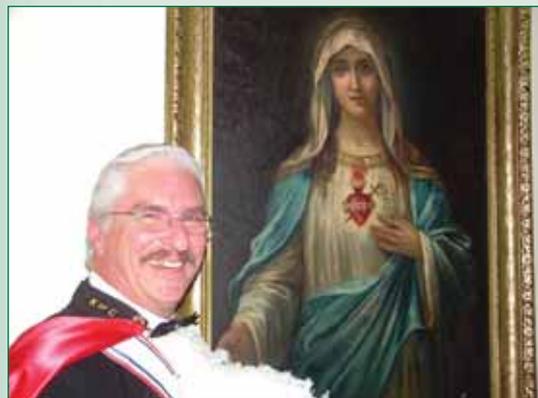
"And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too' (Mt 20:3-4). From that day, the call of the Lord Jesus, "You go into the vineyard too" never fails to address every person who comes into this world.

"*You go into the vineyard too.*" The call is a concern not only of Bishops, priests, deacons and men and women religious; the call is addressed to everyone. The Lord also calls on the laity, sending them out on their missions on behalf of the Church and the world.

The Church makes an earnest plea in the Lord's name that all lay people should give a glad, generous, and prompt response to the impulse of the Holy Spirit and to the voice of Christ. Young people should feel that this call is directed to them in particular, and they should respond to it eagerly and magnanimously. The Lord himself renews his invitation to

all the lay faithful to come closer to him every day, and they should associate themselves with Him in His saving mission.

Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:5). The dignity of each Christian derives from Baptism, which makes us children of God. "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well



Joe Yekulis

pleased” (Lk 3:22). Because of Baptism and faith, the Lay Faithful are united in the Priestly, Prophetic and Kingly Mission of Jesus Christ.

The Lay Faithful are called to Holiness and to participation in the salvific mission of the Church. The Holy Spirit, while bestowing diverse ministries on the Church, enriches it still further with particular gifts of

grace, called *charisms*. These can take a great variety of forms, both as a manifestation of the Spirit, who abundantly supplies them, and as a response to the many needs of the Church in history. These *charisms* are given to individual persons, and can even be shared by others in such ways as to continue in time a precious and effective heritage.

Blessed Louis Guanella received a gift of Grace from the Spirit and he responded to that gift with gratitude and enthusiasm. That answer of acceptance was the birth of the Guanellian Charism.

The Guanellian Charism gave life to three different groups: The Servants of Charity, the Daughters of St Mary of Providence and the *Guanellian Cooperators*. Each group shares the same charism and the same spirit of the Founder. As members of the Guanellian Family, we are sent to evangelize the poor, arousing in them reasons for hope by revealing the love of the Father. Therefore, we become instruments of Providence through the exercise of the works of mercy. The Guanellian Cooperators are the lay branch of the Guanellian Family. *The Guanellian Lay Movement* is a school of formation and a place of discerning one’s own vocation and mission.

With Jesus, our Teacher, and the Church, our Mother, we learn to pray, to educate and to be educated, to love and to be loved. The Guanellian Lay Movement inspires us to promote the Dignity of each person and to respect the inviolable Right to Life. A privileged group for the Guanellian family are the *Suffering and Dying*.

Most of all the Guanellian Lay Movement teaches us that spiritual formation must occupy a primary place in our life. Everyone is called to grow continually in intimate union with Jesus, in conformity to the Father’s will and in devotion to the spirit of Blessed Louis Guanella.



Joe Yekulis



# A New Tent of Charity in Andhra Pradesh

BY FR. PROMIYO, SdC AND  
FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

In June 2004, the Servants of Charity pitched a new tent of charity in Vatluru, Andhra Pradesh. Five years later this mission in South Central India, has become a significant symbol of the Guanellian Charism.

**T**he mission includes a Parish with 13 substations, an orphanage, a Day Care Center for the elderly and a tailoring training program

for girls. The Village of Vatluru is about seven hours by car north of Chennai. As we drove on the brand new National Highway 5, I noticed several girls in colorful saris taking care of the flowers on the dividing strip and made a comment on what appeared to be a government program to employ women. The driver kindly informed me they were just prostitutes who try to lure the drivers with their colors. This gave me a warning of what was coming next. The children of the orphanage were waiting for us, all dressed up with their smiles and big eyes, the eyes you never forget, that pop into your dreams from time to time. They are orphans. Many of them have AIDS, and their mothers work on the highway. The children, who are happy and loved, will get an extra ice



*Children celebrating Christmas at the orphanage.*

cream from our visit, giving no thought to their futures. Our Guanellian priests are doing a marvelous job.

As you enter the village, you see an impressive and artistic spiral tower from a distance. Heavily but tastefully decorated, the tower is the base for a statue of the Blessed Mother. With a satisfied smile the driver whispers, “We built it. The Catholics here are a very small percentage, but now, even the Hindus and Muslims stop to venerate the Blessed Virgin.” You wonder what else they have done. A parishioner comments: “After the Guanellian priests came to this parish the quality of life has improved considerably. This place has become an oasis. Before, it was like a desert, but the hard work of the Guanellians has given life to the orphanage and the whole village.”



*Orphanage boys pose at Calvary Shrine.*

The work of God’s Providence is quite visible. They have nothing and live day-by-day. The orphans are brought here with only the shirts on their backs, if any. Many benefactors have come forward from other countries with adoption subsidies of one dollar a day. There is hope that the children will get an education and a future. More children will be helped when more benefactors come forward.

In addition to the resident children at the orphanage, there are many other children in the thirteen surrounding villages that are part of the Guanellian Parish. These children have birth parents, but actually, they live on their own, as their parents are busy surviving day after day.

The following day we visit the elderly. They only come during the day. If one of them is missing, all of them are worried. They are a good group of men and women, and each has a story to tell. One woman of about 80 breaks suddenly into a dance. She moves fast and with grace. Where does she get the energy? We all applaud and distribute candy. We can read the gratitude and joy in their eyes. The love of God works in mysterious and hidden ways. They invite us to eat, but we know that the food they are eating will sicken us. They proceed then to pray the





Rosary and have lunch. Before they return home, they receive more food, medicine and clean clothes for the following day.

“What would happen if one day you run out of food, clothes and medicine?” I asked one of my confreres. “It’s happened before,” he said “and it will happen again. We pray, beg, ask, knock at doors and God’s Providence arrives, sometimes slowly, sometimes too late, and life goes on.”

Later on, we are taken to see the tailor shop. Many girls are working at sewing machines. They are shy but eager and pleased to show us their skills and art. These poor girls either dropped out of school or were taken away by their parents and sent to do slave work. Here they learn a trade that will help them to be financially independent and to live a dignified life. After their successful training, at graduation time they will receive a sewing machine as a reward.

Sunday Mass at our parish church was a profound and rewarding religious experience. The church was filled with children sitting in front, women in the middle, and men in the back, by the entrance. All were dressed in their best, but there were no chairs or pews left, so they all sat on the floor, and the men stood. The Liturgy, the singing and praying carries you to another realm. You close your eyes and think of these children, these orphans, these elderly, and these girls all in heaven, free at last of their miseries and suffering, in the company of their Creator, who loved them before He formed them in their mother’s womb.

*“If you have to do some work, see to it that your work is most of all for God only, and that you take time from the day only to care for the needy.”*

*Blessed Louis Guanella*





# God's Providence Was Always My Vocation

BY SR. FLORINE LICAVOLI, DSMP

**I**t may sound strange, but I believe that my vocation began in the womb. My mom was surprised when she found out that she was pregnant. She was bewildered, because things were very difficult at that time and it had been ten years since her last child. Nevertheless, she had all the confidence in the world in her spiritual director of fifteen years, Father Solanus. She explained her situation and he reassured her not to worry, that God would take care of everything in due time. He then asked her to go home and pray, and to return the following morning. He promised her that he would also bring this situation before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and he would listen to what Jesus would inspire in him to share with her. "When you return tomorrow, Mary, we will share our prayer experience. You wait and God will help us figure this all out, and everything will be taken care of." So my mom did as Father directed her and returned the following morning.

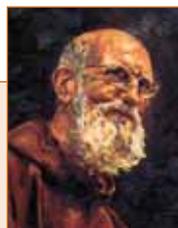
*Sr. Florine enjoys a moment with residents of the Providence Center in Chicago, Ill.*



When Father Solanus answered the door for her, he seemed so happy and excited to see her. “Come in Mary, I have some wonderful news for you.” She sat down across from him and he began. “Oh Mary, I believe God is asking you to have this baby for HIM. This baby will grow up and will serve God and his people.” My mom was stunned for a moment and then responded, “Father, this is such a special blessing.” He continued, “So many blessings will come from this birth, the first being that your husband Sam will change from his former negative habits and will be so taken up with the coming of this new child. You will also have some sorrows as well. One of your sons will pass rather early in life, leaving young children.

Your daughters will also have their share of trials. It will be you who will support them with your faith. Finally, when you are close to the end of your life, God will ask you to bear a heavy cross of suffering, but he is sending this child to help you, so you will not carry this burden alone.” He smiled with such sincerity and said, “Mary, you and your husband will be blessed with much joy and consolation with this child, and God will be with you through it all.”

The weeks passed and my mom began to see a change in my father. He was more attentive and more helpful with the family; he spent more time at home, and seemed to be more peaceful. She thought to herself, Father Solanus’ prophecy was already beginning to come true. She continued to pray with great faith and she could see many things changing with prayer. One day, my father came home from work and told my mom he wanted this baby to be born in a hospital. My other siblings were all born at home with a midwife. I was born on November 29, 1942 at a nearby hospital. I was named after my father’s only sister who resided in Sicily. I grew and was educated at St. Ambrose School for twelve years.



“MARY, YOU  
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They were wonderful years, and I know my parents made many sacrifices to accomplish this goal.

One day my family went to visit the Monastery in our old neighborhood, and my brothers and sisters visited with all the monks who taught them their catechism. I had the opportunity to meet Father Solanus, who knew me, but I had not yet heard the story behind my birth. Mom wanted to wait until I was older to really understand this great faith story, which changed my parents' lives. My mom took me up to Father Solanus, who had a long poorly shaped beard, "Well, you must be Florine, I've heard so much about you. Where do you go to school? What do you want to be when you get big?" I felt a little like a celebrity, so I answered, "Father, I go to St. Ambrose School and I really want to work for God when I grow up. Do you think he will have a job for me?" He smiled and winked at my mother, which I totally missed, and replied, "Indeed, God needs lots of people to help Him, I'm sure He'll have a great job lined up for you." I turned to my mom and smiled, as if to say, his Father must have connections.

That visit and those words stayed with me for a long time, and when I was almost twelve, my mom told me the whole story.

It seemed hard to believe, but as the years passed, Father Solanus' prophecy was being fulfilled little by little. Both of my sisters had many hard trials, my oldest brother died at forty-one leaving four young children, and my dad really did change as predicted.

Part two of Sr. Florine's vocation story, *God's Providence Was Always My Vocation*, will appear in the December/January issue of *The Voice of Providence*.



Moran Studios, PA



# The Carpenter from a Royal Lineage

BY FR. TARCISIO STRAMARE

“The angel of the Lord was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David” (Lk 1:26).

**T**he angel confirmed to Mary that “the Lord will give the throne of David his father” (Lk 1:32) to Jesus. Bethlehem, the town where Jesus will be born, appears in the scene because Joseph “went up from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child” (Lk 2:4). The angels too



on Christmas night mention David, “Today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord” (Lk 2:11).

It was important to underline over and over the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, of Judea, in the house of David because it was a common belief that Jesus was from Galilee, a Nazarene. And that did not match at all with Scripture and the promises of old. Matthew does not even mention the Annunciation, but introduces the event of Jesus with a few words, “When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea” (Mt 2:1). Nazareth is mentioned only when the Holy Family comes back from their time spent in Egypt (Mt 2:23). Matthew gives particular attention to



the Davidic genealogy of Jesus that compromised, in the minds of many, his virginal conception. While Luke points out that such a conception is necessary because of his divine origin as the Son of the Most High, Matthew instead sees it as a difficulty for his human origin.

Later on, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Jesus was fully embraced as Lord and God. The truth of his virginal conception also came to be known in its fullness and clarity to the detriment, however, of the Messianic title of “Christ.” It seems that many within the community were questioning whether Jesus was the Messiah because he was not born from a man belonging to David’s lineage, a necessary condition for being recognized as the Messiah.

It is obvious that the apostolic community could not invent the virginity of Mary, Mother of Jesus, because it had no interest in doing so. Her virginity was strongly asserted by the unquestioned testimony of Mary, herself, the mother of Jesus, who always showed gratitude for the “respectful” behavior of Joseph at the time of Jesus’ conception. The memory of Joseph, perhaps already dead at the time of all those discussions, was treasured by the first Christian community by honoring him as “spouse of Mary” and, especially, “father of Jesus.”

Matthew needs both titles. He needs Joseph as a “spouse” in order to ensure that he is a father. He is in need of the title “father” in order to add Jesus to the Davidic genealogy. They are extremely important issues because they give full legitimacy to Jesus within the Davidic genealogy, justifying his Messianic title. These are theological requirements, not just useless assumptions, which help the faithful to comprehend the Gospels, which are not to be viewed as “biographies” of Jesus of Nazareth. Far from it! They are written testimony of the Apostles’ preaching and mirror the doctrinal difficulties arising in the first Christian communities. We should keep in mind that Matthew’s community is overwhelmingly formed by Christians coming from the Jewish faith. They were very eager to verify within the Gospel the fulfillment of the Old Testament’s divine promises.

For instance, the virginity of Mary did create some difficulty for the Jewish-Christian faithful. They were expecting only the Messiah, the “son of David,” and now they have to face something incredible to their faith and expectations: the same “son of David” is also the “Son of God.” It was utterly new to them. Matthew himself raises the topic by mentioning a specific question addressed by Jesus to the scribes and Pharisees: “What is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They replied, “David’s.” He said to them, “How, then, does David, inspired by the Spirit, call him ‘lord’, saying: The Lord said to my lord, Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies under your feet? If David calls him ‘lord’, how can he be his son? No one was able to answer him a word” (Mt 22:41-46).

Matthew, by presenting the genealogy of Jesus, invites his community to find in it the answer to the problem regarding the ‘Davidic’ lineage of Jesus. The title “Christ,” which unites the two Testaments, depends upon Jesus being the “son of David.” Luke opens his genealogy (Lk 3:23-38) by mentioning that he, Jesus, “was the son, as was thought, of Joseph,” while Matthew closes his own genealogy by writing, “Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called Messiah” (Mt 1:16).

The Church of the origins needed to hear that Jesus was the “son of David” in order to make sure that Jesus was truly descended from King David. Jesus truly is a “son of David” through the legal paternity of Joseph. The title “Christ,” united to the name of Jesus, comes through the paternity of Joseph who legally recognized, as his own son the Son of God himself, by imposing upon him the name of Jesus.



# A Little Girl's Victory

BY SR. MARY LYNN RAKOWSKI, DSMP

*The first of a two-part story of the triumph of love in the face of tremendous obstacles.*

I have been teaching CCD for eight years and every year I learn from my students. One year our Lord wanted to deepen my understanding of the sacredness of life and sent Myra to my classroom. Her mom, Jane, brought her the first day and explained Myra's special needs: she is legally blind and would need help reading the board; she is deaf, but has cochlear implants, and would have to face me so she could read my lips; she has a tracheostomy and occasionally needs suctioning; finally she tires easily in the evening, (our class was from 7:00 to 8:15 p.m.). Her dad, Mike, would accompany her to every class. The other children, who had been in CCD with Myra, were very accepting of her and knew they would have to support her.

Aside from her physical problems Myra had a deep thirst for God. She often read ahead in her book, only missed a class when she had surgery and scored 100 on almost every quiz she took. Myra's determination to drink in everything that pertained to Jesus, even when she was exhausted, was a real example for me. I knew this desire to know Jesus came from a love for Him already rooted firmly in her heart. I realized she was truly loved and accepted by her family, but I wanted to know more about how her parents had reached this point of acceptance and how they had encouraged Myra in her thirst for God. Here, then, is Myra's story as her mother shared it with me.

Jane and Mike were married in 1987 and had tried to have a baby for eight years. They considered overseas adoption, but were not able to afford it. Jane prayed, asking for a baby, promising to care for a child and return this child to God as perfect as He had sent the child. Within a month Jane became pregnant. Mike, who lost his mother at age 16, had a premonition there might be something wrong with the baby. He asked Jane if the baby would be a girl, could they name her Myra after his mother. And so her name was chosen. When an ultrasound was done they thought the baby had no stomach and possibly a blockage in the throat. Jane learned this shortly before the feast of St. Blaise. During the blessing of the throat, Father could tell Jane was upset and asked what was wrong. She told him about the ultrasound and he immediately blessed her abdomen. The hospital wanted to do an amniocentesis so that Jane and Mike could terminate their pregnancy, but they refused!

Myra came at a busy time for Jane, soon after she had started a new job. Jane went to the hospital when her water broke, but had to wait four more days until the baby decided to arrive. Jane did not remember hearing Myra cry because she had a tracheal-esophageal fistula when she was born and had surgery within the first 8 hours of life for insertion of a stomach tube. Jane never heard her cry until she was 4 years old because Myra had a tracheostomy when she was 8 days old. Myra was the most beautiful baby, perfectly proportioned. She would often gaze deeply into her mother's eyes.

Jane returned from the ICU without Myra and took a two-hour shower and cried, letting the waters wash away all her fears and worries. She grieved those two hours. Remembering her earlier promise to God, she let go of her own expectations, and was then able to focus on Myra's needs.



*Myra (r) poses with family members in front of Fr. Guanella.*

They did not know what Myra's situation was at first, so Jane prepared for the worst, which could have been as bad as Myra's death. Yet this did not happen, and as she continued to bond with Myra, she realized that God sent this baby to her for a reason. She felt that she was the steward of the great gift that was Myra and she thanked God. Mike was a little slower in his



*Myra ( r ) with sister, "God makes everything perfect."*

acceptance of Myra's condition. Jane would talk with Mike and finally he decided to support her fully and has never wavered from his decision. Myra remained in the hospital for six weeks. One of the top geneticists in the country diagnosed Myra's condition as CHARGE syndrome association. This allowed Jane and Mike to apply for the services that Myra needed. The social worker at the hospital told Jane that if this was all too hard to handle or live with, she could leave the baby at the hospital and "just walk away," but Jane insisted on bringing Myra home. Jane said, "God makes everything perfect."

"Myra is perfect to Him, and therefore to me too. It's humans that don't seem to understand what *perfect* means." Myra was a gift from God and Jane and Mike were blessed to receive such a gift.

Myra is considered deaf and blind. She did not start speaking till the age of 4 or 5, but she has used sign language since the age of one. She continues to work hard at learning to speak, eat and breathe for herself. She insists on people speaking rather than signing to her, as she continues to learn how to use her cochlear implants. She also uses open captioning to keep up in her mainstream classrooms.

She is now 13 years old and has had over 45 surgeries in her life.

*Part II of Myra's story will be published in the next issue.*



# Thanksgiving

We're grateful for a mild summer; cool nights and just enough rain to wet the grass and nourish the trees.

**T**hanks to the Shrine Forester donations, nineteen new trees were planted at the Shrine this fall. In the spring more than one hundred seedlings were also planted by volunteers. As they mature, this tiny forest will be replanted throughout the grounds and give a shady respite to future generations.

We're blessed in our complete dependence upon God's providential care for the Shrine. Without a watering system or a grounds crew and modern equipment, we're often reminded of His loving care throughout the year. Every time we hear the rain or the sound of a lawnmower powered by a member of the Knights of Columbus, we are filled with thanksgiving. When we see budding branches, flowers, and the many volunteers of all ages, who mulch and prune trees, remove brush and weeds, tend the flowerbeds, or push the snow out of the driveway, we cannot be misguided in thinking we did it ourselves. The beauty of your generosity from afar and of those near enough to get their hands dirty continues to give honor to our dear patron.

In September we were filled with sweet remembrance of the first home of the Pious Union of St. Joseph in the United States when the ceiling construction got underway in the Shrine Chapel. While the furnishings of the Sanctuary were carefully stored away from the dust and debris of construction, the Servants of Charity offered Mass in the Holy Family Pastoral Center. This great house held the first chapel and office of the Pious Union and some of the people present still remember the small group that gathered for the first Mass offered here by Fr. Germano Pegoraro.

When visiting the Shrine of St. Joseph for the Suffering and Dying, please call the office to let us know when you will arrive so that we can offer you the hospitality of the local community and share the loving care that is so abundant in the Shrine of our dear patron.



# Dedications & Memorials

You may reserve the following Shrine or Calvary memorials or dedications with your donation:

- Dedicate a step of the Holy Stair ..... \$5000**
- Dedicate a Bench ..... \$1000**
- “I am the Resurrection and the Life” Memorial Wall .... \$500**
- Dedicate a tile near the Calvary ..... \$250**
- Become a Shrine Forester, Plant a tree ..... \$150**
- Dedicate a leaf on the Tree of Remembrance in the Shrine ..... \$500**

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](mailto:piousunion@pusj.org).



**Dear Fr. Joseph,**

I've almost finished reading the current issue of *The Voice of Providence*. I always find it inspiring and informative. The Pious Union has been very helpful to me in my ongoing conversion and formation over the past several years. I received three prints (paintings of the Holy Family and St. Joseph) by Fr. Germano Pegoraro a few years before his passing. One hangs in each bedroom of my home providing continual blessings. I also received a copy of "Let us go to the Father." by Blessed Louis Guanella. Shortly after reading it, I began the formation process with the Secular Franciscans where I had been volunteering at St. Bonaventure Monastery in Detroit.

So, as you can see the Servants of Charity and the Pious Union provide a very positive influence. My friend is dying with cancer. He has been faithful to the Church, especially to praying the rosary for many years. Please say a prayer for him during his transition. Thanks again. God Bless You. I look forward to entering into the reverent meditations of Fr. Guanella during May as I read "In the Month of Flowers."

*RF – Michigan*

**Dear St. Joseph,**

Well our son is finally here. You gave us hope through our four-year journey. We would often pray to you (to ask you to ask God) to give us a child. Thank you for being there for us. We pray to you every day.

*K Family – Virginia*

**Dear Fr. Fortunato,**

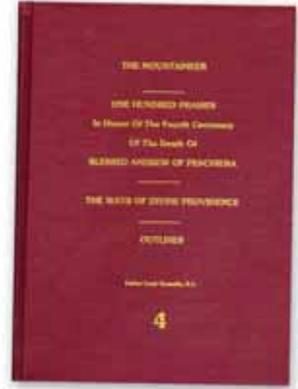
It was very nice speaking to your assistant. I told her a very special intention to tell you about at this time regarding a flood I had at my previous home... There is extensive damage and the insurance company is not giving me much hope that my claim will be approved. Thank you for praying for my intentions. May God bless you for all the work that you do daily for the faith and the Pious Union of St. Joseph. Please send me another supply of St. Joseph in my Pocket prayer cards to give to others.

*MS – Pennsylvania*





# The Ways of Providence



It is rewarding for me to present you with another treasure of the *Guanellian Collection*. Volume 4, among other devotional titles, includes *The Ways of Providence*, which is the autobiography of Blessed Louis Guanella. Not many great people and even less among the saints, write their own biography.

Fr. Guanella, however, dictated his memories to one of his confreres who protected these pages zealously. In these memoirs, Fr. Guanella wants to show that God's Providence led him all the way. "God does it all," was one of his preferred statements.

It is admirable how he describes, with humility and wonder, God's call to serve the poor. He talks about his family, the years in the seminary, his ordination and initial pastoral work. His institutions were all founded based on the Providence of God. God inspired the two congregations he founded. It reads like a manual about the making of a saint. Fr. Guanella puts himself totally in the hands of God and lets Him guide him wherever He wants. With Fr. Guanella we can pray: God our Father, in Your will is our peace. Our heart was made for You and will not find peace until it rests in You.

Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC

*The Ways of Providence* 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.

# Is God Calling You to Serve Others?

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

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

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

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

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become a priest or  
a brother for one  
dollar a day.





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

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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](mailto:piousunion@pusj.org)

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