



**now** **Hour**  
AND AT THE

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THE VOICE OF PROVIDENCE

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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.*

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**Cover:** Adoration of the Shepherds, Anton Raphael Mengs, 1764, National Gallery of Art

**Center:** The Journey – The Magi made a long and difficult journey with only a bit of knowledge about where they were going and only the light of the North Star as their guide. They did not give up until they found themselves in the presence of the Light of the World, the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. They brought Him gifts befitting of a King. Let us not be troubled by the journey that we are facing. The Church is sailing through some stormy seas right now, but like the Magi do not let anything veer you off course, not the lure of riches, comfort or any other earthly thing. In these troubled times keep your eyes on that North Star. Sustain yourself on prayer, fasting, almsgiving and never take your eyes off the Light of the World that you may arrive in His presence with yourself as the gift befitting a King. He is the pathway to heaven no matter the earthly storms the church and the faithful may face. He alone is the anchor.

**Image:** The Three Kings on the Way to Bethlehem, Joseph Binder, 1846, Private Collection



# HOLY CHRISTMAS

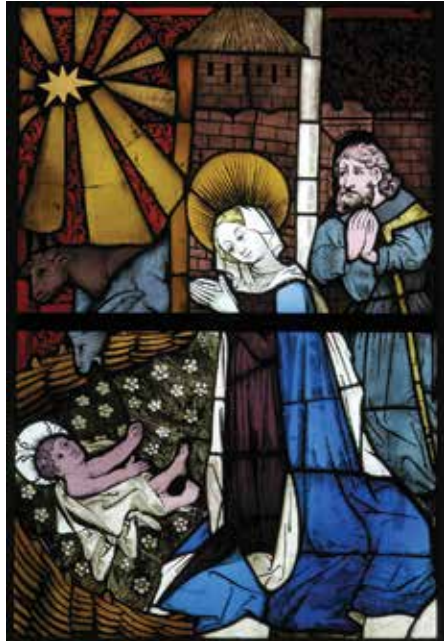
BY ST. LOUIS GUANELLA

May Your Heart Exult for the Savior is Born in Bethlehem.

**T**he signal of forgiveness is the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ Himself, the true Son of the Eternal Father, Who has appeared in Bethlehem to visit His people to bless them.

Bethlehem has become the holy city, the illustrious city. From there, as from the center of a most vivid sun, depart rays of splendid light. Look at it and enlighten the eyes of your mind! I know that not all men pay attention to such bright light, as the owl disdains the light of day, yet do all the others, both men and animals, miss admiring the beauty of it? Bethlehem has become the house of bread, because Jesus appearing in it has come as the savior who satiates all souls with His food of truth. Let us, then, hasten to Bethlehem, to the Savior Who gives life! I know very well that others do not even make a move toward it, yet if you see a madman who wants to starve, feel bad about him, but see that you feed yourself.

Nourish yourself nutritiously, so that you may be able to fulfill your duties. You are the child who, in order to please God the Father, is expected to restrain the evil inclinations that are in you. Above all, you must be benevolent toward your brothers and sisters, yet just. You must consistently turn your loving attention to God. May the saints in heaven and the just on earth look at you with joy as they looked at Joseph and Mary in admiration! May you conduct yourself in this world with the modest behavior that belongs to the angels who are praising God!



To this end, come in spirit to the manger of Jesus as the shepherds did, and adore your Savior. If you see that curious Bethlehemites come in yet do not believe the mysteries of the poor and humble Jesus, do not pay attention to them. If you see that the leaders of the people themselves come in and abhor the purity surrounding the crib of the divine Infant, pity them in the bottom of your heart and pray for them, the wicked ones. These love honors, which after all are vain smoke; they crave for riches that are vile mire. They long for earthly pleasures. Yet what are all these pleasures of the world? They are vanities that press on one another like waves of the sea; they are satisfactions that vanish like the wind; at best, they are nonsense that goes by within the period of a century. Then, see for yourself if, having to live in an evil world, it doesn't pay to remain faithful to Jesus!

Time will come, and perhaps it is not far off, when Jesus, no longer a poor baby, but a benevolent judge and a loving father, will come to welcome you. What a joy then! You will exclaim, "I waited for my God and now here He is! I waited for the glory of my Savior and now I, myself, am surrounded by the splendor of His blessedness! I am with God and am blessed forever." What bliss of pleasure it will be, what a joy, what a most high jubilation!

Fortunate you will be if you do not delay in following Jesus, humble in the manger; if you do not feel ashamed of being close to Him in the glory of paradise.



# JOSEPH: GLORY OF HOME LIFE

BY BISHOP KENNETH J. POVISH

Between the infancy accounts in Matthew and Luke and the beginning of our Lord's public ministry when he was about 30 years old, we have only one Gospel glimpse of life in the Holy Family. That is the incident of the boy Jesus being lost in the temple when He was 12 years old.

Scholars and commentators refer to all these years as the “hidden life” of the Lord Jesus. St. Luke summarizes the period between age 12 and 30 in one verse (2,52), “And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.”

Yet from the little we are told about Jesus' childhood and youth in the New Testament, and what we know about Jewish doctrine and practice in the Old, we can rather confidently picture for ourselves what home life in Nazareth was like.

In the Jewish family, the father was the head of the household and the mother was its heart. Joseph, therefore, was father, teacher and priest in the Holy Family. He taught Jesus to pray, to read the Scriptures, and to study the Mosaic Law. He took his foster son to synagogue on the Sabbath day, where they sat together to hear the readings and the sermon. He presided at the feasts and fasts that were centered in the home and took his family to Jerusalem at Passover.

Mary's role in the family of Nazareth was that of the mothers of all ages and cultures. In Judaism it was the mother's special task to see that the dietary laws



and the ceremonial washings prescribed by the Law of Moses were strictly observed. St. Luke's description of Jesus' place in the Holy Family makes our Lord subservient to His foster father and His mother—He “was obedient to them,” (2,51).



It is interesting to note that in the home at Nazareth the roles were in reverse order to the dignity of the persons involved: Joseph, the least of the three, was the head of the family; Mary, the highly-favored daughter of God and the Immaculate, was second to him; and Jesus, the Incarnate Son of the Most High, was obedient to both of them!

Our litany calls Joseph of Nazareth the glory of home life because he fulfilled his role in the Holy Family so well. He took good care of the family's needs, as several of the earlier invocations have suggested. Jesus' familiarity with the history and laws of Israel He would have received from His foster father. That Joseph's example and teaching bore fruit is evident from St. Luke's comment in 4,16 that Jesus customarily went to the synagogue every Sabbath.

Through most of the present century, to try to stem the secularization of society, the Popes have been emphasizing the importance of the home as the domestic church: St. John Paul II has spoken often of the need for family prayer, for instruction, for the maintenance of liturgical customs and for adult example in the Christian home. The father of the family has St. Joseph's role in the Christian home. And what a model and patron every husband and father has in St. Joseph, the glory of home life.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Bishop Povish had a deep devotion to St. Joseph which he shared with the faithful through these meditations on each invocation of the Litany of St. Joseph. The meditations were originally published in this magazine, one invocation each issue. They have been collected into a book which is now available through the Pious Union, see page 29 for instructions to request your copy. May his words help to draw you closer to the foster-father of the Son of God.



# ADVENT AND SAINT JOSEPH

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

Every year, as soon as the Christmas season is in the air, my mind automatically goes back to Sr. Agnes, my one and only teacher for the first five years. She was a mother, a teacher, a holy woman and a nun.

**P**reparation for Christmas was like preparation for Easter, and she took it seriously. Advent has significance because it is a season of looking forward and waiting for something greater: both for the annual celebration of our Lord's birth and for the time when Christ will come again.

We prepare ourselves worthily to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord's coming into the world as the Incarnate God of Love. We make our souls dwellings fit



“JOSEPH, THE JUST MAN, OBEYS GOD. HE ASKS NO QUESTIONS. HE SIMPLY BELIEVES AND TRUSTS IN GOD.”

for the Redeemer coming in Holy Communion and through a life of Grace. We make ourselves ready for His final coming as judge, at death and at the end of the world.

To accomplish all this, Sr. Agnes hammered a few points in our minds and our souls: some spiritual practices for a successful Advent Season. I remember some of them: attend Mass frequently; receive Our Lord frequently and spend time in Adoration; recite the Holy Rosary with the joyful mysteries; go to confession to clean your soul and prepare your heart to receive Jesus; place an Advent wreath at your dining table; have a personal prayer talk with the baby Jesus; yes, He talks and listens; He is God even if still a baby; set up a crèche in your house.

Then we were taught to add a personal touch to the coming of Jesus. My name is Joseph and therefore I had to prepare myself to be in the company of St. Joseph. Not an easy task. St. Joseph had his personal problems and divine solutions. But I learned plenty, especially from him: “Joseph, be not afraid!” Only God knows how often I recite this prayer!

Of all men, Joseph was chosen to be the husband of Mary, the foster father of Christ, the guardian of the Redeemer and the head of the Holy Family. Therefore, we can rightly say that he is blessed among men.

The Gospel relates God’s Annunciation to St. Joseph. While Joseph was pondering over what he should do, the Angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream and explains how Mary conceived and who the Child is: He is Christ the Redeemer.

Joseph, the just man, obeys God. He asks no questions. He simply believes and trusts in God. Because of his belief he was obedient and humble. Joseph accepted his role as husband and father. He provided a home for his family; he supported and protected Jesus and Mary. Sr. Agnes wanted me to imitate St. Joseph’s humility and to accept God’s will without complaining. In doing so, she insisted, I would experience true peace and joy. Therefore, let us ask St. Joseph to prepare us for receiving the Baby Jesus as he did. Let us ask him to make us simple and pure of heart so that we will experience the love for the baby Jesus as he did.



# SHRINE NEWS

BY FR. LEO JOSEPH

“If you invoke the Blessed Virgin when you are tempted, she will come at once to your help, and Satan will leave you.” — *St. John Vianney*

**W**e are living in a world filled with lots of commotion from evils and evil spirits. The month of August and September is always a special month honoring our beloved Mother, the Virgin Mary. The above saying of St. John Vianney, is very apt for today's reality. The Pious Union of St. Joseph celebrated the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in a meaningful way. A special Mass was celebrated at the Grotto and a creative Rosary was prayed. It was much welcomed and appreciated by the people.

The end of August and the beginning of September is the beginning of the school year for the kids. As St. John Bosco says, “Education is the matter of Heart”, this is the greatest challenge for all parents and educators to help their children be well-equipped for the future. In line with this, on September 3rd we celebrated ‘School kids gathering and blessing’ at the Shrine. It was really a memorable day for all the kids from the homeschool families who actively participated in the Eucharistic celebration followed by a Eucharistic procession to the grotto and a very special blessing was given to all the children. Following the spiritual celebration there was a potluck, games, and finally the Divine Mercy chaplet.

Another colorful event that took place on September 14th, the feast day of the ‘Exaltation of the Holy Cross’, was a pilgrimage of kindergarten to fourth grade students from St. Stephen New Boston, MI with their teachers; led by Fr. John Hedges. Fr. Joseph Rinaldo was invited to celebrate a special feast day Mass for the students. He gave a meaningful homily for everyone. They also received special blessings from the relic of the Holy Cross.

On a separate note, we appreciate and thank those who contribute generously to the *Now and at the Hour* magazine, we still continue to struggle to break-even financially. Depending on Providence and prayer, we request each reader to contribute something towards the costs of printing, mailing and distribution, to assist us in doing God's work through these magazines. God bless you all.

# FROM THE **INBOX** AND THE **MAILBOX**

Dear Friends,

I appreciated the article about homosexuals from the October/November 2018 issue.

May I suggest two good follow-up articles?

1. The Homosexual Condition is a Heavy Cross. Homosexuals have a special opportunity to resemble Jesus and to fill up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ. This spiritual reality is rarely if ever spoken of.
2. It is a known and thoroughly studied phenomenon that male homosexuals have universally indifferent, rejecting and/or possibly abusive fathers. Mothers also play a negative but different role in the child's life.

Catholic clergy and communities always express great sympathy for the parents of homosexuals, as if the parents are the victims, when in reality they are sometimes the perpetrators and should be held accountable for their actions.

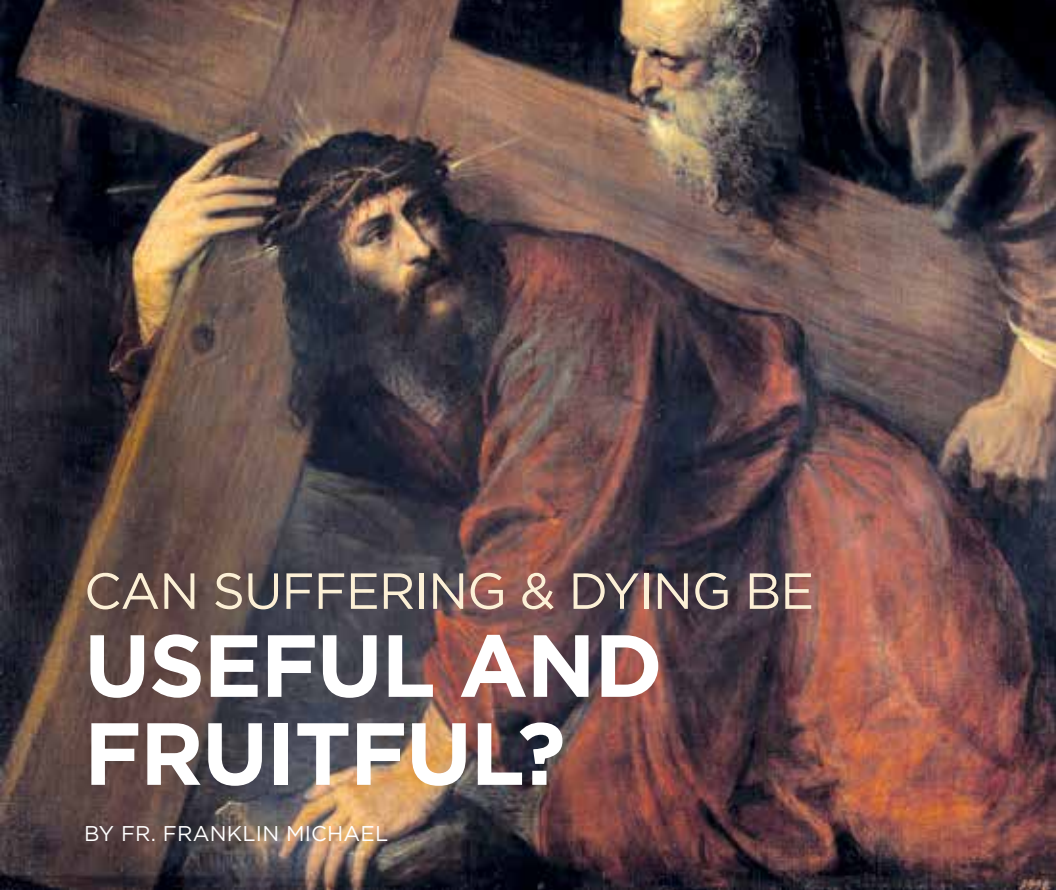
Thank you for your attention,

Tom

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*Dear Tom,*

*We truly appreciate your observations and suggestions for future topics. You certainly have a compassionate view point and we would enjoy hearing more from you on these topics as well.*



# CAN SUFFERING & DYING BE USEFUL AND FRUITFUL?

BY FR. FRANKLIN MICHAEL

Richard Niebuhr was teaching a class, and at the end of his lecture said, “Whatever comes into our lives; God can turn around for good.” In that class was a student who had been involved in a boating accident a few weeks before.

**H**e had lost his mother and father, his only sibling and his fiancée. He alone had survived, and it was a miracle. Many in class thought that Dr. Niebuhr was crazy, and insensitive to the events of the past few weeks.

When the lecture ended, all of the students stayed expecting to see the grieving young man angrily accuse the professor of making an insensitive theological statement. But what happened surprised them all. The student walked up to Dr. Niebuhr, shook his hand and said, “Thank you, sir. That is the only thing that makes life worthwhile.” He then turned and walked away.

In today's world, it is difficult to imagine that anyone would accept the premise that suffering is useful and has a greater purpose. Many would say that it can only be applicable to the saints and other courageous people. Why then, are we so afraid of suffering and dying? A famous saying is that, "The fear of fever is greater than the fever itself." It is true that the fear of suffering often troubles our hearts more than actually facing the event itself. A question that comes to mind is, "Can suffering be useful and fruitful?"

This question may seem to be ridiculous and foolish. Can suffering bring anything good to a person? Many say no, because we are taught not to face our suffering; only to escape from it. When someone has pain in their body what do they do? They seek a physician to receive a prescription for painkillers. What does the painkiller do? It metabolizes and controls the pain. As we begin to take more of it, it slowly causes greater damage to our body, and more suffering is inevitable. Individual choices dictate different remedies. With all suffering, we are invited to find the root cause of it; yet the truth provides us with an opportunity to find value in suffering.

“POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II SAID, “HUMAN SUFFERING IS A MYSTERY. SOONER OR LATER ALL FAMILIES EXPERIENCE IT IN THE MIDST OF LIFE. IT IS PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL OR SPIRITUAL.”

Why do accidents cause suffering and pain? It could be that the more altruistic we are the less accidents occur. Human beings need to care more for each other, and above all, nature. Being in harmony with our neighbors and nature will keep us from unwanted happenings.

Why does God permit human suffering? Job was a perfect example. He faced many sufferings, yet remained obedient to God. Pope St. John Paul II said, "Human suffering is a mystery. Sooner or later all families experience it in the midst of life. It is physical, psychological or spiritual." Suffering restricts our regular activities, limits our autonomy, and seeks to diminish our dignity. While suffering prevents us from normal functioning, the experience allows us to face it with courage and perseverance, knowing that we are achieving something for the Kingdom of God. Suffering allows humanity to participate in the sufferings





of Christ. The Gospel testifies that suffering is not the “master of our life, but is the steward of our salvation.”

Suffering can be a bridge to greater spirituality, hence, the testimony of the Saints. When one is able to say, “suffering is not my master but my steward,” then he/she can handle it in a more positive way. St. Teresa of Avila said, “Suffering is a great favor. Remember that everything soon comes to an end ... take courage.” It is not that we seek or desire suffering so much as how we use it; the gain is eternal. Mother Teresa once said: “I know God will not give me more than I can handle; I just wish he didn’t trust me so much.” The Saints show us that there is no need to worry about suffering and dying, as they are useful and fruitful steps to get to heaven.

In a simplified manner, suffering is valuable when it is an instrument of living for God. We must talk with God and offer Him everything; our success and our failures, our dreams and our hopes. Everything in our ordinary life can become an extraordinary encounter. It is there that God awaits us patiently, wishing to give it divine meaning. It is a process of conversation; building and growing in a relationship and dying in it. Small works done with great joy can create extraordinary works and divine blessings.

In our everyday suffering and dying, we must invite God to join us. He is willing to accept our invitation as well as our complaint. He will make everything great and extraordinary for us, even suffering, because He suffers along with us.



# ST. STEPHEN: HONOR TO HIM WHO DESERVES IT!

BY ST. LOUIS GUANELLA

Let the wicked ones honor their heroes! The wicked do not know what true honor is; they have no one to give to, and therefore they give honor to the one who least deserves it, to the unworthy who resemble themselves.

On the contrary, an upright Christian knows what a merit is and appreciates it. Besides, he reveres it when he finds where it is, in the heart of people. Let us bow before the virtue of St. Stephen. He deserves the honor of a hero. That's true indeed, because even paradise itself bowed to St. Stephen, who always kept meekness in his heart, by opening itself to the sight of



the first martyr of the Lord. My brothers and sisters, let us learn here from the example of St. Stephen a very advantageous maxim. God says in Sir 10, 27, “My son, with humility have self-esteem; prize yourself as you deserve.”

Suppose, now, that a very famous queen has come to your house. Don't you think that all the members of the family would come to offer her their services? What would happen if her servants opposed her upfront, and the most vigorous ones rebelled to her commands?

Well, the queen in the house of the heart is our soul. The body is the servant and along with it all the senses which come with it, in seeing and hearing. What would happen if the body had command over the soul and if the sense of eating, running, seeing, maliciously contradicted the expectations of the soul? ... Christians, Christians, let us never allow such a scandalous thing to take

place. The soul is the one who commands in us. Let us give to her the honor she deserves. Do we find out that St. Stephen contradicted her? On the contrary, he obeyed promptly every order he received from her, and therefore he grew to the lofty degree of perfection in which we admire him today.

Isn't it true that to the queen who fortunately came into your house you immediately show the best of what you possess in matters of clothing, comforts, flowers, fruits, food and drinks? Well, then, give such honor also to the soul.

St. Stephen, who wanted to give her his whole honor, renounced all worldly friendships, conversations and the pleasures of this world. He gave up all riches and the joys of the world. He gave to his soul even all the honor that is due to her outwardly. Thus he deserved to be honored himself to the high degree all his brother Christians honor him today.

St. Stephen also acted to his advantage. He brought his soul to the house of the bridegroom, that is Jesus Christ thereby giving the opportunity to his fortunate soul to enjoy being forever with God. How much does a soul enjoy when she is united with her Lord! Suppose that you can say to the queen who came to visit you, "The kingly bridegroom is coming to you," and saying so you show him to her. How lovingly would she look at you! And if you place your soul in the hands of God, your fortunate soul will rejoice greatly and the Lord will do so along with her, better than any one of us can ever imagine.

For this purpose it is very helpful to keep our soul humble. When a soul does not boast, she keeps herself in a peaceful atmosphere, thereby becoming better able to see the truth to the point of clarity of heavenly goods.

St. Stephen was envied by his companions, yet he did not lose the calm of his spirit. St. Stephen realized more than once that, in anger, they wanted to do harm to him. Yet he recommended himself to God saying, "The best be done to my soul." He was so sincere in saying it that, while people were stoning him and Saul was guarding their clothes, St. Stephen, in order not to become even slightly perturbed, kept praying with all his affection to God that his executioners be pardoned, especially Saul.

This humble spirit of St. Stephen pleased the Most High so much that he immediately obtained most noteworthy favors. The young persecutor, Saul by name, soon converted into Paul, an apostle and distinguished preacher. Were this only a small gain, he had the heavens opened over his head. There St. Stephen looked and entered it. Blessed is he to whom the heavens are opened! Do we, too, desire our soul to receive such a noble favor? Let us keep our heart always humble.









# RACISM

BY LINDA BORDONI, VATICAN NEWS

Pope Francis warned that attitudes that many thought were a thing of the past—such as racism—are on the rise again and can lead to intolerant and discriminating behavior and policies and he urged politicians to avoid exploiting fear against those seeking refuge and better lives in our countries.

**H**e was addressing participants at a just-ended Rome-based conference “Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of Global Migration” at the Vatican on Thursday.

## Upsurge of Racist Sentiments

“We are living in times in which feelings that many thought had passed are taking new life and spreading,” Pope Francis said to the over 200 participants of an international conference on “Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the Context of World Migrations.”

In his message that marked the conclusion of the event promoted by the Vatican’s Dicastery for Integral Human Development, by the World Council



of Churches and by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, the Pope reflected on how, in our globalized world, there appears to be an upsurge of “feelings of suspicion, fear, contempt and even hatred towards individuals or groups judged for their ethnic, national or religious identity and, as such - he said - considered not sufficiently worthy of being fully part of society’s life”.

Such sentiments, he warned, “all too often inspire real acts of intolerance, discrimination or exclusion”.

## **Warning to Leaders and Policymakers**

In his speech Pope Francis also warned political leaders not to exploit fear saying, “Unfortunately, it also happens that in the world of politics some yield to the temptation of exploiting the fears and objective difficulties of some groups, using illusory promises for short-sighted electoral interests”.

He called on those responsible for the formation of young people and on the media to foster a culture of encounter and openness to others, in mutual respect for diversity, while inviting those “who take economic advantage of the climate of distrust in foreigners” to search into their own conscience, “knowing that one day they will have to respond to God for the choices they made”.

## **Responsibility to Promote Respect for the Dignity of Every Human Person**

The Pope said the seriousness of these phenomena cannot leave us indifferent, thus, “we are all called, in our respective roles, to cultivate and promote respect for the intrinsic dignity of every human person”.

In particular, faced with the spread of new forms of xenophobia and racism, the Pope said, leaders of all religions have the important mission of spreading, among their faithful, the ethical principles and values inscribed by God in the heart of man.

It’s a matter of making and inspiring gestures that contribute to building societies based on the principle of the sacredness of human life and respect for the dignity of every person, on charity, on brotherhood - which - he said - goes far beyond tolerance—and on solidarity.

May the Christian Churches, Francis concluded, become humble and active witnesses of Christ’s love. For Christians, in fact, the moral responsibilities mentioned above assume an even deeper meaning in the light of faith.

# HOW WE INFLUENCE OTHERS

BY SILENT LOVING ONE

One of the most common sayings attributed to St. Francis of Assisi is “Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary use words.” As I look back on my life, I recall many examples of how I experienced this saying in my life as well as in others.

In high school we did not have ball point pens. We used ink pens that were very messy. Ink always managed to get on all my fingers! As I watched another student she was very meticulous and never got ink on her fingers. Neatness was just one of her many attributes, that encouraged me to befriend her.



One day after I received my driver's license I remember being at her house and we wanted to go somewhere. Her parents had a new car, but it was a stick shift and she did not know how to drive it. Her parents knew that I drove a stick shift, and immediately offered to let me drive their new car. To this day I don't know what I did or said that made them trust me to safely drive their car!

Eventually we each went to a different college. During that first year we met together to compare notes. She was excited to tell me that she received her first A on an English paper titled, The Person I Admire the Most. She handed her paper to me and as I read it I realized that she was writing about me. I had no idea that I influenced her that much by just being me.

“SHE HANDED HER PAPER TO ME AND AS I READ IT I REALIZED THAT SHE WAS WRITING ABOUT ME. I HAD NO IDEA THAT I INFLUENCED HER THAT MUCH BY JUST BEING ME.”

I lost contact with my high school friends after I got married. Marriage and family took precedence. I recall one winter storm when the weather report predicted 5–7 inches of snow. I shoveled the driveway and side walk several times. It was almost time for my husband to come home from work, so I went out to shovel the driveway again. My neighbor opened her front door and yelled out to me, “What are you doing out in this weather; that is man's work!” I smiled at her and said, “It's late and my husband will be coming home soon. Rather than having him shovel snow out here alone, I would rather have him inside the house with me eating dinner.” My neighbor must have thought about that for a while because after I went in the house I saw her shovel her driveway.

A few years later, I had trouble with our car and took it to the dealership for repair several times. But it was never fixed right. I found out that the local high school taught a “powder puff” class where twenty students learned how to maintain and fix their own car. I decided to take that class in hope that the instructor could help me figure out what was wrong with our car. (By the way, our car did get fixed. While rebuilding the carburetor my instructor showed



me that the official company instructions were incorrect. Now I question all instructions when things do not work out right.)

It was a three-hour class, so we had a break where the students would stand around in a circle and just talk. One day a student across from me in this circle started yelling a string of swear words. I grew up in a house where that type of language did not occur. I was taught that when I hear someone swear I should put my eyes down and say to myself, “Forgive them Lord they know not what they do.” Suddenly, instead of swearing, I heard that student apologize for swearing. When I lifted my eyes, he and all the other students were looking right at me. I was shocked and nodded in response wondering why he did not apologize to any of the other women that were there. Non-verbal communication is more powerful than verbal!

This memory reminds me of my brother. He visited a rabbi who recently had a heart attack. My brother told me that during their conversation he simply said the name, Yahweh. Upon hearing this name, the rabbi was physically shaken, and appeared to be having another heart attack. After a few moments of silence and concern, the rabbi recovered enough to tell my brother that the name of the Most High God is never to be spoken. What we say or do may not seem important to us; yet, others may be devastated by our words.

The way we live our lives through actions and words, we preach our values and beliefs. Most of the time we are not aware of how what we do or say influences others. Remember, “Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary use words.”



## THE SEED OF CHARITY **SPROUTS IN EUROPE**

BY FR. ANTONY KALAI SELVAN, SDC

“We can never stop as long as there are poor to be assisted,” says St. Louis Guanella. A charitable heart never stays calm when there is love to share in needed places. This is because the charity of Christ pushes us to minister to those in need.

**H**aving shared the charity of Christ for the past one hundred years in twenty-two countries, the Providence of God has led the Servants of Charity to Romania, one of six countries off the coast of the Black Sea in Southeastern Europe. Experiencing a 25.4 percent poverty rate and desperate economic struggles in the last century, the Romanians have seen a great deal of poverty. Victimized by both World Wars and struggling under Soviet occupation, Romania suffers from a severely weakened economy as well as a dispirited and hopeless population; the result has been escalating poverty in Romania.

Romania was not always like this; it was a beautiful and prosperous country. After reaching positive economic growth as the second largest oil producer



in Europe after World War I, Romania was pulled into World War II by an ultimatum from the Soviet Union. Once the Communists pulled out however, Romania was left in shambles. The post-Soviet era called for the reorganization of farm land, which displaced many farmers and added to the poverty of Romania. Since Romania's economy was agriculture-based, this resulted in a shift to subsistence farming. Farmers were bound to low levels of production and marginal incomes due to a lack of resources. For the past two decades, these farmers have been stuck in the vicious cycle of working for the bare necessities of life. In 2015, a Eurostat news release projected that 46.8 percent of children were at risk in poverty.

This low standard of living has propelled Romania into an emigration-based nation. Ethnic minorities and victims of the post-communist decline are looking for hope outside of Romania. According to Focus Migration, almost two million Romanians have left their homeland in the hope of improving their lives. In addition, despite the misleading statistics often presented by the Romanian elite, there is still much to accomplish in regards to improving human rights and establishing a stable government for its residents.

Inspired by the charity of Christ in the footsteps of St. Louis Guanella, in 2015 the Servants of Charity planted the seed of charity in Iasi, known as the cultural capital of Romania. Located in the historical region of Moldavia, it is the second largest city in Romania. For the past three years, the confreres have inspired 12 young hearts and started planting the seed of charity by helping them to discern their vocation to the religious life.

In Bucium, an area in Iasi at the periphery of the city, there is a high number of poor people living in substandard conditions. Despite its size, Iasi is known as a city of great poverty. Around the clock, people can be seen roaming the streets without a place to stay or a good meal for the day. These people face even greater difficulties in the winter when temperatures drop to -30 degrees and they must find shelter under a bridge or in a graveyard. There are also shocking stories of men found dead in the places where they sleep. After the fall of Communism, there were very few religious communities who worked for the aged and their suffering. But even though there is an urgent need for improving their life's status, no religious community, particularly in Iasi, has begun a ministry focused on the welfare of the homeless.

Along with their ministry of serving the aged, the Guanellian Sisters also provide lunches every day for almost 80 homeless people. With the help of our Sisters, the Servants of Charity have a great opportunity to reach out to those who live on the periphery. Staying on their campus, we have a better chance to interact



with the needy and the homeless. We also visit poor families and the sick, organizing camps for poor children, and accompanying them in their needs. Through our special ministry of the Pious Union of St. Joseph, with 98 members, we also accompany the sick on their deathbed. Thus, we have a better knowledge of the people and their needs. Currently the Servants of Charity, along with our candidates, provide people a more stable life—bathing and shaving regularly, dressing neatly, and combing their hair; thus slowly educating them.

“THROUGH OUR SPECIAL MINISTRY OF THE PIOUS UNION OF ST. JOSEPH, (WITH 98 MEMBERS), WE ALSO ACCOMPANY THE SICK ON THEIR DEATHBED. THUS, WE HAVE A BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF THE PEOPLE AND THEIR NEEDS.”

However, we cannot accomplish all we want; as we can only shelter nine in our small house, and our vision is to provide all of them with shelter. Despite these difficulties, we pray and make further efforts. It is God who works and His will be done. May the blessings of our Holy Founder, the supporting shoulders of our confreres, and the merciful heart of our benefactors help us to carry out this new mission for our congregation, thus enabling us to bring hope to the poor of Romania.



# CHOICE:

## A CHILD OF FREE WILL

BY DR. JAMES N. PHILLIPS JR.,  
GUANELLIAN COOPERATOR

We all value having a choice. Where to eat, where to live, where to go to school or work, when to get up, and so on reflect our deep seeded interest in choice. Choice is the child of Free Will, as it is Free Will that gives us the opportunity to choose, good or bad.

Let's look at this again:  
Free will gives us the opportunity to choose. Free will is a gift from God the Creator, accordingly it is this same free will that allows us to choose God or turn away from the God who created us.

So why would God give us Free Will or said differently allow us to choose? Love. God's love is not forced it is either accepted or not. God's love for us is unconditional; it is our love for God that is subject to choice. What kind of love would it be if it were forced (no choice), especially forced by God? That is not love, certainly not free will love! God only wants your love rooted in your choosing Him and forsaking others.

So how can a God that is all good, beautiful, and true, allow bad things to happen to His creation? Free Will, the allegory of the Garden of Eden and the fall of Adam and Eve, focuses on choices! Adam and Eve were in paradise and when confronted with a choice, they chose. Certainly God could have uprooted the tree, or eliminated all choices, but God didn't. Why? God wanted His creation to love Him not out of fear, but from freely choosing Him, and forsaking others. Adam and Eve could not exercise the freedom of choice, if they did not have the gift of free will, the very gift we enjoy today!

Choices which occur because of Free will may be good or bad, such as driving drunk, divorce, abortion, murdering, stealing, and so on are choices humans make that are an offense to the love of God. God didn't predestine bad to occur, however God does take bad to make good from it. For instance, when there is a



“GOD’S LOVE IS NOT FORCED IT IS EITHER ACCEPTED OR NOT. GOD’S LOVE FOR US IS UNCONDITIONAL; IT IS OUR LOVE FOR GOD THAT IS SUBJECT TO CHOICE.”

hurricane or earthquake, His creation rallies together to help one another and pray for each other. This doesn't happen by accident; the seed of God's love is in us all and calls us to action when action is needed most!

So how do you explain the savagery of Communism under Stalin and Mao, or Fascism under Tito or Mussolini, or Nazism under Hitler, or ruthless despotism under Pol Pot of Cambodia? While God desires good for His creation, His creation may choose otherwise! This is free will and God will not intervene in humanities free will directly, however God blesses certain men and women to be beacons of hope for a struggling humanity, called saints; some 20th century saints include Edith Stein, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Maximilian Kolbe who died at the hands of the Nazi's.

Their deaths were not in vain, but pointed to the source of Hope and Love, which is God. Free will does not remove bad, but it does elevate good when it is aligned with God's love.

So how do you recover when bad things occur as a result of Free Will? Ask for forgiveness and healing. In the Catholic prayer, an Act of Contrition we say:

*My God*

*I am sorry for my sins with all of my heart.*

*In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,*

*I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.*

*I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more,*

*and avoid whatever leads me to sin.*

*Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.*

*In his name, my God, have mercy. Amen.*

Free Will and our choices are OUR choices, not the choices that others have made! Edith Stein, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Maximillian Kolbe were not responsible for the choices made by Hitler, but were responsible for their choices made in that situation. In their cases, a choice for God was a death sentence!

The Act of Contrition helps remind us that bad things happen based on choices we make to do or not to do something, which results in an outcome that hurts ourselves, others and our relationship with God. Yet God does not say, you are on your own, He says, He will help! So it is about choice, a free will choice, where YOU choose! Faith helps us to choose wisely.



# WE ARE MADE FOR HAPPINESS

BY KELLY FLAHERTY

“Joy is the gigantic secret of Catholicism.” — GK Chesterton

**W**e cannot ignore the news headlines these days about Church scandals or the vicious climate between groups of people with differing opinions about religion, politics and morals. To be sure it seems like people of faith and faith itself is the source for persecution, abuse and intolerance. So many popular clichés and scripture quotes are tossed around frivolously: ‘Don’t give up the ship,’ ‘keep calm and ... on,’ ‘Do not be afraid.’

These words can feel empty and meaningless to the victims of abuse or those defending the true faith of Jesus Christ. People on all phases of their faith-walk need more to help them to truly live the gigantic secret of Catholicism, joy.

First and foremost we need to remember to pray. Pray that our own faith can be strengthened, pray for victims of abuse and pray for those guilty of abusing others in any way. Next, remember that for every bad priest or clergy member, there are 200 good ones. Pray for them too. They are likely taking a lot of negative reactions due to the crimes and sins of the few. Also remember that Christ Himself promised that He would not leave us alone. The Holy Spirit lives in each one of us who have been Baptized and sealed in those who have been Confirmed.

Before the breaking news of the recent scandals, the Diocese of Lansing planned to gather the faithful from all the parishes to help equip them for the new evangelization. This Diocesan assembly, called ‘Made for Happiness,’ was held at the Breslin Center in E. Lansing MI on Saturday, September 22, 2018. The day began with a Eucharistic procession of about 4,000 participants walking from St. Mary Cathedral in downtown Lansing to the Breslin Center. They joined another 10,000 people at the Breslin Center to be re-invigorated with joy in living their Christian life.



To those of little or wavering faith, it may have seemed like a futile endeavor to undertake, but for the 14,000 people in attendance who learned much about their faith and why there is still cause for joy, they would beg to differ. The first presenter was Fr. Mike Schmitz, a dynamic young priest who is the director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry at the Newman Center at University of Minnesota-Duluth. Fr. Mike taught the difference between happiness and joy. He says that happiness cannot be the main goal of our lives, but the fruit of a life spent living for something greater; joy is bigger than happiness. It is an abiding and pervasive sense of well-being. We are made for joy and commanded in the Bible to rejoice.

We were asked to consider the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. Fr. Mike pointed out that even though these events are cause for joy, they do not necessarily bring immediate happiness. The Blessed Mother and Christ Himself undergo the difficult work of the Luminous Mysteries, the dramatic pain of the Sorrowful Mysteries. The joy is not complete until the Glorious Mysteries for those who say to the Father, “Thy will be done.”

Jennifer Fulwiler gave her personal testimony of growing up an atheist and coming into the knowledge that true happiness is found in the faith. She shared how truly surrendering her life to the will of God has led to greater joy and fulfillment for her and her family. Her wit and intellect was inspirational and reminded each of us to not ever doubt the providence of God.

The final presenter, Deacon Larry Oney, began by reminding us of who we are as Catholics. Despite the challenges we face as a Church, as a nation or as a family that “for such a time as this we have been called.” This is not the only time in history that the Church has had to face challenges. He warned us to “be careful how we walk for the days are evil.” Just as the saints who have gone before us we “must be the salt and the light of our time. God wants to bless us despite our sinfulness. He has established this Church for us as a place to walk our destiny and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” His talk was more like a pep rally, firing up the crowd to be convicted in our lives as Christians, to be certain that we are ‘Made for Happiness,’ and that giving ourselves to God is the only way that we will realize our destiny.

No one left that assembly doubting that they are truly ‘Made for the Happiness’ that comes from God and living fully for Him. All of these talks are available online as audio and video files at [www.dioceseoflansing.org/news](http://www.dioceseoflansing.org/news).

# CHRISTMAS GIFTS

## FROM THE PIOUS UNION

Christmas is a gift from God to humanity. From this truth comes the tradition of exchanging gifts with one another.

You will find inspiring, durable, spiritual gifts in the library of the Pious Union of St Joseph. Surprise a relative or friend with a unique gift this Christmas. At this time the library can offer books about St. Louis Guanella, his spirituality and his spiritual sons and daughters. You might also like *The Guanellian Way to Pray the Rosary*, *The Holy Cloak of St. Joseph* or *The Litany of St. Joseph*.



Another gift for your loved ones is *Eternal Remembrance* with

enrollment in the Golden Book. It is a spiritual last embrace offered by the Servants of Charity and pilgrims for the benefit of souls at the Shrine of St. Joseph. All enrollees partake of these spiritual benefits: Perpetual Holy Mass celebrated by priests enrolled in the Pious Union of St. Joseph globally and First Friday Mass intention at the Shrine of St. Joseph. The stipend for Golden Book enrollment is \$100.

Merry Christmas!

Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC

If you would like a copy of these or any of our other books, send your request and a donation to The Pious Union of St. Joseph, 953 E. Michigan Ave., Grass Lake, MI 49240. Your donation for shipping will be appreciated. You may also use the envelope in this magazine to make your request.



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)

### **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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