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29 October

## **Blessed MICHAEL RUA** **priest**

### **Memorial**

Michael Rua was born at Turin on 9 June 1837. While still a child he met Don Bosco who with a symbolic gesture foretold that they would 'go halves' together in their future life. In 1855 he made his first vows; while still a subdeacon he was chosen as spiritual director of the recently founded Congregation. When he became Don Bosco's successor in 1888 it seemed that he had indeed 'gone halves' with him in everything. He displayed a creative fidelity to the apostolic aspirations and initiatives of the Founder; he reflected the same attractive fatherliness; he developed the Founder's works and continued his apostolic ardour in favour of the young, adapting the works to changing social situations. During the 22 years he was Rector Major he made numerous journeys to support and consolidate the work of the confreres, whom he frequently encouraged by both circular and personal letters which constitute an authoritative interpretation of the spirit of the Founder. He died at Turin on 6 April 1910, and was beatified by Paul VI on 29 October 1972. In his homily Paul VI described the Blessed indicating his mission and his holiness, as the successor of the Founder: « his successor, that is, continuer: son, disciple, imitator. He made the example of the Saint a school, and his personal work an institution extended, it may be said, all over the earth. He made his life a history, his rule a spirit, his holiness a type, a model. He made the spring a stream, a river.».

*From the Common of pastors; or from the Common of saints: for religious. Psalms of the day as in the Ordinary.*

### **Office of Readings**

#### **SECOND READING**

From the "Letters" of Blessed Michael Rua,

(29 November 1899; "Circular Letters,"  
Turin 1965, 236-239 *passim*)

#### *The practice of obedience and sacrifice*

Among all the virtues the one most difficult for human nature is obedience. To have to renounce one's own will and judgement, to have to depend on others not only as regards action but also in thinking and judging - in things great and small and even in what concerns the salvation of the soul - are things much harder to bear than the practice of the most severe penances. Obedience strikes at man in his most intimate being, i.e. in his free will. But obedience cannot be disjoined from the spirit of sacrifice, which is that virtue by which when circumstances are most difficult a religious does not give way to imagination or feelings or first reactions but, in the light of reason strengthened by faith, comes to realize that whatever unpleasant things may happen to him will redound to his spiritual advantage. One who has the good fortune to possess the spirit of sacrifice, far from being downcast and complaining, even amid the most painful suffering, suppresses in his heart any natural repugnance and looks up to heaven with generous resignation saying: Lord, if this is how you want it, your will be done.

On this virtue is founded the beatitude of suffering which Jesus Christ made known to the world; and this was the path our Founder trod. His life could be described as a continual sacrifice, to such an extent that without a spirit of self-abnegation we could not call ourselves his sons. Furthermore, without sacrifice one could not hope to do good to the young, because at every step one would become impatient, angry or discouraged. It would be impossible to tolerate the defects of confreres or to obey Superiors. Without a spirit of sacrifice one would not have the strength to practise poverty, would run the risk of shipwreck as regards chastity, and would render perseverance in vocation very doubtful. Every morning in our prayer of consecration to Mary most Holy we ask that, as far as possible, by our words and conduct and good example we may be living representations of Jesus. But when is it, my dear sons, that we are most similar to the Divine Saviour, when it is that we represent him most closely in the eyes of those whose souls we have to save? It is especially when through our status as religious, through our priestly ministry, we have something to suffer. When we come to die, it will not be the pleasures we enjoyed, the honours we received, the riches we acquired that will be our consolation, but rather what we did through the sacrifices we suffered for Jesus.

#### RESPONSORY

Cf. Eph 4,1.3.4; Rm 15,5.6

**R/.** Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. \* There is one hope that belongs to your call.

**V/.** May God grant you to live in such harmony with one another, that together you may with one voice glorify God.

**R/.** There is one hope that belongs to your call.

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\* *Or:*

#### SECOND READING

From the "Homilies" of Paul VI, pope

(29 October 1972; Teaching of Paul VI, 10,  
Vatican City 1973, 1100-1106 *passim*)

#### *Son, disciple, imitator*

Let us meditate for a moment, on the characteristic aspect of Don Rua, the aspect which defines him, and which with one look tells us everything and makes us understand.

Who is Don Rua? He is the first successor of Don Bosco, the holy Founder of the Salesians. And why is Don Rua now beatified, that is, glorified? He is beatified and glorified precisely because he is his successor, that is, continuer: son, disciple, imitator. He made the example of the Saint a school, and his personal work an institution extended, it may be said, all over the earth. He made his life a history, his rule a spirit, his holiness a type, a model. He made the spring a stream, a river. The marvellous fruitfulness of the Salesian family, one of the greatest and most significant phenomena of the perennial vitality of the Church in the last century and in ours, had in Don Bosco its origin, in Don Rua its continuation. It was this follower of his that from the humble beginnings at Valdocco served the Salesian work in its expansion, realized the felicity of the formula, developed it according to the letter, but with ever inspired newness. Don Rua was the most faithful, therefore the most humble and at the same time the most valiant of the sons of Don Bosco.

What does Don Rua teach us? How was he able to rise to the glory of paradise and to the exaltation that the Church gives to him today? Just by teaching us to be continuers; that is, followers, pupils, teachers, if you like, provided we are disciples of a higher Teacher. Let us amplify the lesson that we receive from him: he teaches the Salesians to remain Salesians, ever faithful sons of their Founder; and then he teaches everyone reverence for the magisterium, which presides over the thought and economy of Christian life.

The dignity of the disciple depends on the wisdom of the Master. Imitation in the disciple is no longer passiveness, or servility; it is leaven, it is perfection (cf. 1 Cor 4,16). The capacity of the pupil to develop his own personality is derived, in fact, from that art of drawing out, the teacher's art, which is called education, an art that guides the logical but free and original, expansion of the pupil's virtual qualities. We mean that the virtues of which Don Rua is a model and which the Church made the reason for his beatification, are still the evangelical virtues of the humble who adhere to the prophetic school of holiness; of the humble to whom the highest mysteries of divinity and of mankind are revealed (cf. Mt 11,25).

If Don Rua is really qualified as the first continuer of the example and work of Don Bosco, we will always like to think of him again and venerate him in this ascetical aspect of humility and dependence. But we will never be able to forget the operative aspect of this small but great man, all the more so in that we, in the mentality of our times which is inclined to measure the stature of a man by his capacity for action, are aware we have before us an athlete of apostolic activity which, still in the mould of Don Bosco but with growing dimensions of its own, confers on Don Rua the spiritual and human proportions of greatness.

#### RESPONSORY

1 Cor 11,1-2; Phil 4,1

**R/.** Maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. \* Stand firm in the Lord.

**V/.** Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

**R/.** Stand firm in the Lord

Concluding prayer as at Morning Prayer.

### Morning Prayer

#### SCRIPTURE READING

Heb 13, 7-9a

Remember your leaders, who preached the word of God to you, and as you reflect on the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be for ever. Do not let yourselves be led astray by all sorts of strange doctrines.

#### SHORT RESPONSORY

**R/.** I placed watchmen on your towers, \* they watch over your Church.

I placed watchmen on your towers, they watch over your Church

**V/.** Day and night they proclaim your name

\* they watch over your Church.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

I placed watchmen on your towers, they watch over your Church.

**Ant. At the Ben.** The Spirit of the Lord has consecrated me  
to proclaim a joyful message to the poor.

## INTERCESSIONS

At the beginning of this new day, the memorial of Blessed Michael Rua, let us raise our prayers and supplications to God our Father

*God our Father, strengthen our fidelity.*

Through the grace that comes from you, Father, you enable the ministers of your Church to work with patience in charity:

- grant courage and perseverance to those you have called to work for the Kingdom.

In Blessed Michael Rua you have given us a model of total availability to your call:

- grant that by imitating his example we may love and serve Christ in the young with whom we come in contact

In Blessed Michael you have given us an example of work and temperance:

- help us to bear witness to the values of evangelical poverty by our way of life.

You made of Blessed Michael the faithful collaborator of St John Bosco and the continuer of his work:

- grant also to us a filial spirit so that we may progress along the way of holiness.

You constituted Blessed Michael Rua as the responsible leader of a religious Family in rapid expansion:

- enlighten with your Spirit of wisdom those whom you call to guide the Salesian Congregation.

Our Father.

## PRAYER

God our Father, you have given to your priest, Blessed Michael Rua, the spiritual heir of Saint John Bosco, the ability to form in the young your divine image; grant also that we, who are called to educate young people, may make known the true countenance of Christ, your Son. He is God, and lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

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## Evening Prayer

### SCRIPTURE READING

1 Pt 5, 1-4

Now I have something to tell your elders: I am an elder myself, and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, and with you I have a share in the glory that is to be revealed. Be the shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you; watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but be an example that the whole flock can follow. When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the crown of unfading glory.

### SHORT RESPONSORY

**R/.** This is a man who loves his brothers, \* and intercedes for the people.  
This is a man who loves his brothers, and intercedes for the people.

V/. He laid down his life for his brothers,  
\* and intercedes for the people.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.  
This is a man who loves his brothers, and intercedes for the people.

**Ant. At the Magn.** With the help of the Holy Spirit  
guard the legacy you have received:  
be vigilant, endure pain and suffering,  
proclaim the Gospel, fulfil your ministry

## INTERCESSIONS

As evening falls we make our humble prayer to God our Father, who calls all his children to holiness, and let us say:

*Lord, sanctify your faithful people.*

You led Michael Rua, while still a boy, to give himself entirely to you at the school of St John Bosco:

– grant that we too may be always faithful to the charism of our Founder.

You gave to Blessed Michael Rua the heart of a good and gentle shepherd:

– inspire all the members of the Salesian Family to serve you in their brothers and sisters with a spirit of initiative.

You enlightened him in the guidance of the work of missionary expansion of the Salesian Family:

– increase our zeal for your Kingdom, and prosper the labours of our missionaries.

In every age you call men and women to follow the obedient, poor and chaste Christ through complete self-donation:

– raise up generous vocations for the Church and the Salesian Family.

Through the merits and intercession of the Virgin Mary and of all the saints:

– grant that the faithful departed may live for ever with you in the blessedness of your Kingdom.

Our Father.

## PRAYER

God our Father, you have given to your priest, Blessed Michael Rua, the spiritual heir of Saint John Bosco, the ability to form in the young your divine image; grant also that we, who are called to educate young people, may make known the true countenance of Christ, your Son. He is God, and lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.