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15 January

Blessed LOUIS VARIARA, priest

Memorial

(For the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Volunteers of Don Bosco: *Optional Memorial*)

Louis Variara was born at Viarigi (Asti, Italy) in 15 January 1875. At twelve years of age he entered the Oratory at Valdocco, four months before the death of Don Bosco. The memory of Don Bosco had such an influence on the boy as to direct him towards Salesian life. He began the Novitiate in 1891 and he completed it with religious profession in the hands of Blessed Michael Rua.

In 1894 he met Fr Michael Unia, the missionary of the lepers in Agua de Dios, in Colombia, who invited him to follow him. Just over a year after his arrival in Agua de Dios, Fr Unia died and the cleric Variara took up his inheritance. In 1898 he was ordained priest. With the model of the Oratory at Valdocco in his thoughts he transformed that place of suffering into a small city of joy, where it was possible to live a deep spiritual life. As their spiritual director, he perceived in some young leper girls the dispositions for the religious life; and since no Congregation accepted a leper or even the daughter of a leper, the first idea came to him of young consecrated women, even though lepers. In this way he began a new religious Institute, which he named and placed under the protection of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

In the meantime, there began for Fr Louis a period of suffering and misunderstandings so that the Superior transferred him to different places. But his health was deteriorating. On medical advice taken to Cúcuta, in Colombia, he died on 1 February 1923, at 48 years of age. Buried in Cúcuta, his remains were taken in 1932 to Agua de Dios, where they now are.

John Paul II beatified him in Saint Peter's Square on 14 April 2002, the third Sunday of Easter.

*From the Common of Saints: Saints noted for works of mercy; or from the Common of Pastors.
Psalms of the day, from the psalter.*

Office of readings

SECOND READING

From "Letter" 34 of Blessed Louis Variara, priest

(Barranquilla, 29 November 1919; Generalate, Central Archives)

Doing everything with Jesus, for Jesus and in Jesus.

My beloved daughters in the Heart of Jesus, [...] see to it that whatever you do, is done *in ipso, cum ipso et in ipso*, I mean that you ought to see to it that you do everything *with Jesus, for Jesus and in Jesus*; if I might, I would say to you that Jesus ought to be like the condiment which gives taste to all your work. Remember that the various practices of piety prescribed by the Holy Rule and also the devotions which each one practises personally are only like small fountains from which each one has drawn in order to nourish the spirit of piety which ought to sanctify all the other moments of your life.

If you were to think of spending a considerable length of time without in any way exteriorising this spirit, or if by some serious misfortune you were to suffocate it in your heart, how would it be possible to sustain that intimate relationship, that ineffable family connection which Jesus himself has decided to establish between Himself and our souls by means of Holy Baptism?

There would not exist any communication between that God, whom we call with the sweet name of Father, and we who have the good fortune to be called his children. In that sad situation that spirit of living faith by which we are deeply convinced of the truth of our Holy religion would

begin to grow weak; in this way in whatever situation we may find ourselves, we feel the influence of this faith. Without this spirit of piety, we would not obey the Holy Spirit who very often visits us, instructs us, consoles us and supports us in our weakness.

On the contrary, if this spirit is well cultivated, then, thanks to its influence, our union with God is never interrupted, but is communicated to all our actions even the most ordinary, giving them intimately religious character and raising them to a supernatural merit making them participate like a sweet smelling incense in that never-ending worship which we ought to offer to God. In doing this, as Saint Gregory the Great says, our life becomes the foundation of that happiness which the blessed enjoy in heaven.

However, if this relationship exists between God and the Christian soul, what might not happen between God and the religious soul from the moment that the ties which bind them by religious profession are so solemn and intimate? At the moment the Holy Vows are pronounced the soul is wedded to Jesus Christ, to him one is consecrated without reserve, to him one offers all one's faculties, one's feelings, one's life. The soul therefore belongs entirely to God. For these reasons there is nothing more important that the religious ought to cultivate than the spirit of piety; she ought to possess it to such a high degree as to be able to communicate it to those at her side.

RESPONSORY

1Pt 3, 8-9; Rm 12, 10-11

R/. You should all agree among yourselves and be sympathetic; love the brothers, have compassion and be self-effacing; * that is what you are called to do, so that you inherit a blessing.

V/. Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit;

R/. that is what you are called to do, so that you inherit a blessing.

Concluding prayer as at Morning Prayer

Morning Prayer

SCRIPTURE READING

Rm 12, 1-2

My brothers, I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance; the worship offered by mind and heart. Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade, and your whole nature thus transformed. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, what is good, acceptable and perfect.

SHORT RESPONSORY

R/. The law of God guides him, * his mind is fixed on God.

The law of God guides him, his mind is fixed on God.

V/. His steps will never falter

*. his mind is fixed on God.

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

The law of God guides him, his mind is fixed on God.

Ant. At the Ben. If there is love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples.

INTERCESSIONS

United in the liturgy of praise, let us invoke Christ the Lord, so that following the example of Blessed Louis Variara, we may serve him in holiness and justice all the days of our life:
Sanctify you people O Lord.

You were tempted in every way that we are, but you did not sin,
– Lord Jesus, have mercy on us.

You came to serve and not to be served,
– Lord Jesus, teach us to serve you in our brothers and sisters

You call everyone to perfect love,
– Lord Jesus, sanctify your people.

You have told us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world,
– Lord Jesus, enlighten your people.

In Blessed Luigi Variara you have given us a model of total self-giving to our brothers and sisters weighed down in body and in soul,
– Lord Jesus grant to the “Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary” and all the members of the Salesian Family love for those most in need.

Our Father.

PRAYER

O God of infinite goodness, who through the death and resurrection of your Son has saved the world, graciously grant, through the intercession of the priest Blessed Louis, that we too, called to share in the mystery of suffering, may be fervent witnesses to your Father’s love. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Evening Prayer

SCRIPTURE READING

Rm 8, 28-30

We are well assured that everything helps to secure the good of those who love God, those whom he has called in fulfilment of his design. All those who from the first were known to him, he has destined from the first to be moulded into the image of his Son, who is thus to become the eldest-born among many brethren. So predestined, he called them; so called, he justified them; so justified, he glorified them.

SHORT RESPONSORY

R/. The Lord is good; * he loves good deeds.

The Lord is good; he loves good deeds.

V/. His face is turned towards the upright man.

* he loves good deeds.

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

The Lord is good; he loves good deeds.

Ant. at Magn. Anything you did for the least of these who are mine, you did for me.

Come you blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

INTERCESSIONS

Blessed Louis Variara looked to Christ the good Samaritan, who came to the assistance of every one weighed down in body and in soul; trusting in his intercession, we make our prayer with confidence:

Listen O Lord and have mercy on us.

Lord Jesus, he healed the leper, with him we pray:

– If you want to you can heal us.

Lord Jesus, you healed the servant of the Roman centurion; with him we pray:

– Say but a word and we shall be saved.

Lord Jesus, you walked on the water; with Peter we pray:

– You are the Son of God: come to us sinners.

Lord Jesus, you listened to the Canaanite woman; with her we pray:

– Come to our help and give us the bread of children.

Lord Jesus, you pardoned the thief who was dying on the cross with you; with him we pray:

– Remember us when you come into your kingdom. Admit our deceased brothers to the contemplation of your face.

Our Father.

PRAYER

O God of infinite goodness, who through the death and resurrection of your Son has saved the world, graciously grant, through the intercession of the priest Blessed Louis, that we too, called to share in the mystery of suffering, may be fervent witnesses to your Father's love. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ.