

# The Voice of Providence

PUBLICATION OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

**now** HOUR  
AND AT THE

FEBRUARY–MARCH 2011



Featured Story: *Because of Love*, page 25

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Patron of the Suffering and Dying

953 East Michigan Avenue

Grass Lake, Michigan 49240-9210

517-522-8017 voice 517-522-8387 fax

PiousUnion@pusj.org

www.servantsofcharity.org

www.pusj.org

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Fr. Joseph Rinaldo SdC

EDITING TEAM: Joe Yekulis, Lauren Hill, Kelly Flaherty, Sr. Margaret Mary Schissler DSMP

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

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### **The Voice of Providence:**

Is a non-profit bi-monthly publication of the Divine Providence Province of the Servants of Charity, a Catholic Religious Congregation founded by Blessed Louis Guanella, (1842–1915).

### **Mission**

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

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

# HERE I AM LORD

A REFLECTION BY

FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SDC

The Candle Mass on February 2nd is probably one of the oldest celebrations in the Roman Liturgy. The Gregorian chant of that day is one of the most touching and inspiring of the whole collection. In the old days, all mothers who had newborn babies would go to church and offer their children to God, while they went through a ceremony recalling the Gospel's narrative of the purification ritual prescribed by the Mosaic law.

After Vatican II, on this day, the Church honors the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

Jesus is presented as the Light of Revelation to all people. In the fullness of time, God, the compassionate Father, wanted to redeem the world incapable of doing it on its own. Jesus, the only begotten Son, offered Himself to do the will of the Father. It was not an act of obedience in our common sense; it was an act of love toward His Father who loved the world so much. To the call of the Father, Jesus answered, "Here I am, Father." He offered His divinity for the salvation of the world.

In the feast of the Presentation, Mary and Joseph offer the humanity of Jesus to God for the salvation of the world. Jesus renewed His offer to the Father in the Olive Garden, "Let Your will be done." Jesus consummated His offer on the Cross, "Father into your hands, I commend my Spirit."

In the history of Salvation, patriarchs and prophets like Abraham, Samuel, Isaiah, all answered God's call, "Here I am Lord."

In the New Testament, Mary of Nazareth, the Apostles, St. Paul, and all the charismatic Saints answered to God, "Here I am, Father," for the salvation of the world.

All of the believers are presented to God at Baptism and they all answer, "Here I am, Father, I came to do your will."

Since then every Christian is grateful to God for a new day, and every day we offer to God our life, our deeds and our thoughts. God continues to call us in many different ways and means. He is patiently waiting for our answer.

We pray, "God of Love and mercy, You always call me to work in Your Kingdom for the salvation of the world. Keep my heart pure and open to Your call. Do not allow the distractions and the lure of the world to conceal Your voice and Your love. Keep me on Your path of holiness always ready to do Your will and to answer Your call with the same sincerity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus Your Son, "Here I am, Father," I want to do Your will, because in Your will is our peace. Amen."

# Mailbag...



**Dear Fr. Joseph,**

We are devoted to the Pious Union of St. Joseph. In 2007, I stopped at the Shrine and lit a candle and prayed for a holy death for my Father. He died on Wednesday, June 25th.

I thank St. Joseph for his holy death.

*DR in Portsmouth*

**Dear Sr. Margaret Mary,**

I finished the 30 day St. Joseph Cloak prayers. I'm not sure yet of the answer but I'm much more clear in my mind. I first became acquainted with the Pious Union of St Joseph many years ago when Fr. Germano appeared on EWTN with Mother Angelica, speaking on the St. Joseph devotion. I say the prayer for the sick and dying morning & evening.

St. Joseph, Pray for us!

*A Friend of St. Joseph from Wakeeney, Kansas*

**Dear St. Joseph,**

Thank you very much for interceding for me with Jesus for my health: in the past, now and always.

I am enclosing a small token of thanksgiving and gratitude for your Shrine. I still need much help in my health and will continue to ask for your intercession & blessings.

Thank you St. Joseph for all the answers and solutions and in advance for complete good health to come.

*Yours in the Sacred Heart, ET*

# SHRINE NEWS

SR. MARGARET MARY SCHISLER, DSMP

These next two months are very important and exciting for us supporters and devotees of the Pious Union/Shrine of St. Joseph. As we all await Pope Benedict XVI to announce the date of Canonization of the Founder of the Pious Union, we are filled with joy and expectation.

The Church recognizes people who lived as heroes of faith and love. Blessed Louis Guanella was inspired by the Holy Spirit to provide for the needs of the poorest of the poor. He believed in dignity and love for all and saw the importance of praying for the suffering and dying, thus the founding of the Pious Union of St. Joseph, Patron of the Suffering and Dying!

Saints give us joy. Their example sustains our hope and their friendship increases our love and our union with God and with one another. Canonization is a way of giving thanks to God as we honor the person who has been so faithful to God's plan in his or her life. Let us all be united in a prayer of thanksgiving for the life and works of our soon to be Saint: St. Louis Guanella.

On March 19th we celebrate the Feast of St. Joseph. Many of our readers are praying the Holy Cloak of St. Joseph in preparation for the Feast. If you have not yet experienced this devotion now is the time to order your *Holy Cloak* booklet. Be sure to include your special intentions with this prayer and leave all in the protective and caring hands of St. Joseph.



# VOCATIONS EXAM

(L'ESAME DI VOCAZIONE)

AN EXCERPT FROM LUIGI GUANELLA: PARABLES OF  
A GOOD SAMARITAN, BY CARLO LAPUCCI

One day two sisters went to the House of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence situated in Fratta Polesine in Northern Italy. One was Martha, 15, and the other was Mary, 17. Desiring to become nuns, both were there to see Father Guanella who was going to test them and see if they had a true vocation to Religious Life.

Instead of receiving them in his office, Father Guanella welcomed them near the hen house. While they were talking, a hen, finding a hole in the fence, ran out and rushed quickly toward the garden where fresh lettuce was awaiting her.

Father Guanella began his vocation test by asking Martha, the youngest, to go after the hen and catch it.

"Martha, please, go after that disgraceful hen and bring her to me!"

The young girl, despite carrying the name of the good sister of Lazarus, found that request a bit strange and out of place. So, she did not move and, blushing, lowered her face.

"Mary, it is your turn now!" Father Guanella told the elder girl.

Mary without thinking twice ran after the hen and in perfect form caught her and quickly brought her into the hen house.

Father Guanella looked at the sisters and told Mary, "Your test was excellent. To me you can begin your period of postulancy very soon, even next week. Congratulations!"

Shaking his head, he then turned to Martha and said, "Martha, Martha, you should pray more! You have to strengthen your will, to mature more and get stronger. It is too early for you to commit to us. It will surely be possible later on."

With a big smile and a blessing he sent them off.



# BR. ANDRÉ BESSETTE: BEST FRIEND OF ST. JOSEPH

BY MARY BETH BRACY

Br. André Besette (1845–1937) of Quebec, Canada, spent himself tirelessly in spreading devotion to St. Joseph. On October 17, 2010, this Holy Cross Brother—who called himself St. Joseph’s little dog—was canonized. Considering all that God accomplished through Br. André, in his simple yet amazing life, it is fitting to recall his words: “The greatest works of art are accomplished by artists who use small brushes.”

Br. André was raised in a devout French Catholic family. By the time he was twelve, both of Br. André’s parents had died and he was sent to live and work with relatives. Br. André’s father was a workman like St. Joseph and his mother imitated the virtues of Our Lady. In his book *Brother André: The Wonder Man of Mount Royal*, H. P. Bergeron,

*Statue of St. Andre showing the Oratory in the background.*

C.S.C. writes: "His holiness took its source in the heart of his mother... Destinies are almost as a rule shaped at the knees of a mother" (11). "Fervent indeed must have been his first meeting with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, for the teachings of his pious mother were still vivid in his mind, and all his lifelong he was a devoted lover of the Holy Eucharist" (15). Bergeron continues:

*He had already often thought of Saint Joseph watching over the Child Jesus and he had made up his mind to imitate this saintly Workman, for he also was to watch over the Infant God Whom he carried at all times in his soul by divine grace and Whom he received with such deep piety in Holy Communion.*

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist and St. Joseph were, indeed, the hallmarks of Br. André's life. Decades later, the faithful marveled at the ardor of Br. André's love of the Holy Eucharist, as he trembled with joy, receiving Holy Communion with tears in his eyes. Br. André trusted Jesus completely and drew strength from Mass, Communion, Adoration, the Stations of the Cross and St. Joseph's intercession amidst the many trials and obstacles of life.



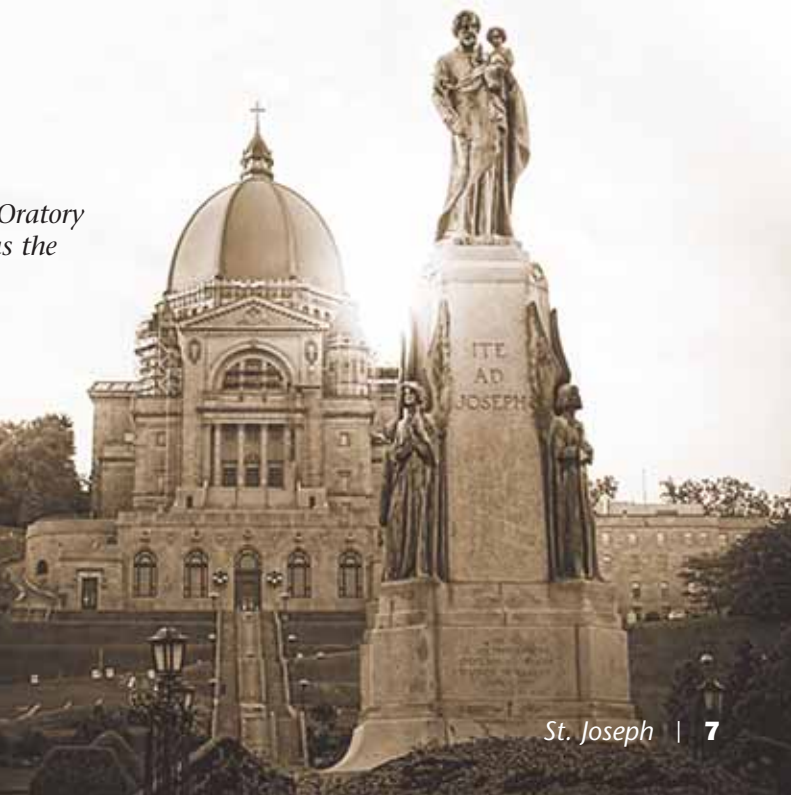
Br. André was tested, especially as he sought to become a Holy Cross Brother, and build a Shrine to St. Joseph on Mt. Royal. He began with no money and even his own Brothers' said it was impossible. Still, Br. André placed total confidence in God and the patronage of St. Joseph. A medal of St. Joseph was buried in the ground where Br. André wished to build the Shrine and fervent prayers were offered. Miracles happened. A small Church was built, then a larger one. When the walls were erected and there was no money for a roof, Br. André placed a statue of St. Joseph in the middle and said that the Saint would provide his own shelter. St. Joseph's home kept growing to receive the throngs of people who came to seek his help! Imagine this awesome scene:

*Upon the side of the mountain, a procession of singing and praying men, women and children, winds its way between two lines of*

*kneeling pilgrims, preceding the Blessed Sacrament escorted by the scarlet-robed acolytes and the priests in white and gold vestments.*

*At twilight, the great prayerful murmur of the long torch-bearing procession makes an unforgettable impression. Inspired by the collective fervor, the pilgrim is moved by but one desire: to be but a voice blended in prayer and song, an atom lost in that throng which God is drawing unto Himself. The Oratory is a place in which one comes palpably in contact with the supernatural, in which one breathes the very atmosphere of divine grace, in which human faith shows itself naked and unashamed. It is an oasis to which we all, poor way-worn travellers to eternity, may come for spiritual regeneration, for strength to take up anew the battles of life. Here, temporal favors are the allurements Christ makes use of as He did in the days of His earthly life to draw the hearts of men. Along the St. Lawrence River one may often see fish swept in on the tide from the deep waters and caught in traps when the tide recedes. So is the shrine of Saint Joseph a divine fishing net into which the incoming tide of visitors sweeps sinners and then, when it recedes, leaves them imprisoned within the Master's love (61–62).*

*Full view of the Oratory with St. Joseph as the 'Gatekeeper.'*





Br. André led all of those interested in weekly Stations of the Cross and a Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration in the small chapel at St. Joseph's Shrine. So immense was Br. André's love for the Blessed Sacrament that he often spent his nights in prayer before Jesus Hostia. Br. André's bedroom, in which he always cared for the sick and dying throughout the night, overlooked the chapel. Br. André cut a window in his room that he might gaze upon the

tabernacle, when he was unable to be with our Eucharistic King. In all of his prayers, Br. André asked for the help of St. Joseph.

It is often said that a dog is a man's best friend. Br. André, St. Joseph's little dog, certainly deserves the title of his best friend. Sometimes it was as if he was speaking with St. Joseph, said those who witnessed him in deep prayer. Br. André's advice to those seeking cures was simple: "Rub yourself with the medal [of St. Joseph] and with St. Joseph's oil. Make a novena" (67). Br. André especially encouraged novenas of Holy Communion, the Sacrament of Confession and the Stations of the Cross. He advised: "Begin by receiving the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist as often as you can. Then it will be easier for you to pray and to obtain favors. The love of Our Lord as expressed in His Passion is a reflection of God's love for us."

Above all, Br. André desired interior healings and spiritual conversions. "People often ask for healing but seldom do they ask for humility and a spirit of faith. These are so much more important" (Br. André). He was willing to offer up any sacrifices—his time and numerous penances—for the conversion of one soul. Great was his fatherly solicitude for the sick and weak, poor and suffering of the world. "The poor always come first! I would allow myself to be cut into pieces to save the world" (Br. André). Deep was his longing for the conversion of nations and the salvation of souls:

*Touching indeed was his prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for all the nations of the world. Great is the breadth of Catholicism, which unites in the same thought the Pope, the great white-haired old man, looking at the world with fatherly eyes from the Eternal*

*City, and the little old man  
praying for the same intentions  
on Mount Royal (Bergeron, 138).*

Today, when visiting the Basilica of St. Joseph, one is struck by the sight of the thousands of crutches and braces left behind by those who were healed. In the words of Br. André: “Seldom have I met someone who has come to the shrine and left without consolation, without feeling better about life. God is so good! How well He cares for us! Do not seek to be rid of trials. Rather ask for the grace to accept them with courage. Place yourself in God’s hands. He will not abandon you. For Christians, death is a friend introducing them to the Merciful Lord. I find death gentle and loving for it satisfies my one and only desire: to possess my Beloved.”



*Those who were cured left behind  
their crutches and canes, some  
offered memorial plaques in  
thanksgiving for favors received.*



*The original chapel  
as it looks today.*

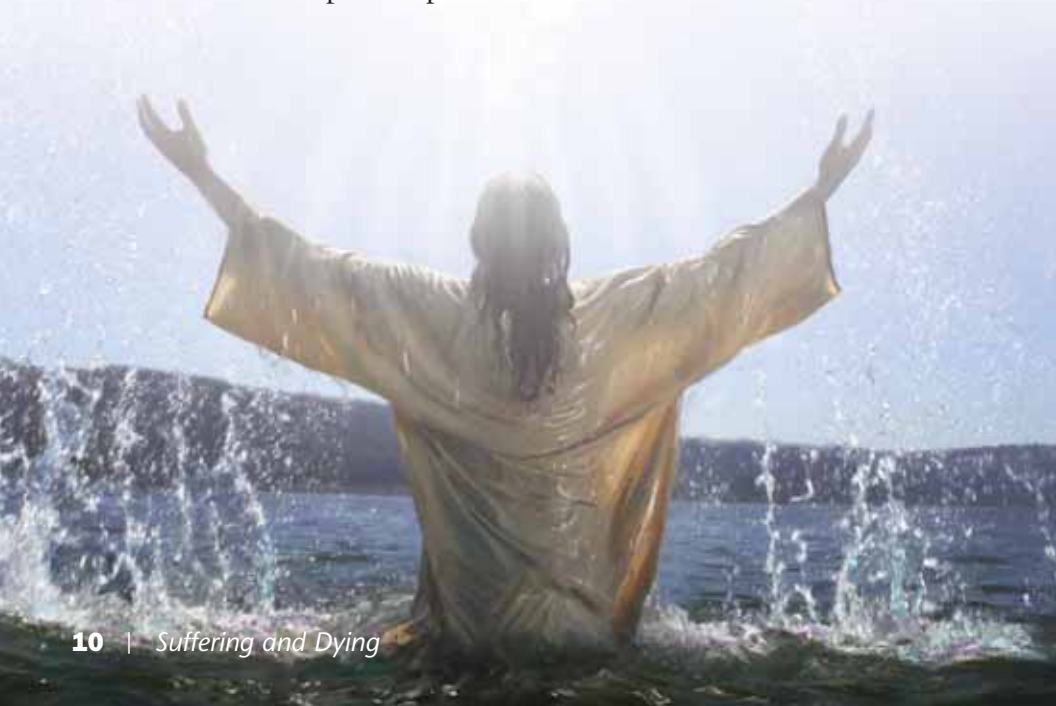
# MY BROTHER AND MY SISTER

BY FR. JOSEPH RINALDO, SdC

**The secular world is continuously attacking the traditional family. The assaults are growing in intensity and viciousness.**



On October 12, 2010, President Obama made an appearance at the Human Rights Campaign, the largest pro-gay marriage organization in the country. He delivered a passionate speech criticizing the concept of the traditional family and announced that his administration would work to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act. President Obama said, “You will see a time in which we as a nation finally recognize relationships between two men and two women as just as real and admirable as relationships between a man and a woman. You will see a nation that’s valuing and cherishing these families as we build a perfect union—a union in which gay Americans are an important part.”



He went on to affirm same-sex behavior as being no different from the sexual union of a man and a woman in marriage. Then he continued, "I support ensuring that committed gay couples have the same rights and responsibilities afforded to any married couple in this country. I believe strongly in stopping laws designed to take rights away and passing laws that extend equal rights to gay couples. I have called on Congress to repeal the so called Defense of Marriage Act and to pass the Domestic partners benefits and Obligations Act."

But same sex attraction and behavior is not a political issue, it is a very serious moral issue threatening Catholic families.

Our brothers and sisters who struggle with same sex attraction are encouraged to live chaste lives in accordance with the Catholic Church's teaching on same sex attraction.

"The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a simple reference to his or her sexual orientation. Everyone living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties, challenges to growth, strength, talents and gifts as well. Today the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when She refuses to consider the person a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: a creature of God, and by grace His child and heir to eternal life." (*Letter from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. October 1996*).

Some persons find themselves, through no fault of their own, to have a homosexual orientation. Homosexuals, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against basic human rights. They have a right to respect, friendship and justice. They should have an active role in the Christian community. Homosexual activity however, as distinguished from homosexual orientation, is morally wrong. Like heterosexual persons, homosexuals are called to give witness to chastity avoiding, with God's grace, behavior which is wrong for them as non-marital sexual relations are wrong for heterosexuals.

Nonetheless, because heterosexuals can usually look forward to marriage, and homosexuals may not, the Christian community should provide them with a special degree of understanding and care.

The dignity and identity of Christian persons is not determined by their sexual attractions, but by their relationship to Jesus by developing faith, hope and love. Persons who experience same sex attractions can choose

to follow Jesus Christ according to authentic Catholic spiritual and moral teaching. Like all Catholics, with faith in Christ and his Church, it is more than possible to live a chaste single life in a healthy and happy manner.

Homosexuality is not a personal sin. It does not make a person sick or perverse. However, homosexual acts are immoral and can extinguish the life of Christ.

Homosexuality is not the work of God and it is not usually a person's choice. It is an aspect of an arrested sexual development resulting from many factors. This arrested development will muddle a person's normal sexual feelings.

The first reaction of many Catholic homosexuals is to leave their church because they feel it does not understand them. That is a mistake. It is like a child leaving the family going toward the unknown because his family does not understand. Where do they go? Who loves them more than their parents? It is safer and more productive if help is sought from the ones who have their best interest at heart.

With the church, we can develop a happy grace filled life with an understanding of ourselves, and continue to grow into our identity as maturing Catholic men and women.

We pray, "Lord Jesus, in you I die and rise to New life. May I know your life so fully that I would rejoice in all that I face. Amen."

## WHERE TO FIND HELP:

- **Courage**, Spiritual support system for Individuals with same-sex attraction. ([www.couragerc.net](http://www.couragerc.net))
- **Catholic Medical Association**, Referrals for mental health professionals ([www.cathmed.org](http://www.cathmed.org))
- **National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality**, Informative website, books, pamphlets and referrals. ([www.narth.com](http://www.narth.com))

# THE DREAM OF A SAINT

BY FR. DOMINIC SAGINARIO, SDC

**Father Louis Guanella had many dreams in his lifetime. He was a “Dreamer of dreams,” as the Bible calls the Prophet Daniel, “A Man of visions.” (Dn 7,1; 10,1)**

When he was a child, playing with his little sister, they would mix sand and water in a rock’s hollow, dreaming about cooking food for the poor. He would add with enthusiasm, “When we grow up, we will make soup for the poor like this.” Then, he was only eight years old.

Later on, in the seminary and very close to his ordination time, his mind traveled far and was swept away to distant horizons. He felt a strong urge for the missions in India and dreamed of working there. Many times, even after his Ordination, he asked his bishop to let him join the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions. This institute had just been founded and they had started to organize expeditions to India. An Italian missionary of the Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions founded the parish and Institutions of the Guanellians in Andhra Pradesh in those very days. That missionary could have been Father Guanella as well, if his superiors had allowed him to join. Today the foundations of Fr. Guanella are actually expanding in India.

Years later, he kept dreaming of opening programs for the poor in England, the Holy Land and Egypt. He wanted to assemble a large number of charity motivated Christians to assist all the poor in the world. In a booklet dedicated to the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, who in 1913 went to the United States to start their charitable work,





he recommended them to keep a wide-open mind when it comes to charity, “The whole world is your homeland.”

However, the greatest dream he had, one that caught his imagination and engaged his enthusiasm was inspired by the family and in a particular way, the Family of Nazareth. The idea went back to his childhood and it was rooted in his beautiful family where he grew up. In 1902, he had the fortune to travel to the Holy Land on a pilgrimage.

During the visit to Nazareth, he was caught up in contemplation and

vision of how to transfer to his works of charity the typical uniqueness of the Holy Family. He wanted all his Houses to be modeled like families of Nazareth, open to all, similar to what he experienced as a child. He was dreaming of a human and colorful world, harmonized as a large, united and holy family, where all, young and old, would find space for joy and acceptance.

I want to share with you an event that at first may appear ordinary and non-consequential; however, my experience and observation gave me an idea of the family dynamics Father Guanella was envisioning and later established in his Houses. It is nine o’ clock on any Sunday morning. The auditorium is turned into a chapel. The children arrive first like many little birds chasing one another and chirping. Behind them their mothers and fathers follow. To the right of the mobile altar the youth choir is testing the chords. On the other side, a dozen children are dressing as acolytes. A couple of buses pull in and unload people in wheelchairs. Some are blind, some deaf and many crippled. The special children come last. They are surly and act like they own the place,

smiling and greeting everyone like at a fair. The auditorium fills up fast. The bell rings. A priest leaves the reconciliation room and dons the Mass vestments. The acolytes line up and the procession starts. The music and the singing start. The candles, cross and Gospel are carried high and with pride. These are special jobs. At the end of the line comes the priest, slowly and solemnly. The Mass follows as usual.



However, there is a touching moment during the *Our Father*. The celebrant intones the *Our Father*. They all hold hands. This is Father Guanella's dream. They all become children of the same father, brothers and sisters united. Each one has his own style, his own space, his own time and identity: the child, the disabled, the cripple in a wheelchair, the grandmother, the professional, the worker, the young sportsman, and the cantor. The sight of this diverse group of people holding hands and praying, each with their own voice and heart, like children of God proclaiming with joy the words of the *Our Father*, fully expresses the dream so cherished by Fr. Louis Guanella.

I believe that this will be the message that will be announced during the canonization of Blessed Louis Guanella in Rome at St. Peter's Basilica next year.







# THE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES OF FR. GUANELLA

## PART 2

BY JOSEPH YEKULIS

**As we continue our journey through northern Italy, we see the impression that Fr. Guanella, the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence have made in the lives of the people of Milan and Como.**

Consider conditions in Europe at the end of the 19th Century compared to the world of today. There was no dearth of governmental programs available to protect the most vulnerable of society, and people relied on the generosity of the Church and visionaries like Fr. Guanella to provide the societal safety net. Fr. Guanella was the Lord's Good Samaritan of his time, and the Servants of Charity's Regulations of 1910 clearly articulated his charism.

*Duomo di Milano,  
west entrance*



“Every religious family has a particular spirit, suggested by the grace of the Lord, by the quality of the times, and by the circumstances of place; and this character or mark, is that which distinguishes one Institution from other similar ones. The character of the Institution flows naturally from its nature, and from its pre-planned purpose: the care of the poor children and the poor aging, and the apostolic life which reached out especially in favor of the people...The Servants of Charity must understand profoundly the height of their ministry. They themselves must be profoundly moved to be able to move and grow day-by-day in the path of zeal and charity, to become living and speaking images of the Divine Apostle of Charity, Jesus Christ our Savior.” (Mazzucchi, pp.232–233). The zeal of this religious community helped them to become most revered as their congregation grew and attracted many seminarians during that time to grow the Order.

In the last issue, we toured several Guanellian facilities in Rome and Milan that were built with the oversight of Fr. Guanella, continuing to provide services to persons with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities and the frail elderly to this day. Before leaving Milan and heading back to Como, we must visit the historically significant *Duomo di Milano*, where Fr. Guanella was honored with a sculpture as one of the many saints and martyrs of the Church who were exalted as examples of Christ’s love for His people.

## **Cathedral of Milan: *Duomo di Milano***

The Cathedral or “*Duomo*” of Milan, is one of the most historical and famous buildings in Europe. Constructed to replace a basilica built by St. Ambrose in the 5th Century that had been damaged by fire in 1075, the cathedral was begun by the Archbishop of Milan in 1386 and wasn’t completed until 1880; a nearly 500 year labor of love! Primarily a Gothic design when first begun, Baroque and Neo-Classical designs were added over the years as the project moved through several architectural periods. Most importantly for Guanellian followers, many uncarved blocks were left over in 1880 to be carved into statues at later dates, and eventually a statue of Don Guanella was designed and immortalized into the side of the cathedral along the south wall. The statue shows Fr. Guanella carrying one of his “Good Children,” and offering him up to God. It was carved and mounted in 1987 by the brother of a Guanellian priest, who sculpted many statues of Fr. Guanella throughout northern Italy.

## The Mother House: *Casa Divina Provvidenza*

Our journey to Como began with a flight to Milan's Malpenza Airport, followed by a train ride to the town of Saronno, and then a transfer to a northbound train that took us to the end of the rail line in Como; coming to a stop at the south end of Lake Como. From there, the House of Divine Providence was a mere four blocks from the train station, and we arrived at the "Mother House."

Historically, this complex was built in 1900 as Fr. Guanella's first institution, and was built to alleviate the squalid conditions that existed in the public institutions of that time. By 1910, Fr. Guanella had reached an agreement with the Como Asylum to, "transfer to the *Casa Divina Provvidenza*, those who were 'feeble minded but harmless,' and did not require hospital care." (*Aloysius Guanella: He went about doing Good*, p.35).



*Sr. Clare Bosatta*

There were many special things to experience in this beautiful place, but most importantly, we had the opportunity to be in the presence of the saints themselves, as both Blessed Louis Guanella and Blessed Clare Bosatta were found resting in state in the Shrine of the Sacred Heart. Behind and left of the main altar is a Sanctuary that contained two funerary urns where each body rests.

The Mother House was found to be a hub of community activity, and Daily Mass was said at 7:00 a.m. *Casa Divina Provvidenza* was found to



*Fr. Guanella lies in state*

provide many programs, including a Retirement Community, a residential program for troubled youth, a nursery school, a vocations program for seminarians, and a museum that houses the artifacts of Fr. Guanella and the archives for his original hand-written documents.

## South Como: *Casa di Gino* Residential Care

The *Casa di Gino*, (House of Gino), is a beautiful 50 acre complex that contains a working farm on the southern edge of Como, where the residents actually work the land and help to care for some of the animals on the property. The house and land were donated to the Servants of Charity in 1947 by the family of 19 year old Gino Grassi, who died in 1947 from wounds suffered during World War II. The living units were built in the 1970's, and upgraded in 2005.



This unique pastoral oasis within the city limits of Como contains four living units occupied by 38 total residents with developmental disabilities. A typical day includes walks through vegetable and flower gardens, working on their own laundry, and then working on assigned tasks on the farm. After 4:00 p.m., they relax as a family until they join together for meals in their units at 7:00 p.m. Then it's time for clean-up and bed.

*The Inner Courtyard*



## Nuova Olonio: *Casa Madonna del Lavoro*

North of Como lays the House of Our Lady of the Workers. Also established around 1900, this area was considered a “wasteland” at the north end of Lake Como, and was purchased by Fr. Guanella to create one of his early institutes. While being scoffed at by the townspeople, he used the labor of his “good boys” to fill-in the marshes with sand and dirt, and turned it into an area of meadows, vineyards, and fruitful acreage.

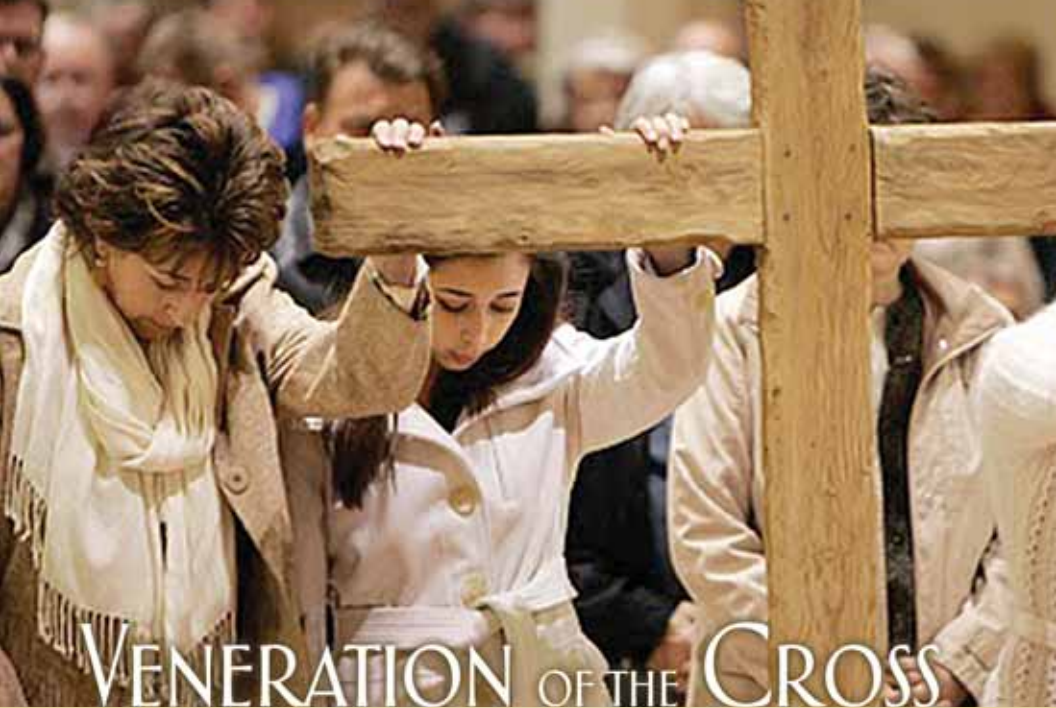
Today, this beautiful facility cares for 108 frail elderly people on one side of the complex, and 49 persons with developmental disabilities on the other. The Church of Our Lady of the Workers sits in the center of the complex, and greets the visitors who come to this scenic place. An additional 33 residents from the local community are provided with day care, and there are eight retired Servants of Charity priests residing among the senior population of residents, living in separate religious quarters.

In summary, a tour of the Houses of Fr. Guanella provides us with a spiritual journey rooted in the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the heart of our future saint, Fr. Guanella, who taught us the importance of being a Good Samaritan in our daily lives, with perseverance and commitment. We also see the timeless beauty of the country that inspired many to become the saints of our time.



*Bell Tower and the Pre-Alps*





## BY YOUR HOLY CROSS YOU HAVE REDEEMED THE WORLD

BY LAUREN HILL, GUANELLIAN COOPERATOR

*"This is the wood of the cross, on which hung the Savior of the world."*

*"Come, let us worship,"* we respond, as we approach His Cross to bow, kneel, touch, kiss, and sweetly adore our Savior.

In preparing for Holy Week it can be helpful to reflect upon what these powerful words evoke in us, these words intoned by our Priests on Good Friday as we venerate the Cross of Christ.

Our Christian formation tells us that adoration or veneration of an image or representation of Christ's cross does not mean that we actually adore the material image, of course, but rather what it represents. In kneeling before the crucifix and kissing it we are paying the highest honor to our Lord's cross as the instrument of our salvation. The Cross is inseparable from His sacrifice. In reverencing His Cross we, in effect, adore Him.



On Good Friday we have had more than 40 days of preparation for offering our humble gesture of love and yet we may find that we are shy, stiff-necked, embarrassed, or unfeeling as we “worship” in front of everyone.

This simple and countercultural act of devotion on Good

Friday, deeply connects us to Christ’s Passion, expresses our love for Him and sustains us as we remain alone outside His tomb that night. Today is our real opportunity to physically kiss the feet of the image of our Lord and spiritually join ourselves to Him in His suffering. We may also offer our compassion to Mary, who stands at the foot of the Cross and contemplates His death and the coldness of the tomb.

Ours is, then, a kiss of farewell, a final spiritual parting as we see His image disappear from the Sanctuary. The altar is now bare, images of Christ and His Holy Mother are covered and no one gathers again until the eve of the great Easter Vigil, when the light of Resurrection breaks through the darkness that has covered the Earth.

Our Holy Father gave us a precious gift and much to contemplate in his first encyclical, *God is Love*. When we turn our hearts to our Lord and His Holy Cross the words of Pope Benedict XVI give us inspiration and guidance.

“Christianity belongs to a greater order of things, greater than the material order and ideas; Christianity belongs to the order of Love and Goodness. A love that forgives; this quality shines intensely in the mystery of the Cross.”

“... a great teaching we receive from God’s Love on the Cross, is that God’s love is faithful and eternal.”

“We should reflect on how the love of Christ on the Cross can help each man to find the path of his living and of his loving,”

“He loved us with a love of suffering for redemption, therefore it is on the cross that more than ever we should contemplate the truth that ‘God is Love.’”

# BECAUSE OF LOVE

FR. CHARLTON VIRAY

I grew up in a Catholic family environment and I believe that this made a big contribution to my own personal discovery and the growth of my vocation. All my siblings and I studied in a parochial school. Both my parents are active in our parish. My father was a Fourth Degree Knight of Columbus and my mother was a Charismatic Movement member. We would go as a family to the Church every Sunday and at times my mother would bring me on weekdays because she is a daily Mass attendee. Once in a while she would take me to her Charismatic prayer meetings even if, as a young boy, I didn't understand what they were doing. At six o'clock every evening we recited the Angelus, and before or after supper; the Holy Rosary. We also attended daily Catechism classes for the whole month of May, went on pilgrimages to different Churches, and participated in the activities of the parish with other children and adults. All my siblings, including me, were members of different organizations in the parish.



*Fr. Charlton shown with his mentors,  
Archbishop Socrates Villegas and Sr. Mila Roco.*



*Residents enjoy the company of Fr. Charlton.*

As a young boy, I felt that somehow God was calling me to be closer to Him, even though I was not yet sure whether it was really a calling to priestly life or just another feeling of the moment. I enjoyed going to different Churches, attending Mass, praying, looking at statues of saints and the Virgin Mary, and participating in religious activities. With my friends, sometimes we would put on a play and I would act as if I was a priest and they were my parishioners. I would use our blanket as my chasuble and give them wafer biscuits as hosts for “Communion.” We used to go to a Dominican church, not far from home, where there is a seminary for theology students. Whenever I saw the seminarians I always wondered what it would be like inside a seminary. I knew that I had the desire in me to be there but I was afraid to be separated from my family and I didn’t have any idea about life inside.

As I entered high school, my interest in Church activities decreased even though I still continued attending Sunday Mass. I became very busy with school and at home helping my father who was sick for many years. Like many of my friends and classmates, I wanted to discover life and be more independent and free. I tried many things and different possibilities and somehow I forgot God’s calling.

My intense religious experience came before graduating from high school during an overnight recollection. It was an unforgettable experience.

I don't remember the talks or the activities, but it is clear to me now that I felt intense joy and love coming from the Lord. My classmates were playing and chatting but I couldn't join them; not because I didn't like them or what they were doing but because I felt at that moment that God was very alive and close to me. I felt His presence, His love, and His forgiveness very strongly. I told the Lord "I have gone too far away from You; now is the time to return and give You my life." After the recollection I was never the same again. The calling came back and I became more and more interested in entering the seminary, but I knew that my father, who wanted me to be an accountant like him, would never allow it.

Because I did not want to frustrate my father, I obeyed him and enrolled in a university in Manila and took up accounting. At the university, I became a member of the campus ministry and met the campus minister, Sr. Mila Roco, a

Franciscan Missionary of Mary, who helped me in my discernment to enter the seminary. In our group, I learned the value of community life, service, prayer, honesty, simplicity, love for God and the poor. Through the guidance of Sr. Mila, we organized many activities that helped us follow



*Seminarians join Fr. Charlton for some recreation.*

Christ more closely, and truly give ourselves to Him and to the Church. One activity was the annual vocation awareness week. During the vocation week of 1992, I met the Guanellians. After this encounter, I became interested in their life and began visiting their house and attending vocation discernment activities.

I will never forget my first visit to see the Guanellians. From the house they were renting, one of their priests brought me to the construction site of the future seminary and pastoral center (the first house of Servants of Charity in the Philippines). Then we went to a squatters area (my first time) near the seminary and visited one of the handicapped that he knew. I was surprised and shocked, not only by the extreme poverty of the people but by the desire and dedication of my Italian



*Fr. Charlton entertains the residents of Guanella Home at Christmas.*

priest companion. As we crossed a small bridge that was almost collapsing and walked through several muddy areas, he greeted the people with a smile and spoke a few words of Tagalog. My companion was Fr. Luigi, my current Provincial Superior, a true missionary. He is a happy priest, and he is happy to be with the poor. I will never forget that afternoon because after that encounter my heart and my mind has never been the same. The desire to return to the Servants of Charity has never left me. I met many other religious groups; bigger, more famous, more established and I even attended their discernment programs and was accepted, but the call for me was to the Servants of Charity. So, after two years at the university, I decided to enter the seminary. I was barely nineteen years old.

My father didn't like my plan. He had many reasons, and was very much against my decision. Against my father's will, I escaped while he was sleeping and went to the seminary in May of 1994. My mother was my "partner in crime." In the seminary, I offered many prayers for my father and, surprisingly, God answered. After only five months, my father accepted my decision and even began looking for benefactors to cover my room, board and studies in the Seminary.

Three years after entering, I returned home. I was very sad to leave but my sister became sick and my father was gravely ill; my mother was alone taking care of them both. He died just one year after I left the seminary.

While outside, I was a religious education teacher in the high school and attended a pastoral course for youth leaders on weekends. There, I met the Archdiocesan Minister for Youth Affairs who, today, is the Archbishop of the Philippines. He was very influential in our group and in my life personally. His words of wisdom and reminders whenever we met, always struck my heart and challenged me to be a better person and a better Christian. During this time away from the seminary, my heart was restless. I felt God was really calling me to serve Him and His poor as a Guanellian priest. During the Jubilee of 2000, I returned to the seminary permanently.

I was ordained a Priest on December 9, 2007 after ten years of formation by the Servants of Charity. These ten years were a challenging and joyful journey with the Lord, with the Guanellian community and with the poor. One could think that my journey has ended with Ordination, but to tell you the truth, I am only just beginning.

Everything is grace. I am a priest now because of God's love. I cannot boast of anything from me except for my own sins and limitations. I am just beginning, so please pray for me and the many priests and religious who have answered the call of God. Pray that we may become holy. Pray for our perseverance. Pray that we do everything with love because when we act with love, we give of ourselves and it is this gift of self that is most precious to God.

I am happy to be a Guanellian priest, helped and challenged to be a true Guanellian until the last breath of my life.



*The Archbishop lays hands on Fr. Charlton during his ordination.*



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Send email to [piousunion@pusj.org](mailto:piousunion@pusj.org).

# THE HOLY CLOAK OF ST. JOSEPH

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

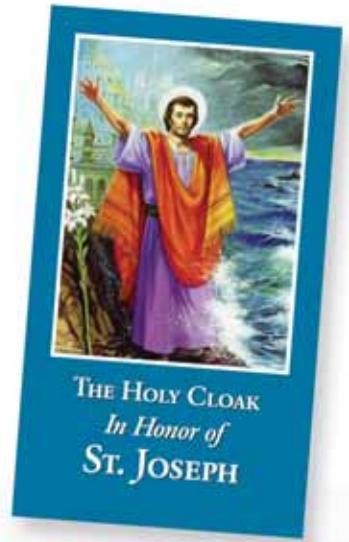
St. Joseph is the Patron of the Universal Church, the Guardian of Jesus and Mary, the Protector and model of every Christian.

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

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

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

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



# 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:**

## UNITED STATES

### ► **Servants of Charity Formation House**

Fr. Dennis Weber  
1795 S. Sproul Rd.  
Springfield, PA 19064  
tel: 610-328-3406  
fax: 610-328-1019  
fr.dweber@chs-adphila.org

### ► **St. Louis Center**

Fr. Satheesh Alphonse  
16195 Old US 12  
Chelsea, MI 48118  
tel: 734-475-8430  
fax: 734-475-0310  
frsatheesh@stlouiscenter.org

### ► **Daughters of St. Mary of Providence**

Sr. Brenda McHugh  
953 E. Michigan Ave.  
Grass Lake, MI 49240  
srbrenda@pusj.org

## INDIA:

### ► **Bangalore**

Fr. Samson Rajasekaran  
Guanella Preethi Nivas  
Geddalahalli, Kothanur (PO)  
Bangalore – 560 077  
Karnataka – India  
Tel: 080/28445501  
Email: gpnbangalore@yahoo.com

► **Chennai**

Fr. A. Adaikalam  
Don Guanella Major Seminary  
Karayanchavadi, Poonamallee  
Chennai – 600 056  
Tel: 044/26274795  
Email: guamaj@yahoo.co.in



► **Cuddalore**

Fr. Paul Arockiara  
St. Joseph's Seminary  
Samupillai Nagar  
Cuddalore 607 001  
Tamil Nadu – India  
Tel: 04142/296788  
Email: sjseminary@yahoo.co.in



► **Vatluru – Eluru (A.P)**

Fr. Charles Boromeo  
Guanella Karunalaya  
Vatluru, West Gothavari  
(Dt) 534 007  
Andhra Pradesh – India  
Tel: 08812/244474  
Email: gkarunalaya@yahoo.com



**PHILIPPINES:**

► **Servants of Charity House**

Fr. Charlton Viray  
Centerville Subd – Pasong Tamo  
Tandang Sora –  
1107 Quezon City  
Tel: 2-931-5549  
Email: coviray@yahoo.com



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### **Shrine of St. Joseph Sacraments and Hours of Devotion**

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

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

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

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

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

**Confession:** Before and after Mass, upon request

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

### **Pious Union of St. Joseph**

953 East Michigan Ave.

Grass Lake, MI 49240

Phone: 517-522-8017

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