

Messenger of St. Philomena

Est. 1876



Sanctuary of St. Philomena

May The Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ & The Immaculate Heart of Mary Our Mother guide this Messenger throughout the world



Miraculous Statue of St. Philomena



Miraculous statue of St. Philomena in procession for the feast day in Aug.

Once the Sacred Relics of St. Philomena had been enshrined at the Church of Our Lady of Grace, Mugnano del Cardinale on the 10th August 1805, it was decided that a feast should be held in her honour on that day every year. The very first feast day celebrations were to be held on the 10th Aug. 1806, a great procession had been planned to add greater solemnity... *cont.* page 2

New Edition

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2003

Jan. 12th—Celebration of the Patronage & Annual Blessing of Oil

May 25th— Feast of the discovery of the Sacred Relics

August 10-13th & 31st — Special Feast day Celebrations



to the day. Cardinal Ruffo-Scilla, the Archbishop of Naples, donated a statue of the Saint for this purpose. This statue is still preserved at the Sanctuary, where it is one of the most prized possessions.

The statue is life-size and made from wood. The Saint is depicted in a standing position in her right hand she holds arrow while in her left grasps a palm and lily. Her hair is tied back and she wears a small tiara. During the Jubilee year of 2000, the statue underwent restoration. At that time it was discovered that the robes of the statue were originally soft ivory and a delicate rose, and not the deep pink and azure blue that they had been for as long as anyone could remember. The restored statue has a much more imposing appearance and has been placed in a niche in the north transept of the church. During the feast day celebrations of 1823, while the statue was being processed around the streets of Mugnano, the bearers noticed that it became so heavy that they had to stop every few paces. In the previous eighteen years there was never any such problem, but now they had to summon assistance and only managed to return it to the church with great effort. By now everyone who looked at the statue noticed that its face had taken on a much more natural appearance than usual and that her cheeks were now quite rosy!

The following day it was noticed that an 'oily sweat' was now flowing from the face of the image. This miraculous 'manna' flowed for a number of days and legal documents were drawn up to prove the miraculous nature of these events. Many of the sick were cured after the 'manna' was applied to them, and many sinners were converted. The Miraculous Statue is exposed for the veneration of the faithful during the month of August, and on the second Sunday of that month it becomes the focus of devotion in a procession which departs the Sanctuary at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The statue is vested in ivory cloth upon which are sewn gold rings, chains and crosses, the tokens of love from devotees of the Saint from around the world. The procession passes through all of the streets in the town, accompanied by bands and a large number of the faithful. Townsfolk throw money or rose petals from their balconies as the statue passes. The procession takes over seven hours to return to the Sanctuary, and concludes as the statue is taken into the Church amid the applause and 'viva's of the Mugnanese and pilgrims. Small plastic reproductions and pictures of the Miraculous Statue are available from the Sanctuary and from official Archconfraternity centres.

Viva

Santa Filomena

The Messenger of the 21st Century: Saint Philomena

By Fr Giovanni Braschi, Rector of the Sanctuary

It is with great joy I welcome this new will include articles on the history of edition of The Messenger of St Philo- devotion to our Wonder-working mena, especially in this the 200th anni- Saint, spiritual guidance, news from versary of the finding of her relics. The the Sanctuary and from the official Messenger was originally founded by Fr devotional centers throughout the Louis Petit in 1876, and was distributed world. Devotees are welcome to send by the Paris branch of the Arch- articles, news, petitions and thanks- confraternity for many years. The inten- giving for inclusion in the Messenger. tion of this new edition remains the same It has been one of my greatest de- as the original; the promotion of devo- sires in all of my years as Rector to tion to St Philomena, the spiritual growth send this messenger out to devotees of her devotees, and the unity of the worldwide, so please spread it to all world-wide Philomenian Family with its far and wide and tell everyone spiritual home, the Sanctuary here at about our Heavenly Patroness. God Mugnano del Cardinale. This new edition Bless you all. From the Sacred Altar is being produced by the Sanctuary's of St. Philomena in her earthly home I administration centre in Scotland, and send you my blessing and prayers.



News from the Sanctuary of St. Philomena



In this past year 2002, there have Jersey, California (many), Texas, Vir- been many pilgrimages staying and ginia, Colorado, Kentucky, Arizona. visiting and we would like to acknowl- There where also many individuals edge and thank them for their prayer- and smaller group too numerous to ful companionship, they where from: mention but never forgotten. The Canada, Germany (many from Sanctuary has undergone a vast Monaco), Hungry (Budapest), Austria, amount of restoration work over the France (many), North Italy, Brazil, past 20 years, the most recent being South India, Spain, Portugal, Hawaii, the internal paintings of the Church Australia, Philippines, Mexico, Croatia- and new Chapel of Confession. There Great Britain, Ireland, Belgium, USA; has been a great deal of hard work Many from Chicago, Louisiana, New and sacrifice but what great rewards!



Our Lady of Grace



The Sanctuary of St. Philomena is dedicated principally to Our Blessed Lady. The title in Italian is "Maria Santissima Delle Grazie" - Most Holy Mary of Grace. The original Church contained an oil painting of the Blessed Virgin under this title however as tastes changed this was replaced by a wooden statue during the sixteenth century. This statue remains at the Sanctuary and is considered to be miraculous. As shown here, the Madonna is depicted in a sitting position, with three cherubs in a cloud

below Her feet. On special because she is Her right knee She with Her Son. All who supports Her Divine enter the Sanctuary to Child, who's right arm visit with St. Philomena in outstretched to bless must first pay their re- all who looks upon the spect to Our Lady and statue while His left Her Son Jesus.

hand is pointing to His

Mother. The Virgins left hand is directed toward Herself, welcoming all to come to Her. The statue is enthroned above the High Altar of the Sanctuary from wear She can look down over all the pilgrims who visit St. Philomena. This beautiful statue can be seen from the bottom of the hill on first sight of the Sanctuary. The feast of Our Lady of Grace is kept on the first Sunday of July, when the statue is carried around the town in a solemn procession. It is a beautiful feast day for Our Lady and more

Pray the Rosary

With our Holy Father's introduction of the new "Luminous Mysteries" we are encourage to pray the Holy Rosary. The Rosary is a very simple yet very powerful way to pray, by praying the rosary we can bring peace to our time. The Sanctuary will be introducing the Living Rosary under the protection of Our Lady of Grace and of which St. Philomena is patroness of. Details of this will be included in the next issue.

St. Philomena's Oil

Perhaps the most famous of the sacramental's associated with St. Philomena is the use of her Holy Oil. In fact dating from 1805 it is the oldest sacramental of the Saint. Over the last two centuries millions have used St. Philomena's Oil and countless graces have been received after its application. In 1805 a mother came to the Sanctuary bringing her blind child, for whom she prayed. Full of trust in St. Philomena and knowing of the power of her intercession, the woman dipped her finger in the oil lamp which was burning before the Relics of the Saint. She applied the Oil to the eyes of her blind child whilst praying feverently to the Holy Martyr. St. Philomena's power was demonstrated when the child was instantly cured and for the first time was able to see the wonder of

God's creation. The prodigy was witnessed by the many pilgrims who were at the Sanctuary at that time and was duly authenticated by the Church. January 13th is the feast of the Patronage of St. Philomena however the celebration for this takes place on the second Sunday of January alongside the annual blessing of the oil. On this day the pilgrims arrive in procession donating oil. The Bishop of Nola and the Rector celebrates Holy Mass, during which this oil is blessed in a special ceremony exclusive to the Sanctuary. This oil is then used to fill the oil lamp which burns day and night before the Sacred Relics of St. Philomena. This blessed oil is used to fill

the small, round, red bottles which are distributed around the world. Only the oil which has been blessed in this ceremony at the Sanctuary of St. Philomena, Mugnano del Cardinale, Italy is the official sacramental of the Church and any other oil is not authentic and is not



the Holy Oil of St. Philomena. This oil can be obtained from the Sanctuary or any official Universal Archconfraternity centers.



PAX
TECUM
FILUMENA

Present Ecclesial Status of Devotion to St. Philomena

The following is the first part in a series from the booklet entitled Present Ecclesial Status of Devotion to St. Philomena by Dr. Mark Miravalle, Professor of Theology and Mariology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, U.S.A.. The full edition of the article is available from the Sanctuary

Precisely how the Church views the history and nature of devotion attributed to an early Roman martyr named “Filumena” (or more popularly, “Filomena” [Ital.] or

“Philomena” [Eng.]), a name found inscribed on a catacomb *loculus*, remains a topic of considerable discussion and confusion. The status of devotion to St. Philomena has recently received renewed attention in light of the recent release of the revised *Roman Martyrology* by the Congregation for Divine Worship, whereby the omission of St. Philomena was perceived by some as an official rejection of her status as a saint, somewhat inconsistent with the fact that she continues to be the object of popular Church devotion throughout the world. What then is the present ecclesial status of this early Church female martyr, the veneration of whom in the past has been the object of several papal documents and numerous hagiographical testimonies? In seeking to examine this question, we will briefly examine the historical origins of devotion; papal and ecclesiasti-

cal decrees regarding the devotion; hagiographical testimonies; the archeological controversy; and recent Church documents relative to the devotion.

Historical Origins of the Devotion On May 24, 1802, an excavator in the Catacombs of St. Priscilla struck a tile and, as previously instructed by Msgr. Ponzetti, Custodian of the Holy Relics, immediately ceased the excavation. Fr. Filippo Ludovici, Vatican overseer of the excavation was informed, and on the following day, May 25, 1802, Fr. Ludovici, accompanied by several observers, descended into the catacomb, and witnessed the full uncovering of the *loculus*, whereby with the removal of soil, three brick funeral tiles were revealed which bore an epitaph painted in red. A vial was found broken in the process of unsealing the *loculus*, with a dust of blackish color indicating blood clinging to glass fragments, and with the lower portion of the vial still intact and firmly embedded in the cement. An engraved palm branch, the other typical sign which

designates the tomb of a martyr along with the blood vial, was observed on the second tile.

The painted inscription on the three funeral tiles appeared as follows: tile one - LUMENA; tile two – PAXTE; tile three – CUM FI. The *loculus* was documented by Msgr. Ponzetti, Custodian of the Holy Relics, as bearing

“FILUMENA,” an interpretation of the epitaph consistent with both the ancient custom of beginning inscriptions from the second tile and the logical etymological context. The result is a full reading of the epitaph as “PAX TECUM FILUMENA.” The name of “Filumena” is officially granted to the sacred remains examined on May 25, 1802, as recorded in the document issued by Ponzetti as Custodian of the Sacred Relics which released the remains of this Christian martyr to the Diocese of Nola on June 8, 1805:

8 Iunii 1805

*Dono dedi Ven. Ecclesiae
Archipresbyterali terrae Mugnano
Dioecesis Nolanae corpus Sanctae
Christi Martyris*

FILUMENAE

*Nominis proprii sic picti in tribus
Tabulis laterariis cinabro*

LUMENA PAXTE CUM FI

in pulverem et in Fragmina redactum

*per me infrascriptum Custodem
extractum cum vasculo vitreo fracto ex
Coemeterio Priscillae Via Salaria Nova
die 25 maii 1802, quod collocavi in
capsula lignea charta colorata
cooperta et consignavi Illmo Dominico
Caesari pro Illmo et Rmo D.
Bartholomaeo de Caesare Epo
Potentino.*

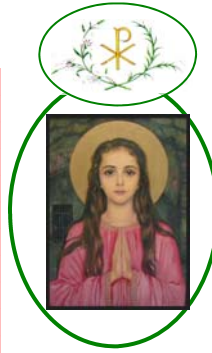
*HYACINTHUS PONZETTI, Custos.*⁹
Fr. Francesco de Lucia, parish priest from the Church of Our Lady of Grace at Mugnano del Cardinale in the Diocese of Nola, received the assistance of Msgr. Bartolomeo di Caesare, Bishop-elect of Nola in obtaining permission from the Holy See to transfer the sacred remains of the Christian martyr, Filumena to his Mugnano parish for the purpose of fostering spiritual renewal amidst his faithful. The remains of Filumena departed from Rome on July 1, 1805 and arrived at Mugnano on August 10, 1805 where they have remained since the transferal. The exceptional quantity of miracles which resulted from the petitioning of the martyr invoked as “Philomena,” initially by the southern Italian faithful, and then shortly thereafter by peoples of various countries, has been officially documented in various ecclesiastical recordings. *(part two cont'd. next issue)*

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ST. PHILOMENA, VM

**St. Philomena
Devotional Items**

Chaplets
St. Philomena Cords
Holy Oil of St. Philomena
Statues in various sizes
Medals/Relic Medals
Holy Pictures/Prayer Cards
Prayer Books
Audio Tapes/ CD's

**St. Philomena with
your cord encircle
and protect us**

Next Issue

*The finding of St. Philomena's Relics
Places of interest around the Sanctuary
News from the Sanctuary and much more*

Donations

Are most needed and are greatly received. Please send direct to the Sanctuary at the address above.

Archconfraternity Membership

The Universal Archconfraternity seeks to join devotees of St. Philomena worldwide into one spiritual family under the direction of the Sanctuary of Saint Philomena. The Archconfraternity seeks to spread devotion to our Little Saint, and to encourage commitment to Christian life lived according to the Gospel of Christ and the special example of St. Philomena, Virgin and Martyr. Members of the Archconfraternity will receive a quarterly newsletter and membership card. Membership of the Archconfraternity has been enriched with Indulgences by many Popes and can be obtained from the Sanctuary or your local official centre.

Pilgrims Centre

The Sanctuary of St. Philomena, spiritual home of devotees of the Saint throughout the world extends a warm welcome to all those who wish to come on pilgrimage to this sacred place. The Pilgrim centre can now accommodate groups of up to fortyfive pilgrims, accommodation is available on a bed & breakfast, half board or full board basis. For further information, brochures and prices contact the Sanctuary.