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26 August

Blessed ZEPHYRINUS NAMUNCURÁ

Optional Memorial

Zephyrinus Namuncurá was born on 26 August 1886 at Chimpay, on the banks of the Rio Negro, in Patagonia (Argentina). He was baptised on 24 December 1888 by the Salesian missionary Fr. Domenico Milanesio. His father Manuel, the last of the great ‘chiefs’ of the Araucano Indian tribe, had had to surrender three years before to the forces of the Argentine Republic.

A good-natured child, obedient to his parents, Zephyrinus spent his childhood in a peaceful rural setting. At eleven years of age his father Manuel sent Zephyrinus to study in Buenos Aires, at the Pius IX Salesian College, so that one day he could defend his people.

The family atmosphere in the Salesian College made him fall in love with Don Bosco. The spiritual dimension grew in him and he began to want to become a Salesian to bring the gospel to his people. He chose Dominic Savio as his model, and in the course of five years, through the extraordinary efforts he made to fit into a totally new culture, he himself became another Dominic Savio. He was exemplary in his piety, charity, daily duties, practice of mortification.

In 1903 (he was sixteen and a half and his father had been baptised at eighty years of age) Bishop Cagliari accepted him among the group of aspirants at Viedma, the capital of the Vicariate Apostolic, in this way beginning his path to the priesthood.

Because of his poor health, the Salesian Bishop decided to take him to Italy so that he could pursue his studies more seriously and in a climate which seemed more suitable. In Italy he met Don Michael Rua and Pope Pius X, who blessed him with emotion. He went to school in Turin and afterwards in the Salesian College of Villa Sora, in Frascati. He studied with such commitment that he was second in class.

But an illness not diagnosed in time, since he never complained, undermined him: tuberculosis. On 28 March 1905 he was taken to the Hospital of the John of God Brothers on the Tiber Island in Rome. Too late. He died there peacefully on 11 May. Since 1924 his mortal remains have rested in his own country, at Fortín Mercedes, where crowds of pilgrims gather to venerate him.

He was beatified on 11 November 2007 at Chimpay, his birth place in the pontificate of Benedict XVI.

From the Common of saints. Psalms of the day as in the Ordinary.

Office of Readings

SECOND READING

From the letter of Zephyrinus to the Pro-Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia, after his audience with Pope Pius X on 27 September 1904

(Vicente Martínez Torrens, “Ceferino Namuncurá, Vida, escritos e imágenes”, Ed. AHSP, pp. 124-127)

The precious and holy memory of the Vicar of Christ, who represents Jesus himself on earth

«On 27 September His Excellency Mons. Giovanni Cagliari was granted an audience with H.H. Pius X with thirty other Superiors from the Salesian Houses in America and among them ‘the son of the King of the Patagonian lands’ (as the Roman newspapers are saying).

At half past ten in the morning we had the greatest joy of kneeling at the feet of the Christ’s Vicar on earth. I had the good fortune to be the first, after Monsignore and Don Marengo, to kiss the sacred ring of His Holiness. Ah, my most beloved father, if you had been present at that moment

you would have been able to understand the goodness of the Holy Father! He did not allow anyone to kiss his foot. To everyone, one by one, the venerable hand. He continued to pat me on the cheek. Oh, how loving the holy old man of the Vatican!

After we had all saluted the Holy Man, the Holy Father himself signed to me to begin my little speech, since Mons. Cagliero had already informed him before that I would say a few words in Italian. When I began I became numb, but half way through my address I began to shake all over, my legs and my hands started to tremble, my voice stuck in my throat. When I knelt down to ask H.H. a blessing for myself, for my family and for all the Indians of Patagonia, my shaking increased and tears fell from my eyes; in the end I managed to finish well.

How attentively the Holy Father listened to me! He didn't even want to sit on the throne. Monsignore said this to him and he replied: 'I'm fine standing up. Let me be.' Don't you see how good he is? When I had finished, he himself lifted me up and spoke to me replying to what I had said; and here I shall tell you exactly what he said to me in Italian. I shall translate it into Spanish because I am still not able to do it in Italian. But I can speak it well enough.

Here then the words of the Holy Father: 'Well done my son, I thank you because you speak so well of the Vicar of Christ. God grant that you can achieve what you say: to convert to Jesus all your brothers and sisters in Patagonia. And I on my part with all my heart give you my apostolic blessing. Tell your papà that the Holy Father blesses him and his family and all the people of his tribe. May God bless you my son.'

While he was saying these affectionate words I could not hold back my tears. Oh how kind is the Holy Father!

After he had said these words to me he spoke to everyone in general, thanking them for the filial encounter and he gave his holy and apostolic blessing. (...) After H.H. had given his blessing, Monsignore gave him the plans of the new church of Saint Charles (Bs. As.) and asked him to write on the plans in his own hand the holy blessing. Full of kindness the old man, with the smile of a saint, of a kind father to his children, replied with all the love of his heart: 'Yes, certainly. And in the meantime all of you come forward.'

And we immediately went into another room, his study, and we gathered around him in a circle. Mons Cagliero sat on his left, and all the rest were standing. While H.H. was writing, Monsignore said to him: 'How good you are Holy Father!' and H.H. replied: 'For these my children ...'. As well as being the affectionate Holy Father he was also very cheerful.

Then came the best and the most precious thing. After he had put his signature on the plans, Mons. Cagliero gave him a letter from the novices and aspirants from Patagones, saying to him: 'Holiness, here is a letter from the novices and aspirants from Patagonia, and they are asking Your Holiness to send them your holy blessing.' His Holiness immediately took the letter and without reading it immediately wrote his precious autograph, imparting his holy blessing on all the Superiors and young men in the novitiate in Patagones. (...)

Continuing: we all went forward to kiss the Sacred Ring of the Fisherman, to bid farewell. (...)

Then we were all leaving. All the priests had already gone out and I was left behind: the Bishop who was with H.H. called to me and said me: 'His Holiness is calling you.' I turned and he took me to the writing table of the Holy Father who was sitting and looking for something. I knelt down in front of H.H. and joined my hands. At last H.H. took a fine box containing a silver medal: on one side it had a bust of H.H. Pius X and on the other, himself pointing out to the faithful the Immaculate Virgin Mary. In other words the commemoration of his pontificate and the Immaculate.

I kissed his hand again and he again patted me on the cheek. I thanked him and he gave me a sweet smile. I left the room happier than I can say for the beautiful gift; more than beautiful, the precious and holy memory of the Vicar of Christ who represents Jesus himself on earth.»

R/. God has taught me from my youth: * I shall recount his wonderful deeds.

V/. He hid me in the shadow of his hand:

R/. I shall recount his wonderful deeds.

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 you 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. The man who lives by the truth comes out into the light: so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God

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INTERCESSIONS

Let us raise our prayer to God the Father, who in his merciful love has chosen to reveal the mysteries of his Kingdom to the little ones and the poor, and let us say:

O Father hear our prayer.

You entrusted to the Church the mission of bringing the light of the Gospel to all the peoples on the earth:

- grant that she may be ever more missionary, clearly showing that you hear the cry of your children especially those who suffer on account of injustice.

Through your Spirit, you placed in the heart of Zephyrinus the desire: "I want to study to be useful to my people":

- grant that we may place our talents at the service of others, loving our family, the young and our people, becoming like Zephyrinus, models of faith even in difficulties and with our crosses.

Blessed Zephyrinus greatly loved his family and his people:

- we pray for all families, so that they may become real schools of communion, living in truth and forgiving each other.

You gave the young Zephyrinus who wanted to love everyone as Jesus did, a large heart;

- help us today to be disciples of your Son, evangelisers of the young, working in fraternal communion and giving his Word of salvation to everyone.

Through your Spirit you raised up in the Salesian Family the wonderful gift of youthful holiness:

- grant that many young people may meet Jesus who is calling them and follow him with a joyful and chaste life at the service of their brothers and sisters

Our Father.

PRAYER

O God, who in Blessed Zephyrinus
has given to young people a model of holiness,
grant through his intercession,
that we too may collaborate in the coming of your kingdom
by carrying out with patience and love
the tasks of each day.
Through Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

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 the Magn. Let the children come to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

INTERCESSIONS

We pray to God our Father the source of all holiness that through the example and the intercession of the Saints, we may walk in the path of holiness:

Make us holy as you are holy, Lord.

Father, you showed us in Jesus that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life:

- help us, so that like Blessed Zephyrinus, we may live the commandment of love, doing well whatever is our duty at every moment of the day.

God our Father who call us to live our faith in community, and give us Mary as our model in responding to your Word:

- grant that feeling her motherly presence we may joyfully do whatever Jesus tells us as did Blessed Zephyrinus.

You cheer us with the triumph of the Risen Jesus over sin and death:

- help us to bear witness with joy to our faith and our hope in the new life his Resurrection gives us.

You who want all of us to be brothers and sisters and to take care of each other:

- help us, so that following the example of Blessed Zephyrinus, we may see in all our neighbours brothers and sisters and we may work together for reconciliation, for universal brotherhood.

We pray, Father, for all missionaries who have given their lives and have died for love of their people:

- freed from their labours and life's sufferings, may they find rest in your house, and in your Son Jesus reach the fulness of joy.

Our Father.

PRAYER

O God, who in Blessed Zephyrinus
has given to young people a model of holiness,
grant through his intercession,
that we too may collaborate in the coming of your kingdom
by carrying out with patience and love
the tasks of each day.
Through Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.