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HOUR

THE VOICE OF PROVIDENCE

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2013

FEATURED STORY:

Burial versus Cremation

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

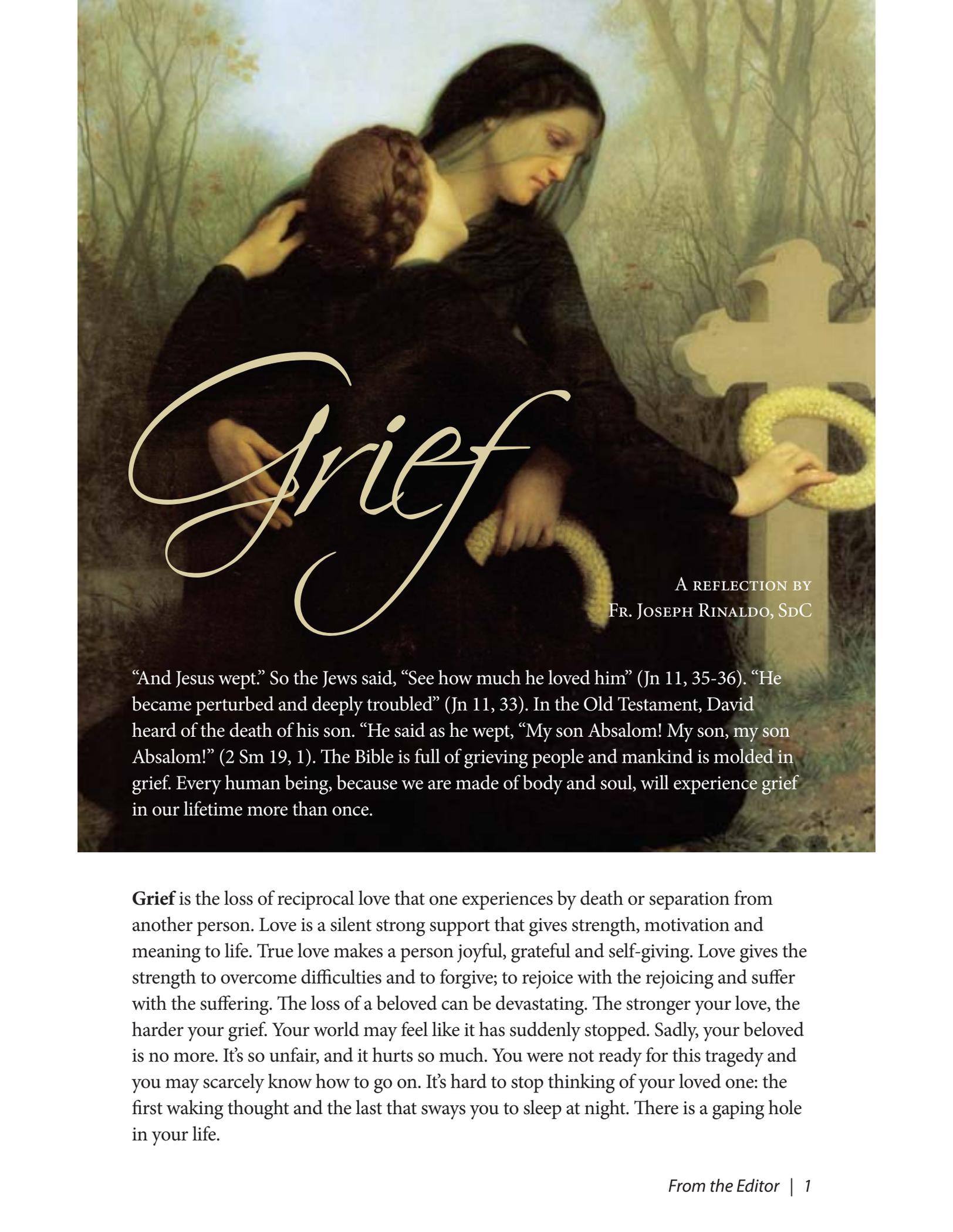
The Voice of Providence:

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Mission:

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

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



Grief

A REFLECTION BY
FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

“And Jesus wept.” So the Jews said, “See how much he loved him” (Jn 11, 35-36). “He became perturbed and deeply troubled” (Jn 11, 33). In the Old Testament, David heard of the death of his son. “He said as he wept, “My son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom!” (2 Sm 19, 1). The Bible is full of grieving people and mankind is molded in grief. Every human being, because we are made of body and soul, will experience grief in our lifetime more than once.

Grief is the loss of reciprocal love that one experiences by death or separation from another person. Love is a silent strong support that gives strength, motivation and meaning to life. True love makes a person joyful, grateful and self-giving. Love gives the strength to overcome difficulties and to forgive; to rejoice with the rejoicing and suffer with the suffering. The loss of a beloved can be devastating. The stronger your love, the harder your grief. Your world may feel like it has suddenly stopped. Sadly, your beloved is no more. It's so unfair, and it hurts so much. You were not ready for this tragedy and you may scarcely know how to go on. It's hard to stop thinking of your loved one: the first waking thought and the last that sways you to sleep at night. There is a gaping hole in your life.

People do not experience grief in the same way, and no one can tell you how to grieve. It is a process that can't be rushed or avoided. There are no short cuts; it must be lived. Grieving is natural and it is personal; it is the most spontaneous response when we are deeply hurt. Grief is God's way of healing a broken heart. We should not be afraid of it, or try to avoid it. Rather, we can look at this painful journey as a way to tell us and others, how much we love and will miss the special one. Sometimes we experience numbness, loneliness, anger with God, confusion in decision making, rage, preoccupation and pain. But grief is not an enemy; it is a friend. It is a natural process of walking through the pain. Each one of us can mature through grief according to the experience of the healing process. Sharing our tears with others helps tremendously. Physical activities and small accomplishments are comforting.

For those of us who have faith in the healing power of God, great consolation can come to us through the power of prayer. Like food for the heart and soul, prayer is a way of strengthening and fortifying us during the long famine of our grief. Praying is a way of coping with our trauma; it allows us to move outside our pain and seek relief in a source larger than ourselves. After so many years after their death, I still talk to my parents. I share with them my joys and my pains; my anxieties and fears; my failures and my successes. During my dark days, I even pray to them, my saint protectors in heaven, and I love to re-experience with them those long ago days when we prayed together.





St. Joseph: Mission Accomplished

BY FR. PAUL OGGIONI, SdC

As I pray to St. Joseph, the words of the great Carmelite, St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), come to mind: “Anyone who totally abandons himself in the hands of God, will be certainly guided. Anything we entrust to him will not get lost; actually it will be saved, enlarged, elevated and correctly evaluated. Total abandonment in the hands of God, without human guarantee, is what should happen.”

This was the personal faith experience of the saint: Jewish by birth, she walked a faithless journey up to the moment she met Jesus Christ. She entrusted herself entirely to him, convinced of undertaking the path that would lead her to the Promised Land. In the tragedy of the concentration camp, she embraced the plan of God who wanted her to be the seed of an abundant life.



St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross

“ANYONE
WHO TOTALLY
ABANDONS
HIMSELF IN THE
HANDS OF GOD,
WILL BE CERTAINLY
GUIDED.”

This autobiographical statement properly identifies the experience of St. Joseph, just man and God’s beloved. He submits to the divine call to live with absolute faith the plan of grace prepared for him from eternity. St. Joseph lives his experience of faith in the tradition of the righteous men of the Old Testament. In solitude, they had placed their hope in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who had promised that a shoot from the House of David would bring salvation to humankind. Like them, Joseph is the sincere believer who lives the call from the Lord in solitude because he cannot find a companion along the way.

However, in the small community of believers, he meets Mary, the wise and prudent virgin, who likewise, is in search of the face of God and was expecting the promised savior. The solitude they experienced in their life as believers was great. Jesus requested the same solitude from all who wanted to follow him. Chosen by the Lord, Mary, Joseph and the many who want to be faithful to their vocation as children of God, will not find honor, power and glory, but the cross and suffering, without counting the cost.

It is easy to imagine how St. Joseph, who was dreaming about his future life with Mary, had lived his trial as part of the call of God to a special mission. He will be a husband without the spousal relationship; a dad without being the father; he will name the child known to all to be his son. It is rewarding to contemplate Joseph as the humble Jew who places all his trust in the providence of God, who assists

and protects anyone who places their life in his immeasurable hands and heart. Joseph never felt alone. From his lips often came the prayer of Psalm 131.

“O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor are my eyes haughty; I busy not myself with great things, not with things too sublime for me. Nay rather, I have stilled and quieted my soul like a weaned child on its mother’s lap, so is my soul within me.”

The Gospel reports the difficult events in the life of these two chosen believers: people whisper about Mary’s fidelity and virginity; the hardships in building a new home; the unknown accommodations for a pregnant mother at the end of the trip to Bethlehem; the fears during the flight to a foreign land; the return to Israel and the search of a place to live; the hard work to support a family. Joseph and Mary, however, know that God leads their way; they live their vocation and accept their consecrated virginity that in Christ Jesus will begin posterity more numerous than the sand of the sea. St. Joseph clearly understood the redemptive meaning of the call.

To fulfill his plan, God chooses the people he wants to send, guided by him not by convenience, culture, money or race. God calls us individually to follow his plan by imitating his Son who did not come down from the cross when challenged by his crucifiers. He endured to the end for our salvation. St. Joseph did not face this extreme challenge because the hour of Jesus did not come yet. But, like Abraham, he experienced in faith, the glory of the Son for whom he had accepted to live, obedient to the will of the Father.



Beyond The Last Frontier

We Pray For Our Beloved

BY FR. PAUL OGGIONI, SDC

St. Joseph, who had the privilege of dying comforted in the arms of Jesus and Mary, now assists and comforts all who invoke his intercession for a holy death. The Church, therefore, invokes St. Joseph “Hope of the sick” and “Patron of the dying.” With great hope we pray to St. Joseph on behalf of our dear ones at the last stage of their life. Our beloved have trusted us and, since we have assisted them in their final suffering, we now continue to help them with our prayers so that they can enjoy the eternal vision of God’s love. The Church offers many ways to pray for the souls in Purgatory. Celebration of Masses, prayers, sacrifices, alms to the poor, visits to the sick and supporting works of charity in the name of the deceased. There is no doubt that the sacrifice of the Mass is the most significant prayer for the souls in Purgatory.

The Pious Union of St. Joseph invites everyone to register their loved ones in the *Perpetual Mass*. Their name is posted in the *Golden Book of Life* saved at the Shrine of St. Joseph. The members enjoy all the benefits of the *Perpetual Remembrance* granted by the Church. It is offered by the Priests of the Servants of Charity, members of the Pious Union of St. Joseph and the Pilgrims of the Shrine of St. Joseph.

All registered members partake of these spiritual benefits:

- Masses celebrated by Priests who are members of the Pious Union all over the world.
- Masses celebrated at the Shrine of St. Joseph for deceased members every First Friday of the Month and every Wednesday.
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Divine Mercy Chaplet every Wednesday.
- Daily Rosary, Novenas, Stations of the Cross and special devotions for the repose of the Souls in Purgatory.

Mailbag

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Joy—Peace!

Please plant one tree in honor of my father (father of 13 children). He died in 1950. R.I.P.

In your June issue of *Now and at the Hour* you quoted at length a recent homily of Pope Francis concerning his love and admiration of St. Joseph. In it he uses protect, protector, etc. 19 times. It made me think of the prayer, “Hail Joseph.” Your readership might enjoy seeing it printed in your upcoming issue.

PPS. Your reproduction of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was magnificent.

Dear Paul,

Thank you for sending us the prayer. We will do our best to include it in an upcoming issue of the magazine.

Reverend Father,

Pax et Bonum! Know that you are in my prayers, as I hope I am in yours, at least when you think of me.

I write concerning my obtaining a relic of St. Joseph, Blessed Clare and Servant of God the Bishop. I still treasure the relic of St. Louis, I am truly thankful for your kindness and I hope and pray you are able to help me regarding the other relics for my parish in St. Joseph and my new Knights of Columbus Council is named for him also.

Please pray for me, father as I progress with my treatments for leukemia and hepatitis C, the reason for relic that, maybe, God willing, my being cured will advance his cause.

In St. Joseph and St. Guanella,

Sincerely, Kirk

Dear Fr. Joseph,

Your editorial on the ‘Signs of the Times’ was excellent—you covered the problems Americans are facing to the letter. I can remember the early 1940s and WWII era as if it were yesterday. Nikita Khrushchev stated Russia will not conquer America using atomic weapons—they will conquer America from within. Since the confusion of the 1960s and *Roe v. Wade* in the 1970s America has been on the decline. The catholic faith taught then was ‘watered down’ and many left the Church. Your article brought everything up to date.

I pray for a worldwide evangelization; for the human race to return to God as well as the majority of my family members and friends. With the help of the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis will see us through our difficult times ahead. Please include me in your daily prayers.

Mildred Lopez, NY

Burial versus Cremation

By Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SDC

The doctors knew it, the family knew it: it was a matter of hours. Dad was dying and the news traveled fast among the family members spread around the country. The family reunion went well until it came to the funeral arrangements. The children were split between traditional burial and cremation.

Both sides were strongly arguing but were unable to reach a consensus. Mom was in deep grief and she refused to talk: the more they argued, the more she cried. I went to pay my respects and I got caught in a family squabble. I knew that no matter what I said someone was not going to be happy. I explained that “in dust you were born and into dust you shall return.” It does not matter how we return to dust. The first thing we have to ask is what the deceased



wanted or which direction his faith was leaning in his conversations and appreciations and preferences during his life, not what the relatives want.

The Church at first did not accept cremation. Today cremation has lost the ideological characterization it had years ago as being in opposition to the idea of the resurrection and of man's religious dimension. Moreover, there is a practical need. Many large cities do not have any space left for the traditional Catholic cemeteries while the funeral urn is a solution as there is always a place available for it. Cremation may be a better solution in cases of deaths abroad or out of state, as the transportation of the body is complex and it is also very expensive. The transportation of ashes is very simple, both from an economic standpoint as well as a bureaucratic point of view. The Church recommends one thing: the cremation must take place only after the funeral. To do it before the funeral, there must be a grave reason. And just like the coffin, the ashes must be accompanied to the cemetery by an ordained minister, with prayers and a prayer when the urn is placed in the tomb. The Church also asks for respect for the body of the deceased, and even if it is reduced to ashes it must be kept in a cemetery. For the Church, it is not right to take the urn with ashes home.

Something which caught my attention particularly is that many persons feel guilty for having cremated their loved ones, because they have the impression that violence has been done to their bodies, although cremation accelerates a natural process that lasts between 15 and 20 years and sometimes longer. After leaving the body of a loved one, they find his ashes in a receptacle, and sometimes this creates a strong trauma in persons who then accentuate their feeling of guilt. My experience indicates that many times words of consolation must be said to the living to console them in face of what they have experienced. Also when the preference of the deceased was to be cremated, the living sees the experience as a sorrow, even though understanding that it's a necessity.



In the old large urban cemeteries, as well as the cemeteries of smaller cities, we can see the people's faith, the roots, and the place of grief. Relatives and friends come to adorn the tombs, bring flowers, visit them, and pray despite the difficulty of distance. Cemeteries are the place of roots. It's lovely to see, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, whole families who come with children to visit their loved ones. They are also the place of grief, where the tears are dried of the inconsolable, especially in the case of children who have died. The tombs of children are the most painful; there are toys, and one sees young couples who come every day. There are mothers who have been coming for years to mourn their children, at times risking their safety as it gets dark early in winter and secondary roads are not always safe.

The cemetery is also a place of hope, a place of art, of beauty and of history. There is a longing for something that goes beyond this life, that affections aren't broken and don't end this way; undoubtedly that feeling is in the heart. These sentiments must be purified and educated. Perhaps the concept of the resurrection of the flesh is easier, which is fundamental for us. But the sense of eternal life exists. Without a doubt, hope in the resurrection must be nurtured. On the dimension of the Judgment, a key reading is given by Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Spes Salvi*, (Saved by faith) which shows the Judgment as a place of hope.

Christian Meaning of Halloween

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

The great tradition of the Feast of All Saints goes back many centuries. The celebration of the commemoration of the dead, All Souls Day, the following day came sometime later. The two Christian celebrations were fused into one and transformed into a single celebration, Halloween, where anything goes while essentially forgetting its origins. The truth about the celebration, that **all children enjoy**, is very different than what it really has become today.

The feast of All Saints, which the Church of Rome already observed, was transferred by Pope Gregory III (731–741) to November 1. Pope Gregory IV (827–844) extended this feast to the whole Church. Although the custom of remembering and praying for the dead is as old as the Church, something which also existed in many pre-Christian cultures, the liturgical commemoration of the dead dates back to November 2, 998. The custom was instituted by Saint Odilo, Benedictine monk and fifth abbot of Cluny, in southern France. Rome adopted the practice in the 14th century and it was eventually extended to the whole Church.



The name Halloween is no more than the popular deformation of the expression **All Hallows' Eve: Vigil of All Saints**, used in Ireland. This very ancient celebration reached the United States through the Irish immigrants who took root there. Undergoing a radical transformation, it returned to Europe in its North American form. Old Europe donned a pumpkin and dedicated itself to enlivening a children's celebration half way between carnival and the request for gifts by children of the Latin tradition.

Halloween certainly is not a Satanist celebration, although some want to make it such. Throughout the Middle Ages it was a popular belief



that the souls in Purgatory could appear on the eve of All Saints as whisperers, witches, toads etc., to persons who had wronged them during their life. To the ones who love them and pray for them, especially children, they bring gifts during that night. The dead relatives of the children bring them special gifts; the closer they are to their children the better the gifts. In many countries, children do not receive gifts from Santa or the Baby Jesus; they receive them on the night between All Saints and All Souls. When my special children come to my office to ask for trinkets, dressed as witches and devils, I first make them recite a Hail Mary.

In many countries, the Day of All Saints and the following All Souls Day, indistinctly, are Days in which families visit cemeteries and remember their loved ones. Sweets are made which relatives give to one another; stuffed marzipan called “saint’s bones,” as an example. While some take flowers to cemeteries, others spend the day remembering their deceased loved ones, erecting altars at dawn, some of which are real works of art. The simplest way in most homes is to put a cloth on a table with photographs of the deceased, adorned with flowers and mementos. Children are given sweets and from a very young age become familiar in a natural way with the idea that earthly life is not eternal, but the next life is.

True Christian concern for the deceased was the reason for the great number of Masses and prayers for them. Among religious traditions, the parish procession to the cemetery, visiting the graves of relatives and friends, and leaving flowers and lights on the graves have remained almost universal.



Eulogy for a Beloved Father

By LISA LICKONA

One of the things about being middle-aged is that you start to see things differently. You realize that everyone makes mistakes, and that we are all sinners, every one of us. And not only have we all made choices that we regret, but we have all suffered many times over from the choices of others—our friends, our spouses, our parents, or their parents.

At mid-life, life starts to look less like a neat thread that has been meticulously measured and more like a tangled spool of yarn after the cats have gotten into it—a mess of choices that we cannot sort out. That's why it is very tempting to want to begin again, to cut the thread yourself and start over.

But what is actually needed is someone to untie the knots; someone who has the patience to sit quietly and carefully follow the twisted threads to where they begin. To do the work with our life that seems impossible to us; to sort it all out. And there is someone who can do it. A few years ago I stumbled upon a beautiful website with the picture of a woman who has a length of thread in her hand and is diligently and lovingly untying it. Beneath her feet a hapless snake is being crushed. The title of the painting is *Maria, Knotenlöserin*; in English, *Mary, Untier of Knots*. If the Greeks had the placid Fates to measure their lives, we Christians have a loving Mother who untangles the messes that we make.



But if Mary is the untier of knots, what is left for us to do? When one has a tangled ball of yarn that needs to be untangled, where does one start? By looking for an end! Our job in life is not to hide the ends of the yarn, as we try to do while pretending we have it all worked out. We think we know all the answers and don't need anyone's help. But what we actually need to do is to keep looking, keep admitting fault, and keep trying to get help. These things are what a life of faith is all about. Faith is not a smug position in which one sits, knowing all the answers. On the contrary, a life of faith is a life lived believing that the answers are not within ourselves, that someone else will make sense of everything, that in Him is Truth, and Goodness and Beauty. A person living by faith is always trying to be better, despite his limitations—and by “being better,” I mean learning to trust better and learning to love better; because that gives God a chance.

About a month ago when my dad was in rehab before he died, I had a conversation with him in which he kept saying “I don't know, I don't know.” What didn't he know? He was always a doer, always found a way to work through things. But, weakened and confused from his poorly functioning heart, he did not know what to do. He could not get up by himself, exercise, read or do much of anything. When I talked to him, he was very upset. I suggested that he just pray. “I can't even remember the words of the Our Father,” he said. “All I can remember is that one prayer: The Prayer for the Departed.” I said, “That must be the prayer you are meant to say, Dad.”

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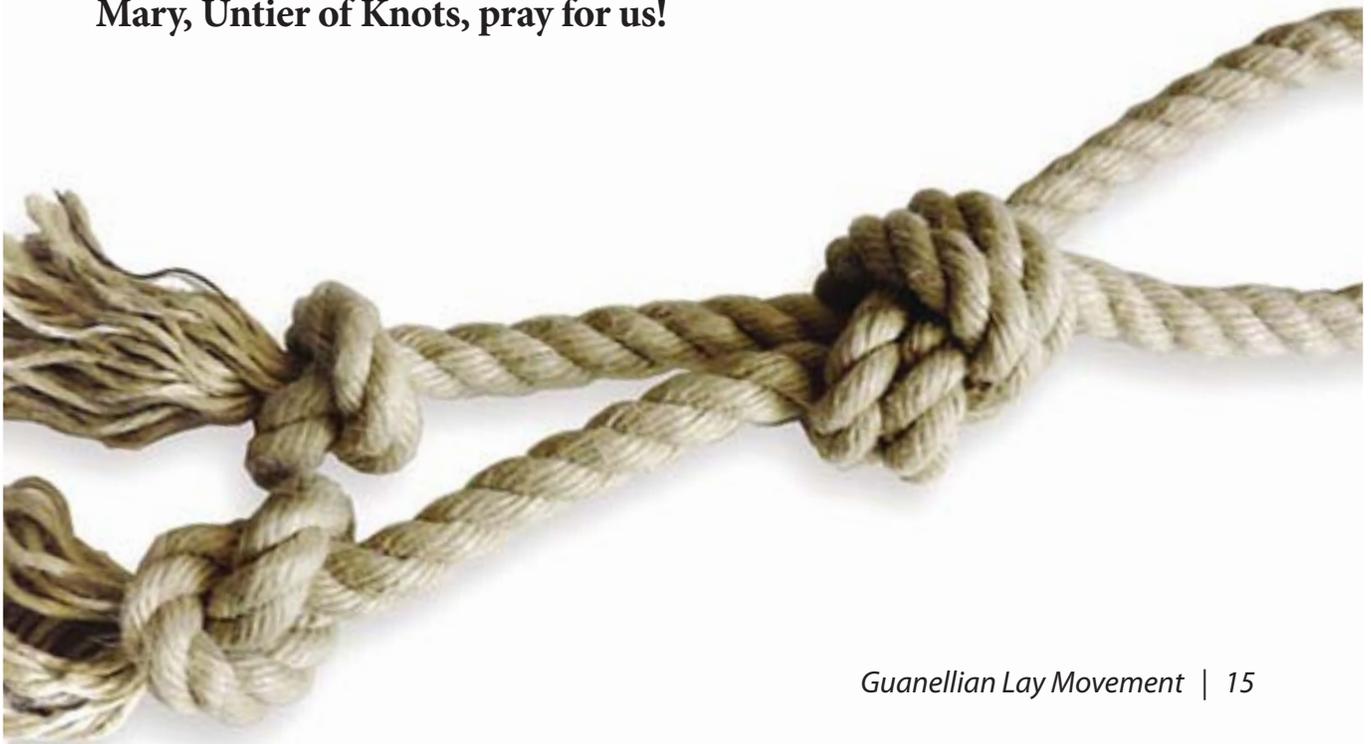
“AS MY FATHER’S HUMAN HEART WAS DYING,
HE WAS ASKING FOR A NEW HEART, A HEART
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AND THAT IS, I BELIEVE, WHAT HE WAS GIVEN.”

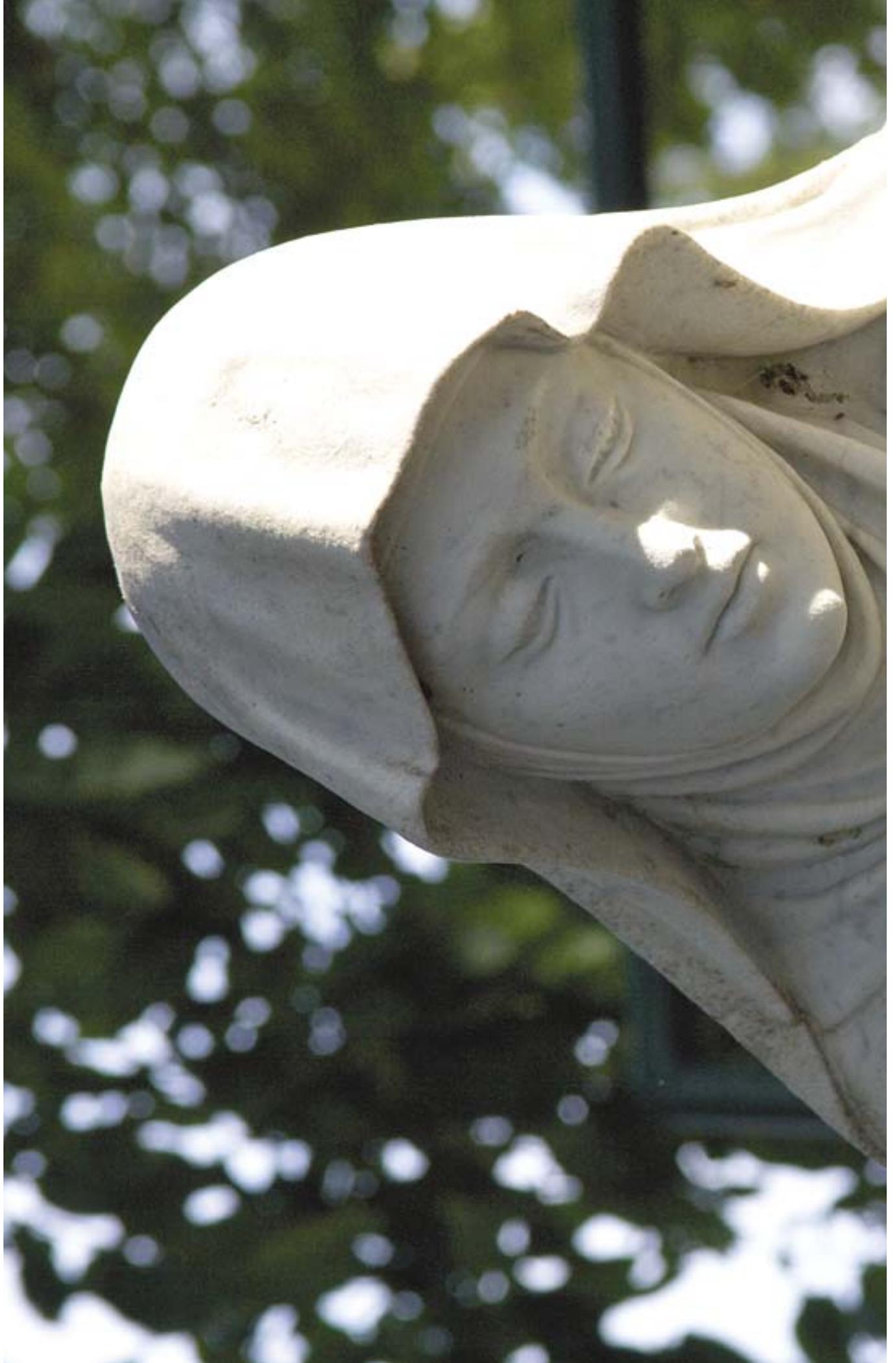
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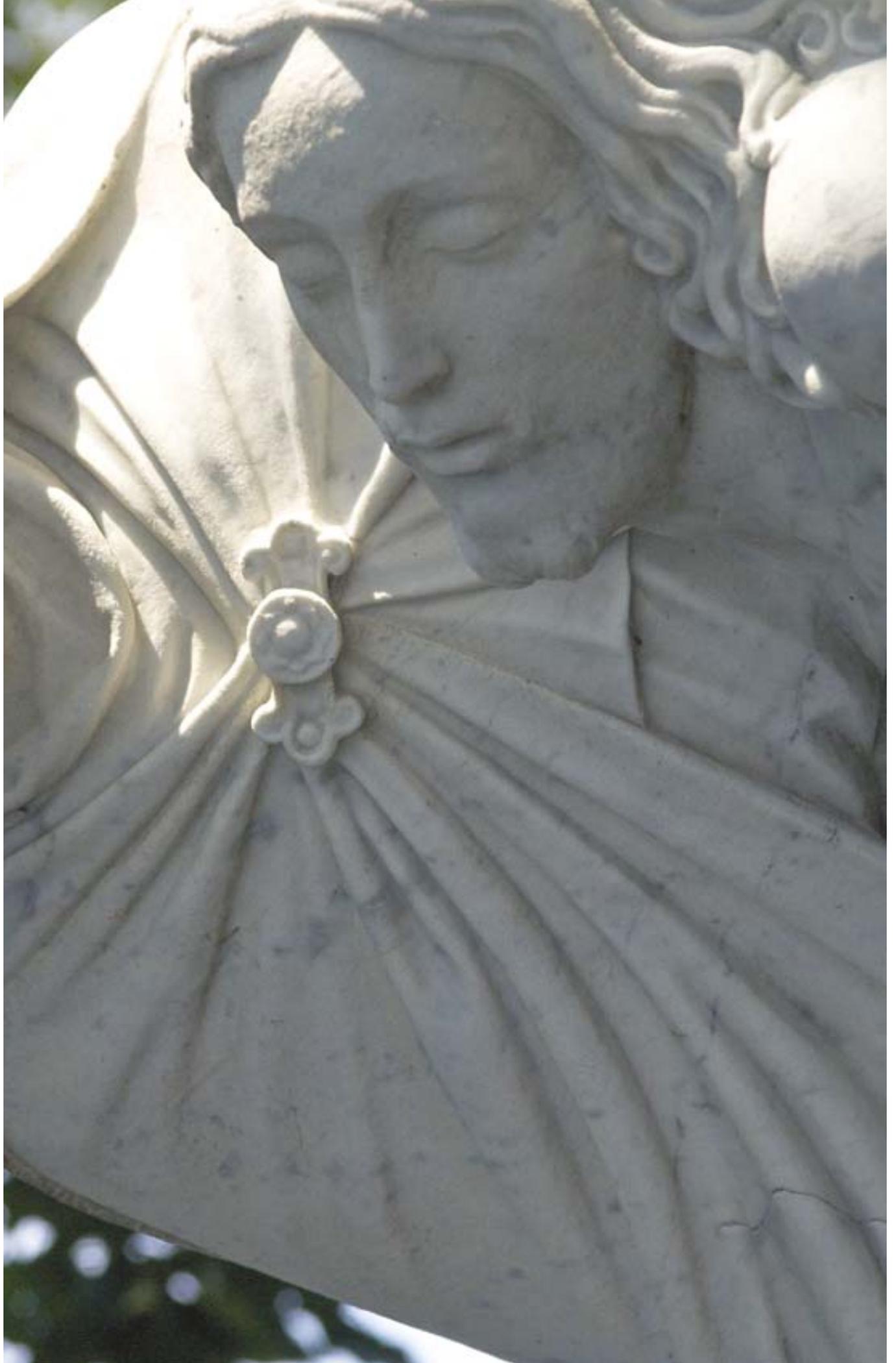
A couple days later I called again, and he sounded happier. “How are you,” I asked. “Well, Lisa, I’ve decided to change my attitude. I had a conversation with my roommate here, who told me that fighting it will only take me longer to get better. So I’ve decided to begin every day with a prayer to Genevieve, the patron saint of our family.” I knew that he wanted to be better than he was. My dad was always trying to be better.

At the very end, in the last hour of his life, his heart was failing and he was in great distress. My sister Christie was there. She told me he kept saying two things: “Lord, help me” and “Grant me a clean and pure heart.” As my father’s human heart was dying, he was asking for a new heart, a heart not made of flesh. A heart of faith; and that is, I believe, what he was given. That is the end of the string—that is all God needs to work with. I am sure that when my dad died, God sent Mary straight to work to untie all the knots. Maybe that is one way to think about purgatory—as the place where the messes of our lives are untangled.

Mary, Untier of Knots, pray for us!







GOD'S PATERNITY

Our Father, Who Art in Heaven...

BY FR. SILVIO DE NARD, SDC

Since his election to the Papacy, Pope Francis never tires of mentioning that God is a merciful Father, ready to forgive and to welcome people into his fatherly arms.

A few hours after his election he met, at St. Mary Major basilica, the confessors that daily hear confession and absolve those who are touched by the Spirit and, somehow, pushed by Him to enter a confessional to clear and clean their souls.



The Holy Father asked the priests to be “merciful, merciful, merciful” because by hearing confession they become the image of the merciful Father, who never tires to forgive. “We tire going to the Lord and asking for forgiveness. On the contrary, God never tires to forgive.”

Saint Louis Guanella, too, wrote and preached that God is a Father. He did not invent hot water. He just read the sole prayer that Jesus left to his disciples: Our Father, who art in heaven... In the gospel of Luke, Father Guanella found many other pages describing God’s mercy and forgiveness.

He writes, “My Lord and Father! When the repented prodigal son came to your presence, he cried out, ‘I am not worthy to be in your presence, but be merciful to me.’ Wicked as the prodigal son, now that I find myself in your house, the church, and in your presence at the Throne of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, I too cry in the bitterness of my heart and call out to you: My Father and my Lord, I am not worthy to stand before you, but be merciful to me, and listen to the cries of my heart!”

It sounds strange to me that today still many people’s perception of God is still too infected by or dependent upon a pre-Christian idea of God, God the Almighty, somehow detached from His creatures, living a solitary life, easy to be irritated and annoyed by our human behavior.

That is a caricature of God that pairs with another one also present among us: the idea that God is our peer, a buddy that loves jokes and parties, that allows everything and is indifferent to any kind of behavior.



According to the ancient Romans, the truth is in the middle.

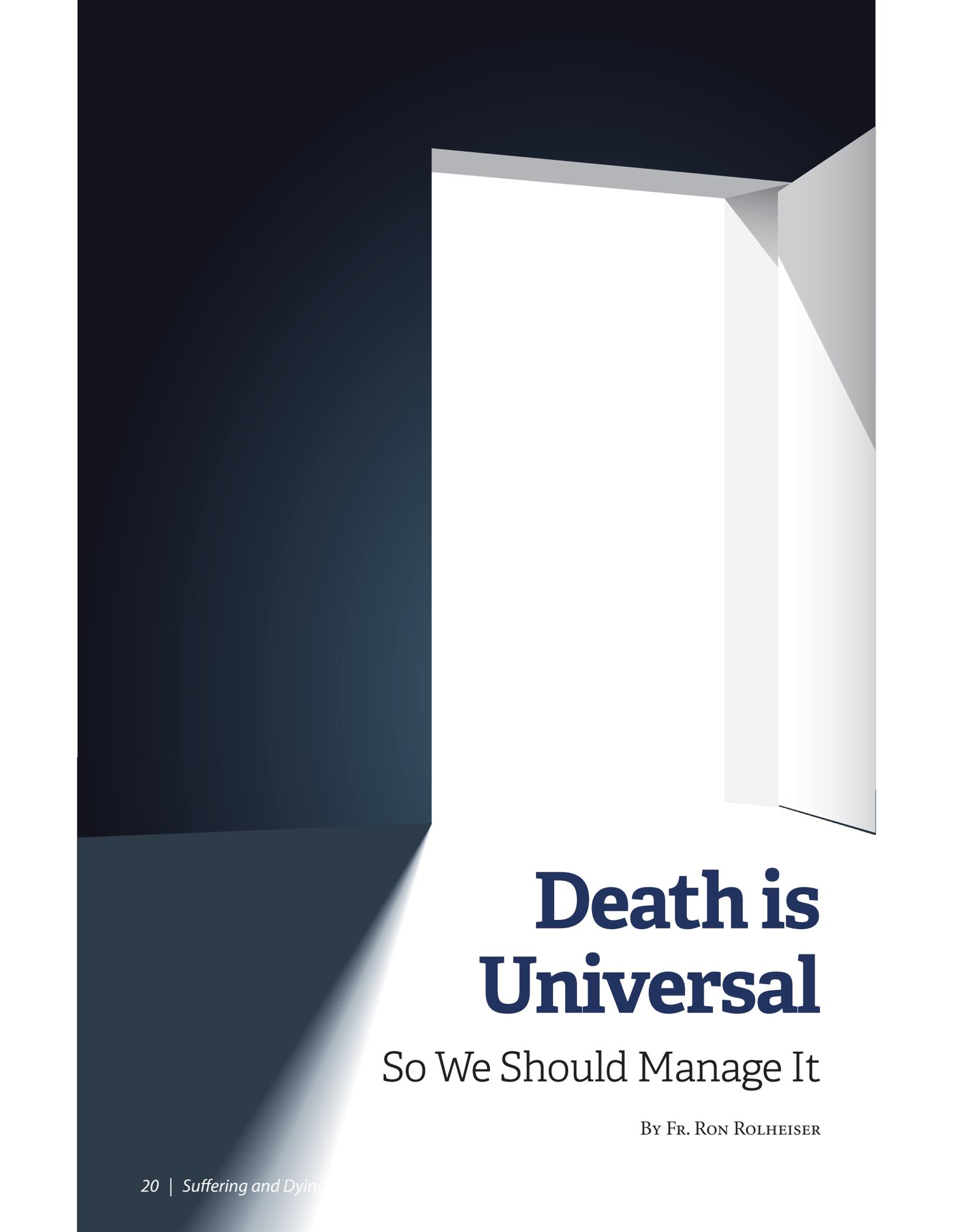
First of all, God is not a peer. How can we forget that He is our Creator and Redeemer and Sanctifier? Our approach to Him should be one of thanksgiving, praise and adoration.

Secondly, God is not an unapproachable God. The coming of Jesus Christ among us is the proof. If God was supposed to keep himself away and hidden from us, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity would have never experienced the Incarnation. On the contrary, God is so approachable that he wants to be called 'Abba,' dad in modern English.

Thirdly, God shows the beauty of His being through mercy and forgiveness. These two attributes of God's being demand patience from his part. God is patient in waiting for the sinner to go back to Him. In front of God every human being needs forgiveness and compassion. The conversion of the heart shows hidden miracles clearly manifesting the greatness of God's generosity and the beauty of his forgiveness.

Saint Guanello says, "I am saved, O Lord. I will sing your praises forever. I want to tell everyone that you are good and forgiving. How much my heart is rejoicing! The fog that was clouding my mind has vanished, and now I can see paradise and God Himself. The burden that was oppressing my heart has been lifted up, and I am able to rise to the Most High on eagle's wings. I know that God has forgiven me. The saints in heaven rejoice, and it seems that the angels are greeting me with deep love. A proof of being accepted in paradise is the joy that overwhelms my entire being."

Pope Francis says that "in the Christian Creed, God the Father comes before God the Almighty. We may fear divine omnipotence, but not divine mercy, because over and over we need His fatherly mercy."



Death is Universal

So We Should Manage It

BY FR. RON ROLHEISER

Some years ago, a friend of mine was facing the birth of her first child. While happy that she was soon to be a mother, she openly confessed her fears about the actual birth process—the pain, the dangers, the unknown. But she consoled herself with this thought: Hundreds of millions of women have done this and have somehow managed it. Surely, if so many women have done, and are doing this, I, too can manage it somehow.

I sometimes take those words and apply them to the prospect of dying. Death is the most daunting, unsettling and heavy topic there is, for all of us, our occasional false bravado notwithstanding. When we say we are not afraid of dying, mostly we're whistling in the dark and, even there, the tune comes out easier when our own death remains still an abstract thing, something in the indefinite and infinite nature. My thoughts here, now doubt, fit that description, whistling in the dark. But why not? Surely even whistling in the dark is better than denial.

So I like my friend's methodology for steeling her courage in the face of having to face pain and the unknown: Hundreds of millions of women have managed this, so I should be able to manage it too! And in the case of dying, the numbers are even more consoling, billions and billions of people have managed it, everyone, including myself, is going to have to manage it. A hundred years from now, every one of us reading these words will have had to manage his or her death.

So I sometimes look at death this way: Billions and billions of people have managed this—men, women, children, even babies. Some were old, some were young; some were prepared, some were not; some welcomed it, some met it with bitter resistance; some died from natural causes, some died through violence; some died surrounded by love and loved ones, some died alone without any human love whatsoever surrounding them; some died peacefully, some died crying out of fear; some died at a ripe old age, some died in the prime of their youth or even before that; some suffered for years from seemingly meaningless dementia with those around them wondering why God and nature seemed to cruelly keep them alive; others in robust physical health with seemingly everything to live for took their own lives; some died full of faith and hope and some died feeling only darkness and despair; some died breathing out gratitude and some died breathing out resentment; some died in the embrace of religion and their churches, some died completely out of that embrace; and some died as Mother Teresa, while others died as Hitler. But every one of them somehow managed it, the great unknown, the greatest of all unknowns. It seems it can be managed. And nobody has come back from the other world with horror stories about dying (given that all our horror movies about ghosts and haunted houses are pure fiction, through and through).

“SOMEHOW IT EVENTUALLY ALL WASHES
CLEAN AND WHAT REMAINS IS THE
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.....

Most people, I suspect, have the same experience I do when I think about the dead, particularly about persons I have known who died. The initial grief and sadness of their loss eventually wears off and is replaced by an inchoate sense that it's alright, that they are alright and that death has in some strange way washed things clean. In the end, we have a pretty good feeling about our dead loved ones and about the dead in general, even if their departure from this earth was far from ideal, as, for instance, if they died angry, or through immaturity, or because they committed a crime, or by suicide. Somehow it eventually all washes clean and what remains is the inchoate sense, a solid intuition, that wherever they are they are now in better and safer hands than our own.

When I was a young seminarian we once had to translate Cicero's treatise on aging and dying from Latin into English. I was 18 years old at the time, but was very taken by Cicero's thoughts on why we shouldn't fear death. He was a stoic, but, in the end, his lack of fear of dying was a little like my friend's approach to giving birth: Given how universal it is, we should be able to manage it!

I've long since lost my undergraduate notes on Cicero, so I looked the treatise up on the internet recently. Here's a kernel from that treatise, "Death should be held of no account! For clearly the impact of death is negligible if it utterly annihilates the soul, or even desirable, if it conducts the soul to some place where it is to live forever. What, then, shall I fear, if after death I am destined to be either not unhappy or happy?"

Our faith tells us that, given the benevolence of the God we believe in, only the second option, happiness, awaits us. And we already intuit that.



Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Currently, Father Rolheiser is serving as President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio Texas. He can be contacted through his website, www.ronrolheiser.com.



Archbishop Leopold Girelli in Vietnam on an official visit.

Vietnam:

The Country That Never Lost Hope

By FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

Last year I visited Saigon, Vietnam. I saw a busy, vibrant city full of hard working people who move through the streets and alleys in a river of motorcycles. The city was clean, the skies clear and the sun bright. People were friendly, gentle and happy to help. I was respectful of their customs, food, lodging and efforts and in return I received their respect and gratitude. Memories of the Vietnam War era flooded my mind. A brutal useless war that killed fifty thousand Americans and millions of Vietnamese and Chinese. Memories of destruction, suffering and endless pain. There is no anger or sadness in the eyes of the Vietnamese people; you see the strength of a people who never lost hope. They are still suffering under another regime, but their endurance will finally bring them what many of us take for granted: freedom of religion, of speech and equal protection under the law.

When Archbishop Leopold Girelli went to Vietnam a few months ago, he made his first visit to parishes in the country's Northern provinces without restriction or interference from government officials. Archbishop Girelli was named non-resident representative for Vietnam in 2011 but has had limited access to certain areas of the country.

The visit of the Vatican envoy suggested a warming of relations between the Vatican and Vietnam in the months since the country's Communist Party chief, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI met in Rome in January.

Since 2009, a joint Vietnam-Vatican work group has held annual meetings to exchange information and study possible steps toward establishing official diplomatic relations.

Trong, at the time of his meeting with Benedict, said that the Vatican and Vietnam “enjoy a better and better relationship. The two sides aim to work for the common good.”

When Archbishop Girelli met with provincial officials, he encouraged them “to respect religious freedom and create more favorable conditions for local Catholics to practice their faith and to provide education and charity for local people. Catholics are good people who work for the common good, not bad ones as authorities propagandize.”

Plainclothes police videotaped and took pictures of Church officials and local Catholics at ceremonies but did not interfere.

The Vatican envoy wanted “to see what challenges Catholics face in remote areas where religious activities are restricted and Catholic communities are not recognized.” Joseph Pham Van Khai, a lay leader from the Tan Quang parish, said that local Catholics had no resident priest or church, hid religious statues and had suffered religious persecution.



Father Joachim Dinh Van Hop was assigned to serve the 1,000 local Catholics but was not recognized by local authorities until 2010; some communities are allowed to gather at their houses for weekly prayers and he visits them two or three times a year.

Local Catholics have petitioned the government to recognize them as religious communities since 2007, but the government has refused, saying political conditions do not permit it.

The Northern provinces, home to dozens of ethnic minority groups, are seen as “no religion” areas by the government. A joint press release, issued after this month's talks in Rome between the Vatican and Vietnam, stressed Hanoi's “respect and assurance of freedom of religion and religious beliefs, as well as continued encouragement of different religions, and the Vietnam Catholic Church in particular.”

However, in a recent interview, Cardinal John Baptist Pham Minh Man of Ho Chi Minh City expressed a different point of view. In his opinion, the government's policies on religion "make people feel threatened, doubtful and dissatisfied. They govern the country with self-interests, rather than searching for humanitarian goodwill."



Bishops said the authorities also ask for lists of candidates for the priesthood before their ordination, as well as the names of the bishops who will ordain them. They refuse. "Ordination is by the Church, not the government, so we do not ask for government permission."

This defiance can come at a price, for it can lead to a bishop being prevented from carrying out his pastoral duties.

In his opinion, though, the situation is not entirely hopeless. He believes that, in recent years, government officials have seen that followers of religions, especially Catholics, want to serve the common good and build a friendly and humane society. They have no reason to struggle with the government for power.

Cardinal Man also noted that although religious activities are restricted, more and more people are turning to them as a respite from the prevailing atmosphere of atheism, moral decline, materialism, consumerism and corruption.

The fact that Vietnam has 200 local churches, full of Catholics attending liturgies, tells its own story.

The Servants of Charity are assisting the people of Vietnam in many different ways. We sponsor seminarians from Vietnam to study in Manila, Philippines. We sponsor programs for AID's victims, the handicapped and the elderly. Our seminarians regularly visit the poor and provide for their needs as much as they can. Housing is a big problem in Vietnam: the country is over populated, construction areas are limited and the sewage system antiquated. The people are very proud and dignified. You don't see hustlers, beggars or people in rags or drunk in the streets. What I mostly admired was the ability of people to deprive themselves of the little they have to help other people who were worse off. The Servants of Charity want to tell the Vietnamese people that the Church did not forget them but loves them as the suffering part of the Mystical Body of Christ.

A Guanellian View of Mary

BY SR. MARGARET MARY SCHISLER, DSMP

St. Guanella loved Our Lady with a deep and tender love. He recognized that her's was a life of generosity to the end. After the Annunciation it was Mary who went to her cousin Elizabeth to be a 'handmaid.' At the Wedding in Cana, it was Mary's charity and generous heart that drew attention to the needs of the house.

In his writings, St. Guanella often exhorts us to follow Mary as a model of every virtue and to entrust ourselves to her protection under the title of Mother of Divine Providence. He saw within this title not only the greatness of her place in the plan of God, but her style of keeping close to the Lord while being attentive to the needs of those around her.

The Virgin Mary is, for us, the power and the tenderness of God. She carries Divine Providence, Jesus, in her arms. She wants to give Him to us. She presents Him to us and invites us to be close to Him through the Gospel, in the Eucharist, and in the poor and forsaken. St. Guanella, seeing the greatness of Mary's virtue and holiness, calls us to imitate her style of prayer and service.

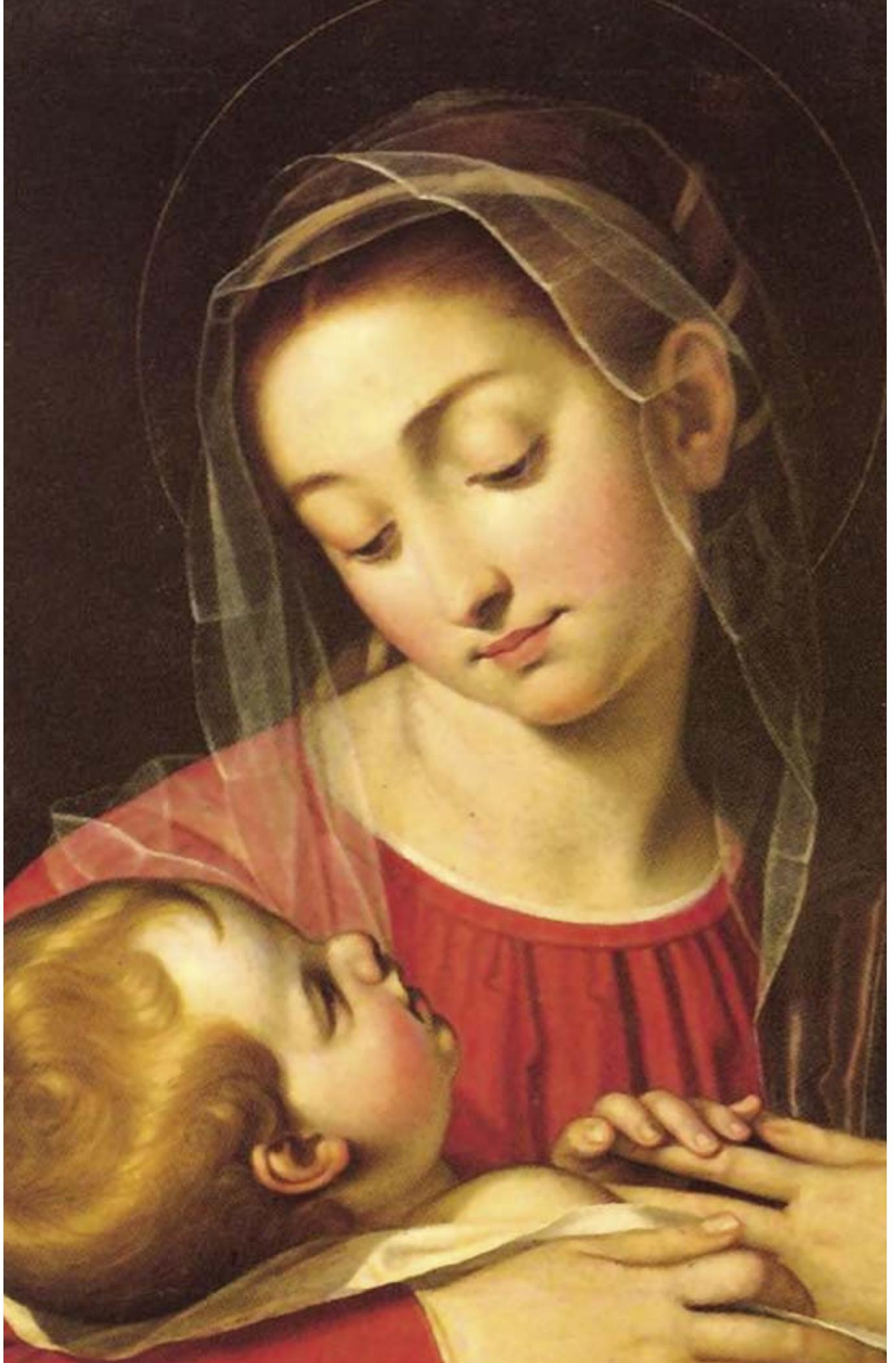
The role of 'mother' always transmits 'life' into the day to day situations. A mother is the one who receives and gives. Mary, as Virgin, has become Mother. Her Motherhood is our gift. With a mother's sensitivity she is attentive to those in need, and with solicitous charity she goes out to embrace all. It is her desire that the plan of the Father be fulfilled in each human life.

Day by day Mary grants us the graces necessary for giving our life to the full. She walks alongside us with special care to guide and encourage us. Mary teaches us to live our lives as projects of love, so as to welcome all in God and to be a sign of his love for them.

St. Guanella saw the need of turning to Mary, especially for strength, to serve the poor and needy of his time. He placed the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence under the patronage of Our Mother so they would become 'lifegivers' for those to whom they minister.

St. Guanella tells us, "...if Mary loves us with love equal to that with which she loves God, then she loves us with an intense love, with a most true love." (*Writings of the Liturgical Year*, V. 1 p. 57). Within the Guanellian Charism, it is this same intensity of familial love to which we open ourselves to conduit to others.





What is Your Cross?

What is World Youth Day? From the official WYD website, Pope John Paul II 'When, back in 1985, [he] wanted to start the World Youth Days... [he] imagined a powerful moment in which the young people of the world could meet Christ, who is eternally young, and could learn from him how to be bearers of the Gospel to other young people.'

By ESTEFANIA AGUIRRE

John Paul II left a legacy for the youth in his institution of World Youth Day, which Pope Benedict XVI has faithfully continued, carrying on the hope of his predecessor for the youth of the world, inviting them and commissioning them as Christ's disciples to be faithful living witnesses.



This year the legacy continued with Pope Francis in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where millions gathered and hearts were moved, he too urged the young people, "Have courage to swim against the current." **Among the highlights of the event:**

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, JUL 27, 2013 / 07:50 PM (CNA/EWTN NEWS). The young Brazilian Felipe Passos moved the hearts of three million World Youth Day participants, including Pope Francis himself, when he told the story of how he became bound to a wheelchair and discovered "the Cross."

Felipe, 23, spoke at the World Youth Day prayer vigil July 27 at Copacabana Beach. He told how at the end of the past World Youth Day, held in Madrid in 2011, he made two spiritual promises. He promised to stay chaste until marriage and to work hard so his prayer group of Ponta Grossa, in Brazil's southern state of Paraná, could participate in this year's World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro.

With few resources, Felipe and his friends began saving money by working several hard jobs at the same time that they prepared themselves spiritually: praying, adoring the Blessed Sacrament, fasting and doing works of solidarity.

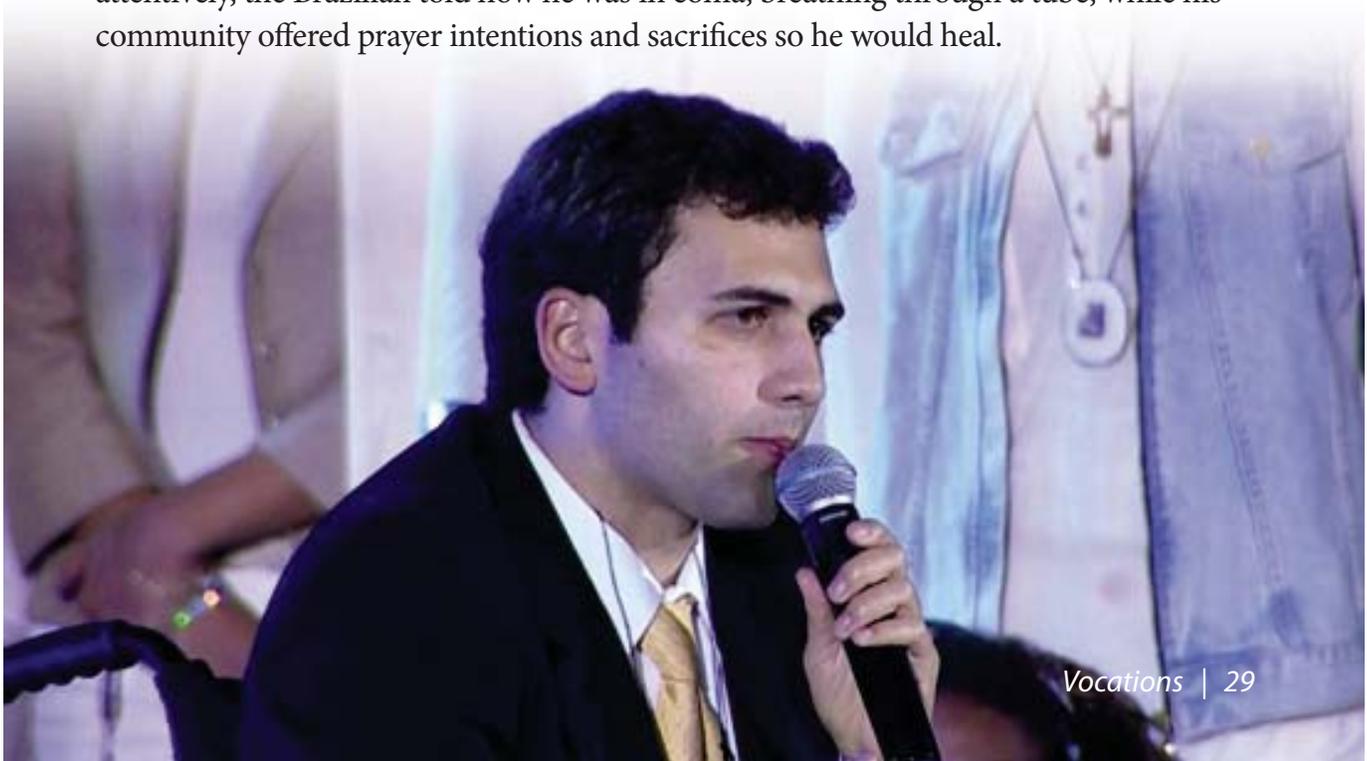
Then a horrible thing happened. “In January of this year, two days before turning 23, two youths entered my house, armed, to rob the money we had gathered with so much sacrifice,” said Felipe.

“I thought of the months of great efforts, of my family’s sacrificing, of my friends and colleagues... in what would have been snatched from us and I decided I would not give it,” he added July 27.

Felipe saved the savings of the group, but received a gunshot wound that almost ended his life.

“I was clinically dead, I had several cardiac arrests, and the doctor told my parents in the hospital ‘this boy has no hope,’ but I’m here and my community is here because of God’s mercy,” remarked Felipe.

In front of a shocked crowd and in front of Pope Francis, who looked at him attentively, the Brazilian told how he was in coma, breathing through a tube, while his community offered prayer intentions and sacrifices so he would heal.



Finally, when he became conscious, the first thing he did was ask for the Eucharist and after receiving it, he recovered rapidly.

But Felipe, who was then bound to a wheelchair, stated “this is my cross, the cross the Lord sent me to come closer to him, to live more openly his grace and love.”

When the three million youths broke out clapping, Felipe interrupted them. “Silence!” he said. “Let’s listen to the Holy Spirit!”

The 23-year-old then asked each of the youths present to take the cross they had hung around their neck, to hold it and look at it.

Felipe invited them to meditate in silence on the questions: “What is the cross that the Lord has given me? What is the cross that he wants me to carry for his love?”

Everyone present, including bishops and cardinals, contemplated their own cross around their neck. The wheelchair-bound young man’s words created a unique moment of profound silence along the entire Copacabana beach.

Felipe finished his testimony asking for prayers as well as for Pope Francis’ blessing.

Later during Eucharistic Adoration, the pope kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, only the sound of Christian singer Matt Maher could be heard performing the song, “Lord, I Need You.” It was very moving for those present and to the thousands who have viewed the video on the

Internet. Of the song Maher says, “The devotional challenge in this song is to think about whether you believe every word when you sing along. Do you acknowledge that you need God every hour? Do you recognize that God wants us to lean into Him? Allow the Truth to sink in that as believers, holiness, sanctification and being set apart for God’s use, is found by the indwelling of ‘Christ in me.’”



As you journey through each day, remember to listen to the Holy Spirit and acknowledge that every hour you are in need of God and continually ask, “What is the cross that the Lord has given to me?”

The Pious Union of St. Joseph's Library

On the Tomb of the Deceased

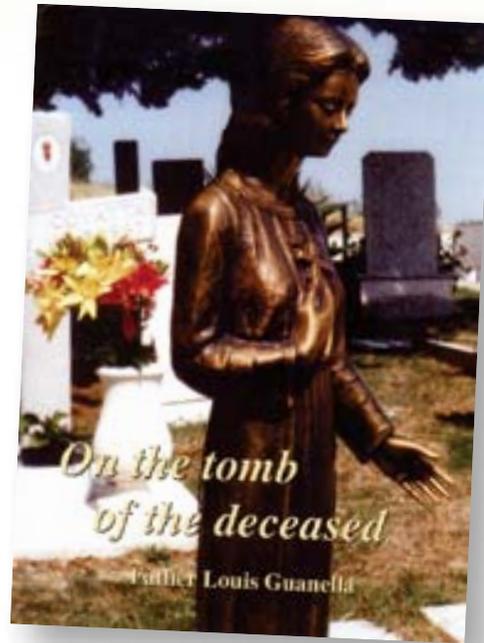
The Pious Union of St. Joseph is a Pontifical Association of believers who pray every day for the suffering and dying. It was founded by St. Louis Guanella in 1913 and now counts more than 2 million members all over the world.

St. Louis Guanella had an extreme devotion for the holy souls in Purgatory. For this reason he wrote a series of meditations in prayerful honor to the faithful departed.

The book includes two Novenas: one for prayer in preparation for the celebration of All Saints and All Souls on November 1 and 2 and the other one for prayer after All Souls Day.

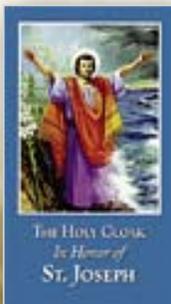
For each day, St. Louis Guanella offers a meditation, a prayer and a practical reflection for our faith and daily life.

These Novenas can be used for prayer and meditation for the terminal suffering and dying person after the funeral. They can also be used anytime our heart wants to be closer to our beloved ones for comfort, encouragement and reassurance.



Fr. Joseph Rinaldo

Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC



The Holy Cloak in Honor of St Joseph continues to be available with a donation of \$5 or more. Please note on your donation envelope the books that you would like to receive.

Is God Calling You to Serve Others?

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

The Servants of Charity Priests and Brothers, Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, Cooperators and hundreds of members of the greater Guanellian family serve over a million brothers and sisters while offering comfort, consolation and support. There is room for many others; those needing help and those who want to help.

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

Sacred Heart Church

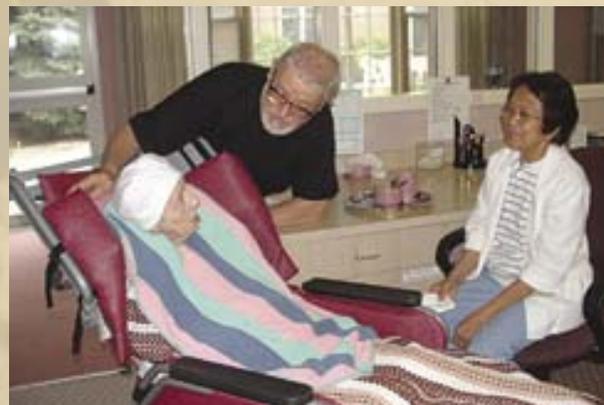
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Prayer for Vocations

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



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

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

Shrine of St. Joseph Sacraments and Hours of Devotion

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

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

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

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

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

Confession: Before and after Mass, upon request

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

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