

ALVARO GARCÍA DE MOVELLÁN HERNAINZ

LIFE OF ST. NUNZIO SULPRICIO



JOUNG, WORKER
AND SICK

Birth and early life

On April 13, 1817, a child was born in the village of Pescosansonesco in central Italy who received the name of Nunzio in honor of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was baptized that same day.

His father Domenico was a shoemaker, his mother Rosa a spinner.

When Nunzio was only three years old, his father died leaving the family without resources. Rosa remarried two years later but Nunzio's stepfather was him. He did not show affection, beat him and humiliate him for any insignificance in such a way that the child became shy and especially sensitive.

Nunzio felt great attachment to his mother and maternal grandmother. He began to attend a small school opened by a priest. I loved it! They were the best moments of his life. There he began to read and write and above all to know Jesus, the Son of God made man and died on the Cross for the atonement of our sins; Prayer began to gain importance in his life.

Around the age of six his mother Rosa died and the child was welcomed into the house of his maternal grandmother Rosaria, an illiterate woman but of great faith and much charity. Nunzio entered a school for very poor people.

At this stage of his life the boy began to develop a great love for God: he liked to be an altar boy, frequently visited Jesus in the Tabernacle and felt great horror for sin.

However, in 1826 with just nine years Nunzio experienced the pain of losing his grandmother whom he loved so much.

Their sufferings begin

The boy was picked up by his uncle Domenico, a man given to alcohol and extremely angry, brutal and rude. He took him out of school and placed him as an apprentice in his forging workshop where he employed him for more than 12 hours without any regard for his young age or for his most elementary vital needs.

If he thought he was not obedient enough, he left him without food. In fact, Nunzio, on occasion, fainted. Domenico sent him shopping to very distant places and transporting very heavy materials. He struck frequently, accompanying the blows with swear words and profanity. The other men who worked in the forge also treated him cruelly and, aware of the child's sensitivity, amused themselves by blaspheming in his presence. Nunzio then fled covering his ears. A few days later, exhausted with fatigue and hunger, he had no choice but to ask for help to the neighbors.

What gave the child strength to resist in such an inhumane environment? Only one thing: his great faith. In the workshop, as he struck the anvil, he thought of his great friend Jesus crucified. He prayed and offered his sufferings in unison with Him, in amend for the sins of the world, to fulfill God's will and gain heaven. On Sundays, although no one cared about it, he

went to Holy Mass which was his only consolation in the week.

On a harsh winter morning Domenico sent Nunzio with his shoulders laden with material to an isolated farm. On the way the boy slipped in a pool of ice water. He left exhausted, with a swollen leg and a head burning with fever. He went to bed without saying anything but the next day he couldn't get up. The medication his uncle prescribed was hard and cruel: Go back to work. He said, "If you don't work, you don't eat!" He went back to his work although the smells were very large. At this time, when he could, he took refuge in the church to pray before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. He received much joy, energy and light.



When he could not go to church, he sought and found God in his own heart. His union with God made him keep his smile and forgive. "It's what God wants! Let God's will be done!" And his inner joy he procured the kindness of the peasants

around him who liked to chat with him since they saw him as a happy and serene spirit. He took the opportunity to tell them about Jesús and bring them some catechism. *The glorious power of God will make you strong to the point that you will be able to endure everything with patience and fortitude, full of joy (Col 1:11).*

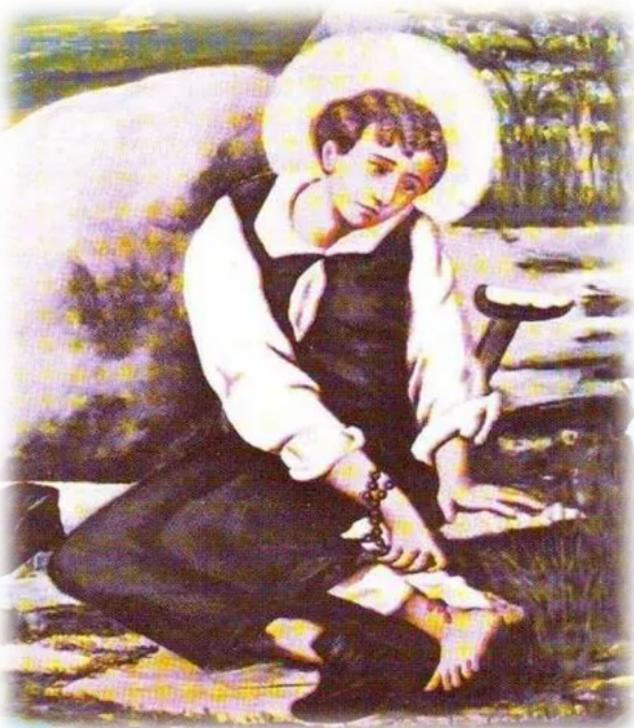
The accident

One day Nunzio drops a hammer on his foot. To clean himself the sore he crawls to the great fountain of the village, but is soon expelled by the women who are washing the clothes there fearing that the water will dirty. From this moment he can no longer work as before. Your uncle says, "If you can't lift the hammer anymore, you'll sit still and take care of the bellows!" Leven tied him with the chains of the bellows to force him to work. This work, so close to the fire, was an indescribable torture for the child.

It became clear that Nunzio needed healing. Domenico sent him to a neighboring town thinking that this useless nephew would not return. In April 1831 he was hospitalized. But the treatment was powerless to cure the sore that ended up gangrene becoming and taking on a horrible appearance. However these days of rest did him a lot of good. He exercised charity towards other sick people. He distinguished himself because he prayed intensely. When he returned to his uncle's house, he was forced to beg for a living. The one that gave him strength was the crucifix, to look at Jesus

crucified. He said: "I don't have very little, as long as I can save my soul and love God!"

Another uncle of his named Francesco, who was a corporal in the Bourbon Army in Naples, and who had heard of the cruel treatment his nephew received, appeared in 1832 at the forge of Domenico and asked the boy. Domenico gladly accepted that this useless worker will be taken away. Francesco took Nunzio away in a terrible and miserable state. In fact, he was taken directly to the hospital. And not just any hospital but the one reserved for desperate cases.



At the hospital

Nunzio, barely fifteen years old, was practically hopeless. The caries had attacked the bones causing intense odors. And yet he showed unalterable patience. The doctors and the rest of the patients began to consider that he was a saint since he lived all his smells with joy and showing great virtues in his day to day. A priest asked him:

-Do you suffer a lot?

-Yes; I do God's will

-What would you like?

-I would like to confess and receive Jesus for the first time

-Have you not yet taken your first communion?

-No, in our region we must wait until we are fifteen years old

"And your parents?"

-Died

-And who takes care of you?

-The providence of God

They immediately prepared him to receive Jesus in communion. That day became the most beautiful of his life. The priest who confessed him later said: "From that moment, the grace of God began to work in him in an extraordinary way making him run from virtue to virtue. His whole person breathed the love of God and Jesus Christ."

Medical treatments achieved a slight improvement in his health. He was able to abandon his crutches and walk with the help of a cane. His favorite place was the chapel: he loved to pray before the Tabernacle or before an image of the

Blessed Virgin Mary. When he was able to walk, he visited the rest of taught hospitalized children the catechism, preparing them for the first Celebration and the First Communion. He gently explained to all the sick how to live intensely the condition of Christians through suffering. He said: "Before God's sake and with joy!" If they gave him something, he immediately distributed it with the poor people even though he himself had absolutely nothing. His love and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary was incredible: he prayed with great fervor and loved her wholeheartedly.



God began to show some supernatural signs in the life of Nunzio. We know that in his most painful moments he came to experience some apparition of the Blessed Virgin, of the

Angels and of the Saints. The bandages of his sores began to manifest miraculous properties. A woman from Naples experienced it when she applied them to her sick knee.

He who is loves himself, is lost, and he who hates himself in this world will save himself for eternal life (Jn 12:25).

Final

In 1834 Nuncio improved greatly to the point that he was able to leave the hospital and stay in the house of a person who took him in. The young man had the desire to consecrate himself entirely to God in religious life. Meanwhile he began a life plan based on prayer, meditation, daily Holy Mass, hours of study during the day and recitation of the Rosary in the afternoon. He himself continued to radiate much peace and love to all the people who came into his life.

But when it seemed that he could fulfill his dream of becoming a religious, his condition suddenly worsened. It turns out he had totally incurable bone cancer. In 1835 the doctors decided to amputate the diseased leg, but the extreme weakness of the patient forced them to renounce it.

In March 1836 the fever became very high and the heart showed signs of weakness. The suffering was very acute. He prayed and gave himself for the Church, priests and the conversion of sinners. To the people who visited him he said: "Jesus suffered much for us and, thanks to his merits, eternal life awaits us. If we suffer for a moment, we will enjoy paradise... Jesus suffered much for me. Why shouldn't I

suffer for Him?... Who would like to die to convert even a sinner."

At that time, he wrote a letter to his uncle Domenico. It is the only writing in his own handwriting that has been preserved. In it no bitterness or resentment is manifested because he had totally forgiven his uncle.

On May 5, he asked for a crucifix and sent for a confessor. He received the sacraments and consoled the person who welcomed him: "Rejoice, for I will always assist you from Heaven." In the afternoon, he exclaimed full of happiness: "Our Lady, our Lord, look how beautiful she is!". With that said he died. She was 19 years old.

A perfume of roses spread around him as all the people who were there and those who entered afterwards could notice. His body, so beaten by illness, suddenly became beautiful and fresh. It was requested that his body be kept exposed for five days to people who wanted to see him before proceeding to his burial. The example of his life began to spread to many places. His tomb soon became a place of pilgrimage.

In 1963 Pope Paul VI beatified him in the presence of all the bishops gathered at the Second Vatican Council. He proclaimed it an example for the young, for the sick and for the working world. Nunzio, in fact, carrying out very heavy manual labor, was able to sanctify himself in this work and live a highly Christian life, of deep union with God, despite his long working hours. It is a clear example of how whatever work we have, however hard and demanding it may seem, it

is not an obstacle to the Christian life if we know how to strive and put God in the first place.



The righteous, even if he dies prematurely, will have rest (Wis 4:7)

In 2018 Pope Francis canonized him saying in his homily these words:

"Jesus is radical. He gives everything and asks for everything: He gives total love and asks for an undivided heart. Even today it is given to us as living bread; Can we give him the crumbs in return? To Him, who became our servant to the point of going to the cross for us, we cannot respond only by the observance of some precept.

To Him, who offers us eternal life, we cannot give a little spare time. Jesus is not satisfied with a percentage of love:

we cannot love him twenty, fifty or sixty percent. Either all or nothing. Dear brothers and sisters, our heart is like a magnet: it allows itself to be attracted by love, but it adheres only on one side and must choose between loving God or loving the riches of the world (cf. Mt 6:24); to live to love or to live for oneself (cf. Mk 8:35). Let us ask ourselves which side we are on. Let us ask ourselves how our love story with God is going."



Body of St. Nunzio Sulprizio

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