

HE CAME BACK TO LIFE

A Modern-Day Glory of Mary

By **Δ**: V. STA. MARIA

STRANGE are the ways of God in bringing back the lost sheep back to the fold; but however mysterious the means of conversion may be, He always has and uses some strange instruments to accomplish the triumph of His love and mercy.

"I was the unworthy and very frail instrument God used," the narrator of this true story tells us, "in bringing back to salvation a bitter persecutor of the Church."

In his own words I will now pick up the rest of the story:

He was a neighbor of mine in Vigan, Ilocos Sur — an old man of some seventy years, who had not thought that very soon he would die; and although he still believed in God's power, he had the diabolical conviction that the greatest enemy of his country was the Catholic Church. This unfortunate misconception is not astonishing: he has thoroughly a very militant part and member of a secret society, whose main concern is to destroy the Church. His house was the meeting-place of many secret sessions.

Since he lived in the brick house across the street from mine, I was greatly disturbed interiorly by these secret meetings; and during one such session, I was suddenly inspired to toss my St. Benedict medal — my own scapular one — up on the roof of this meeting-place. I said a prayer to the Blessed Mother and asked St. Benedict to cause the removal of this depressing rendezvous from the neighborhood and the conversion of the old man.

Little did I guess that what I had done was to be the cause of the initial spark of grace that God would fan to raise the fire of His divine love in the ashes of the temple of God wrecked by sin and stubbornness in the soul of this old man—a divine grace that he would not have the power to shatter.

Strangely, indeed, the old fellow seemed to have sensed that I had done him something *wrong*, taking a sudden change of attitude: he would stare long at me and take

to sudden spitting on certain occasions when we met in the street. And I strongly suspected that he might have spied me in the act of throwing over a small mysterious object up on the top of his newly-reconstructed house. But my fears were soon lost in the news that he was suddenly taken seriously ill.

Being a Knight of Columbus and an active leignary of Mary, I thought it was my obligation to pay him a neighborly visit. It was unwanted: I was not entertained nor was I allowed to express words of consolation. This denied, I could do still a better thing for him: I prayed for his conversion — not for his health to be restored. On the contrary, I begged God, if it was in conformity with His will, to give him more of the ailment that had struck and had him bedridden. I turned to the Blessed Mother who soon enough heard me: the sick man now groaned in pain. His affliction was not merely physical and corporal: he intensely felt the presence of a legion of devils surrounding and oppressing his spirit. In the middle of a night, he shouted and woke up his gentle and patient wife.

"Quick! Wake up! They all want to carry me away. No, my God, please don't let them take me away — these monsters!"

He wept like a child.

The following day, after a Sunday Legion-of-Mary meeting, I asked the Blessed Mother to accompany me in order that my visit would be acceptable to him this time: I begged of Our Lady to save the soul of this old man. I don't now remember what I promised (if I promised anything) in payment for his conversion. But I must say that I paid dearly for the special favor granted—a price that I will tell later.

"Thank God you have come," the sick man told me. "Son, I am slowly dying and I don't want to die yet." He wept again like a little child. "My heart, the doctors tell me, has become very much enlarged and my spleen is swollen. I am being choked to death. What shall I do? Oh, please pray for me."

As I come to think of it now, the Lord must have spoken through my lips; for I

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WHAT MAKES....

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of Columbus. And it is not surprising, because it is one of the essences of our Order. Father Michael J. McGivney had it in mind, when he first conceived the Knights of Columbus.

The third group of the Six-Point-Program, the Fraternal Activity Group, has the task of maintaining a strong brotherly bond among the members. Birthday celebrants among the Knights are greeted and honored. Sick members are visited. The dead are remembered with Masses and spiritual bouquets.

The five committees under this group are the Personal Acknowledgment, Blood Donors, Relief and Welfare, Sick and Memorial committees.

The fourth group is the Membership-Insurance Group. In the Philippines, KC councils so far have only been able to carry out activities concerning membership in this field. Because of dollar restrictions, the KC insurance system in the United States has not been extended here. However, if the proposed operation of a local KC insurance system will be pushed through this group in the various KC councils may soon function completely.

It is the duty of the Membership-Insurance Group to maintain membership in the council at a level which will guarantee the effectiveness of its work and will make Columbianism a potent and worthwhile factor in Catholic, community, and national life. The task is carried out by the Prospects, Admission, Enrollment, Conservation and Readmission committees.

Although it has been almost a tradition among our Knights to work without fanfare, still the need for some publicity exists for the purpose of gaining sympathy for our Order, especially from those who are misinformed about us, and encouraging the members and the other KC groups to activity. The adoption of THE CROSS Magazine as the national organ of our Order affords us a bigger local outlet for publicity. The other media, of course, are the metropolitan and community newspapers and magazines and the national and local radio stations. The Publicity Group with its assisting committees handles this work.

Lately, a lot of rumpus has been raised in several quarters about the widespread delinquency of youth. This issue is not

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could not have spoken the words that greatly comforted him, the gentle words commending Him to the Blessed Mother. As I spoke of the love and mercy of the heavenly Father in the Sacred Heart of His Son, he cried in repentance for his sins; and he began to confess how wicked a son he was to the heavenly Father, how he worked to help in destroying the Church of the Divine Savior. And that bright Sunday morning, he expressed the desire to give up all connections with "this diabolical secret society fighting the Son of God Himself." While he spoke of abjuring his membership, I still believe that there was a distinct smell of burnt sulphur suffusing the air in the sick-room.

A few days later, before the Christmas of the Marian Year 1954, he confessed to a young priest (a veritable lover of Mary) and a great peace of soul descended upon him. Beholding him thus turned to a new living saint of God, I felt that the brief interior happiness in my soul had turned to a sudden interior desolation. Little did I guess that I

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bandied about emptily. The problem is real, starkly real in some places. This currency of the problem may be seized upon by our KC councils to step up their youth work.

The last group in the KC Six-Point-Program is the Youth Activity Group. Many KC councils are active in this field. They sponsor Boy Scouts troops, organize summer athletic leagues, make available to the youth attractive recreational facilities, and conduct catechetical classes.

Our Order has its own youth organization in the Columbian Squires. The Squires are recruited usually from among the sons of members and the children of other Catholic middle class families. For the less privileged children, the KC councils may form other groups such as the Catholic Youth Organization.

The committees under this group are Columbian Squires, Leadership-Services, Religious, Social-Recreation and Welfare.

The Six-Point-Program is a well-balanced and extensive action plan. It is what makes a KC council tick. But it also requires the right leaders (group and committee chairmen) and careful and thorough planning and implementation to keep it ticking.

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was being asked by God to pay an initial part of the price: during the days that followed I felt vividly how a powerful unseen enemy was oppressing my soul with a terrible sadness. This terrible sadness — an interior desolation of the soul — hung on for some long months: a sadness that was coupled with a strange fear of an eternal darkness, which grew worse as the darkness of night approached. Yet, strangely, the terrible feeling did not affect the performance of my daily duties: there was, on the contrary, a deeper calm and tranquility possessing the central portion of my soul. Before this interior agony invaded my soul, I would hear terrible unearthly noises — at times, in the form of maddening blows from unseen hands on the walls of my room. At first I was seized with the fear of being made directly the physical object of such violence, but God had not permitted the Unseen Enemy to harm me physically.

I visited the sick man daily, prayed the rosary with him and his family; and later, a young lawyer joined me in the daily visits.

One night I was suddenly summoned to his bedside: he was dying. The wife sent for his confessor to give him the last Sacraments; but the boy requested to make the call seemed to have taken this job unpleasant and went directly home to sleep. So I did what I thought was the best I could do: I asked the dying man to follow my reading of the Prayers of the Dying. He prayerfully followed but when he reached the point of commending his soul to God, he lacked courage to die: "No, please, God, please, dearest Mother, don't take me home yet," and he begged me to stop commending his soul to God.

"Well, then, ask your Blessed Mother," I told him, "to ask her Son to give you a little more time to make up for the years lost forever—if it is God's will."

"I beg of you, dear mother," he prayed, "to ask your Son to give me only some three years more to plant the seeds I have never planted."

It took him a good while of time, stealing breath, to say his own prayer, although I did not quite understand what he meant by the seeds still unsown. The next day, after he was administered the Extreme Unction, he recovered miraculously.

But something happened: I was desperately persecuted exteriorly and interiorly — by natural and praeternatural means—

PROTESTANT CONFSSIONALS

News stories tell of the increasing use of confessions in the German Lutheran and Evangelical churches.

Catholics, of course, believe that the pastors who hear such confessions will not have the power truly to absolve from sin. Nevertheless, we believe that the move is a good one.

Such confessions, non-sacramental though they are, will bring consolation and guidance to troubled souls. They will also make the Catholic Church seem less strange and more acceptable.

Some of our non-Catholic fellow citizens still have a strong prejudice against the confessional. Now we can tell them that Protestants in Germany, the cradle of Protestantism, have not only rejected their bias against the confessional but have actually adopted it for their own use. (The Witness)

to such an extent that in my human frailty, I brought my family of three children to another section of the town. Nevertheless, I continued visiting him two or three times a week. Some weeks later the man had a relapse. It happened when I had to make a necessary trip to Manila.

Some days later he died — that is, for some long minutes, I was told later by the wife. During all this time of death, the wife was heating water with which to bathe the corpse of her husband; messengers were sent to inform the dead man's nearest relatives in town. When the youngest sister arrived, she was greatly astonished to find her "dead brother" sitting on his death bed — praying!

"It seems to me," the dead man risen back to life narrated to me some days later, "that I was suddenly taken to a deep sleep, much as I fought against it; and in my deep slumber the Child Jesus came to visit me. He was about five or six years old. He asked me if I would like to live a little longer. I answered: 'please, dear Lord, three more years.' The Child Jesus answered: 'I will tell that to my Mother.' And I woke up."

HE died some months ago after the three years had been granted him to "sow the seeds" he had never sown in the seventy years of his life. He spent his last three years as a real child of Mary.