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## *Celebrate the Month of Mary*

**S**aint Therese, the Patroness of the Missions, shared this thought near the end of her life: “We know very well that the Blessed Virgin is Queen of heaven and earth, but to me she is more Mother than Queen.” Therese had experienced Mary’s loving smile and help when she was sick and suffering as a child, and she never forgot that she truly had a Mother watching over her. She reminds us during the month of May that we too have a special friend in heaven, our Blessed Mother, who prays and intercedes for each one of us with her Son Jesus.

The sociologist of religion in the United States, Father Andrew Greeley, has often written that for Catholics Mary is the sign and symbol of the feminine side of God who loves and cares for us with the affection and tenderness of a mother. With these thoughts in mind then, I want to write:

### ***Happy Mother’s Day ...***

*... to the friends of Carmelite Missions who are mothers, grandmothers, and all those very special women who have been like mothers to others! We thank you for the kindness and love that you have shared during your lifetime. During May, your names will be placed on our altar, and I will be remembering you each day in my Mass.*

*During this month of Mary, I would ask you to remember the ministry and needs of our Carmelite priests and sisters in Zimbabwe. The past few years have been very harsh and tragic ones for the people in that country because of the cruelty of the President, Robert Mugabe. Deaths have been frequent and violent. Famine and diseases have been rampant. Food, clothing, and medicines have been in such short supply.*

Letter continued on back

### *“Loving and Caring”*



Elementary Students Gathering



Carmelite priest and sister in Zimbabwe



Saint of the Month 🌸 Feast Day, May 26th

# Saint Philip Neri

**H**ad St. Philip Neri lived today he would have been referred to as the “crazy Father Philip.” He was anything but conventional, he saw a joke in everything, and he dressed like an unmade bed and carried on anytime and anyplace. For some he was devoid of the dignity they thought a priest should have, to the more ‘elite’ he was uncouth, but to those who really knew him, he was a man of God, on fire with the love of God – truly a holy person, a saint.

For the most part, his life and fame were tied up with Rome, and his influence and work was on the Roman scene. But he was born in Florence and born at a time when the new ideas of the Renaissance were coming into being. It was an age of freedom, liberty and enlightenment; it was an age when Christianity was splintered by reformers. Yet, it was the age of great saints – Teresa of Avila, Ignatius Loyola, Francis Xavier, and others.

## Life of Philip

He was born the same year as Teresa, 1515 and of a poor family. His mother died when he was rather young leaving him with two sisters. His father was a dreamer who earned little and

dabbled in alchemy, dreaming some day of great wealth. The family was left to itself as the father spent his evenings after work experimenting on ways to make gold. So Philip roamed the area, hanging around the various shops of his neighborhood. But he had a love of the monks of St. Mark’s of Florence, and he speaks of their influence: “Any good in me comes from them,” he said. In any case, he got a smattering of an education, learned to love God, but had no plan for life.

At eighteen his father thought to farm him out to a supposedly rich relative who lived in Gaeta, half-way between Rome and Naples. So off Philip went with little baggage and when he got to Gaeta, he found his uncle Romulo wasn’t too rich – and he wasn’t very welcomed. Philip being Philip, he probably wasn’t disappointed – but laughed, tied up his few belongings and headed for Rome – a new home that he would never leave.

Philip found a home with a fellow Florentine and earned his keep by tutoring his host’s son (he must have had a good enough education for that). From his home in the Customs House (for his host was a custom official), he sought out a life for himself. He was deeply religious under his gaiety and sought out souls in the street and among those in the hospital for the incurables. In odd hours he would wander into the lecture halls and learn philosophy and theology—a young man with an ideal

who soon had a following.

This was a strange time for Rome. Only a few years previously Rome had been sacked, and many preachers said that this was a penalty from God for their sins. Rome had been seeped in excesses and morality, and it was at a low ebb. Now came the prophets of doom who thundered against the sins of the people, preached an austere discipline, and demanded an impossible way of life. The people felt rejected, and onto the scene comes the spiritual tramp, Philip, happy in his ways, moderate in his mandates of the love of God, and yet seeking to have the people reform.

## Ministry in Rome

Philip’s informal work with the people was fine for a time, but as he got older and more deeply involved, it seemed necessary for him to structure his life more. His confessor, Father Persiano Rosa, induced him to become a priest. Philip had wanted to go off to a desert area to be a hermit after the fashion of St. John the Baptist, but a story that has been handed down has it that he met Father Rosa and was told that his desert was Rome.

So with Father Rosa, Philip – now ordained a priest – started an apostolate; he was thirty-four years of age. They formed an association, a brotherhood, that would meet on Sundays, receive Holy Communion together, and then participate in a spiritual round table that was designed to build up

their spiritual life. Besides, there would be acts of charity, like caring for the patients in the incurable hospital, and in 1550 during the Jubilee Year care for the pilgrims who came to Rome. Records show that they reached out to as many as five hundred people a day.

Thus Philip's apostolate developed. People would flock around him, seek his advice and follow his counsel. But he was especially sought out for confession. Here was a priest who was no rigorist, who would not berate his penitents, who did not act outraged at their falling from grace, but with kindness and great cheerfulness would apply his priestly privilege of dispensing forgiveness as an agent of God. He knew well God's plan for the sacrament of Penance – not only to forgive sins, but to let people also know that God always loved them. He was for the people a “stand-in” for Christ.

### Delightful Stories about Philip

It is in the confessional that Father Philip really made his mark. What lessons he taught! A story is told that a woman came and confessed gossip – but she didn't seem to realize the damage her sin caused. So he told her to take a pillow, go to the marketplace and shake out the feathers and bring the pillow back to him. Well, God bless this crazy Father Philip, and off she went with a chuckle. Returning with the empty pillow slip, she told Philip – “here, I have done my penance.” “No,” he said, “you have only done the first part. Now take the pillow slip and pick up all the feathers that you strew.” “But Father Philip,” she replied, “that is impossible.” “So, it is impossible for you to undo the harm done by your tongue.” This lesson she remembered.

Philip's way sprang from his unique brand of spirituality. He wanted no one



The Virgin appearing to St. Philip Neri

to deem him a saint, and to disguise what was within him, he acted as a clown. One day four Poles came to visit him – they wanted to see a ‘saint’ – so he seated them around him and read to them from a joke book, adding quips of his own. Or in public, he would carry on; he would dress outlandishly, sometimes in an old red cape, sometimes with white shoes, often with only half his face shaved. He wanted to hide his love of God, but he also wanted to make people laugh as he was convinced that joy was the mark of a Christian. For him, holiness and happiness went hand-in-hand.

He was famous for his pilgrimages to the seven major basilicas of Rome. His group would start out before dawn and visit a few churches – of course, receiving Holy Communion, then breakfast and on to the other basilicas – then lunch with music and wine, and ending the day having visited all seven. They sang spiritual songs and recited litanies as they went – at meal breaks there would be food, wine and musicians. It was a spiritual picnic, and Philip would be the life of the party.

### Disciples of Philip

He founded a society of secular priests who took no vows as such but worked for the good of the Church where it seemed best. One of his most famous disciples was Caesar Baronius. Caesar was a brilliant man but a country bumpkin. He joined up with Philip and was made the cook – even to the point where he got sick of it and wrote on the kitchen wall: ‘Caesar Baronius, perpetual cook.’ At that time there was a book published by the reformers full of calumny and hatred for the Church. The reformers used this to spread evil about the Church so that the people would leave and join them. Philip asked Caesar to write a history of the Church – the famous ‘Annales Ecclesiastici’ which did so much to counteract the influence of the Protestant book, ‘Centuries of Magdeburg.’ Later Caesar was made a Cardinal, and only because of his strong protests against such an honor, was he probably kept from being Pope.

There were many exceptional occurrences in Philip's life. It is said that he had visions, was cured of an illness by the Blessed Virgin, had the ability to read souls, and many miracles were ascribed to him. But in reality, his life was very simple – he was a happy person, telling jokes, playing tricks, causing laughter, having one of his disciples dance to amuse people, reading from a joke book, doing all kinds of strange antics – all basically to lead souls to God with joy. He lived a long life, dying at eighty, and loved as a very joyous saint.





## CARMELITE MISSIONS

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*"Thank You for your Kindness and Love"*

### *Month of Mary continued...*

*Our Irish Carmelites have worked in Zimbabwe since 1946, and they have continued to stand beside the poor people during these many years of suffering. They are ably assisted in all of their parishes, schools and mission stations by our Carmelite Sisters, the Handmaids of Our Lady.*

*Your gift to Carmelite Missions during this month of May will help these missionary workers in Zimbabwe as they respond to the hunger, disease, and all kinds of misery that have become so commonplace in that devastated country.*

*Thank you for your goodness and for your gift to our Mission office. May Mary, the Mother of Jesus and of each one of us, bless and watch over you during this lovely month of May!*

Love and peace,

*Fr. John Malley, O. Carm.*



### April 2009 Saint of the Month Update



The Holy See has indicated that the canonization of our Carmelite brother, from **Blessed Nuno Alvares Pereira** to **Saint Nuno Alvares Pereira**, has taken place on April 26, 2009 at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The Carmelites held a prayer vigil at St. Peter's the evening before his sainthood.

*Remember the Carmelite Missions when you write your will.*

# A Lasting Tribute

**“Give of your hands to Serve... and your hearts to Love”**

– Mother Teresa

Have you recently thought about writing your Will? Leaving your loved ones with an outline of your special wishes could be a **real gift** to your family. You might think of a Will as a prayer, because it gathers together the material fruits of your life and disburses them according to what you really value.

Perhaps, you can consider a bequest or other gift in memory or in honor of someone special to you. Creating a memorial through your Will or other plans can be a satisfying way to pay lasting tribute to loved ones.

Here are a few ideas to guide you. These examples are suggestions only. The actual form of a bequest will, in most cases, be determined in consultation with your attorney or advisor.

- 1) **PERCENTAGE** – “I give, devise, and bequeath to (Name of individual or institution) of (City and State), \_\_\_% of my estate.”
- 2) **DOLLAR AMOUNT** – “I give, devise, and bequeath to (Name of individual or institution, of (City and State) \$\_\_\_\_\_.”
- 3) **SPECIFIC PROPERTY** – “I give, devise, and bequeath to (Name of individual or institution), of (City and State), (Description of property), located at (exact location).”
- 4) **RESIDUE** – (Whatever is left after other bequests have been granted). “All the residue of my estate, including real and personal property. I give, devise and bequeath to (Name of individual or institution), of (City and State).”

Hopefully, some of these ideas will enable you to make long-term financial goals to benefit your loved ones and charitable organizations.

Thank you for your longstanding support to the *Carmelite Missions!* Please remember the *Carmelite Missions* by providing the future resources needed to help the Carmelites in their good works in the foreign missions when you write your Will.

