VATICAN CITY, DEC. 18, 2007 (Zenit.org).
A 6-year-old Italian girl who cheerfully endured the amputation of her leg and offered it in union with the sacrifices of Christ might someday become the youngest canonized non-martyr saint.

Benedict XVI approved on Monday the decree recognizing the heroic virtue of Antonietta Meo, who died of bone cancer. Born in 1930, Antonietta was diagnosed with bone cancer at age 5 after a fall caused by a knee injury that would not heal.

The girl formed the habit of leaving a letter at the foot of a crucifix every night. At first, she dictated these notes to her mother; later she wrote them herself. The more than 100 letters and her diary reveal an intense mysticism and a surprising level of theological reflection, albeit hidden in simple phrases.

One of the letters says, "Dear Jesus, I love you very much. I want to abandon myself in your hands [...] I want to abandon myself in your arms. Do with me what you want. [...] Help me with your grace. You help me, since without your grace, I can do nothing."

Her letters were written to God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. In a letter to Mary from Sept. 18, 1936, she said, "Dear little Virgin, you who are very good, take my heart and bring it to Jesus."

Antonietta died July 3, 1937, five months before her 7th birthday. In 1981, the Vatican Congregation for Saints’ Causes removed the norm restricting "heroic virtue" only to those who had lived a "period of maturity." The change in the norm permitted the visionaries of Fatima, Jacinta and Francisco, to be beatified in 2000.

Prayer to obtain grace by intercession of "Antonietta Meo", God’s servant:

Oh God, Father of the humble, we thank You because in Antonietta Meo you gave us the gift of a live image of Your Love and Wisdom, revealed to the young. You, who gave her the grace of being joined to the Cross of the Lord Jesus, and of suffering with fortitude and joy, make her glorious even now on earth, so that everyone can take her as a bright example of loyalty to the Gospel. Grant us her simple and passionate love for the Eucharist and for the Church; come to us in our poverty. And, by her intercession, according to Your Holy Will, Give us the grace, which we ask for faithfully. Amen.

Do you have a faith question, a teaching suggestion, or an amusing anecdote that you would like to share with other catechists?

Contact Mary Carolan at mary.carolan@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au PO Box A286, Sydney South, NSW 1235

Contents

6-Year-Old on Way to Sainthood.............1
From the Catechists.............................2
A Saint’s Day....................................2
In the Words of the Pope......................2
Help with Classroom Management..........3
Secret of the Catechist Revealed...........3
Around the Archdiocese.......................4
On Tuesday 26 November our catechist team brought 50 of our children from Lidcombe Public School to Mass. Our wonderful celebrant was Fr. Andrew Feng, assistant priest at St. Joachim’s, Lidcombe.

We were inspired to do this because, probably uniquely, Lidcombe Public School is across the road from the Church.

What an effort it was! Much consultation of the Directory of Masses With Children, the Lectionary for Children and "Celebrating with Children" (written by Frs. Gerard Kelly, Brian Lucas and Paul Borg), as well as advice sought of the Liturgy Office! We had 3 lessons to prepare the children so they could participate as fully as possible - of course it wasn’t nearly enough time!

The Principal at the school had decided that she wanted to actually dismiss to our care those children who returned permission slips, at 1:50pm. She and I drafted the note to parents, the school collected the slips and I kept a record of the returns. We have 65 Catholic children at the school who go to “Catholic Scripture” and we had 56 slips returned (including for a child who had never actually been registered for classes!) We invited the parents to Mass of course, although only three came.

We're very fortunate - one of the children is an Altar Server. So we could have two, we quickly arranged for some "on-the-job" training for another who attends Mass regularly. She and her parents are now keen for her to take up this ministry officially in the New Year, and perhaps her older brother as well, who is in High School now. One of our Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion was kind enough to come and help the children prepare the altar, and then be with them during Mass.

Continued page 3

A Saint's Day

Feast Days

February
18 St Bernadette Soubirous & St Simeon
23 St Peter Damien
24 St Matthias

March
6 St Collete
7 St Thomas Aquinas
8 St John of God
9 St Frances of Rome
12 St Gregory the Great
14 St Mathilda
15 St Zachary
16 Palm Sunday
20 Holy Thursday
21 Good Friday
22 Holy Saturday
23 Easter Sunday
17 St Patrick
18 St Cyril Of Jerusalem
19 St Joseph
21 St Benedict
24 St Gabriel Archangel
25 Annunciation of Blessed Virgin Mary (Celebrated on Monday 31)
31 St Nicholas, St Benjamin

In the Words of the Pope

- Lent a spiritual retreat that lasts 40 days
- “Lent invites us, or we could say, provokes us, to push forward in our Christian lives.”
- “It seems to me that the time of Lent should be a time of fasting from words and images, because we need a little silence, a little space, without being constantly bombarded with images.”
- “We need to create spaces of silence [...] to open our hearts to the true image, to the true word.”
- There is the need “to identify certain common requirements for authentic education... above all, the nearness and trust that are born of love.”
- “Society is not an abstract concept; in the final analysis it is we ourselves.”
- “At the root of the crisis of education lies a crisis of trust in life. Hope directed toward God is never hope for me alone, it is always also hope for others. It does not isolate us but unites us in goodness, stimulating us to educate one another in truth and in love.”
Pope Benedict XVI Says...

"The secret to being a good catechist is to live what you preach,"

"They undoubtedly deserve the gratitude, encouragement, and constant attention of their pastors so they always systematically receive a solid Christian formation"

"unite the transmission of right doctrine with personal testimony, with the firm commitment to live according to the commandments of the Lord and with the lived experience of being faithful and active members of the Church."

"This example of life is necessary so that your instruction does not stay in a mere transmission of theoretical knowledge about the mysteries of God, but that it leads to embracing a Christian way of life."

This was already the case in the early Church, in which at the end of one’s period of Christian initiation, "it was examined if the catechumens have properly lived their Catechumenate, if they honored widows, if they visited the sick, if they have done good works," the Pope said, citing the "Apostolic Tradition," one of the oldest ecclesiastical constitutions, written around 215.

From the Catechists...continued

Fr. Feng wanted all the children to process in with him, and all the children, except the Gospel bearer, carried a candle in the Gospel procession. The candles were then placed on the steps of the Sanctuary where they looked beautiful. Five bigger children held candles around Fr. Feng as he read the Gospel. We were very blessed to have Maureen Hynes from Sefton Parish come and play piano for us.

Cory, Doreen, Therese, Esther, Edna, Teresa, Margaret and Dunia worked so hard with the children, preparing them beforehand and gently directing them during Mass.

The children were children! They were prayerful, attentive, distracted, confused and interested by turns. Only eight of them had made their First Communion (it rather looked as though this may have been their Second in some cases) but all the children went to Father and those who did not receive the Sacrament received a blessing.

If you are lucky enough to have this as a possibility - if the distance to the Church is not too great, if the school is supportive, if your Parish Priest is supportive and you’re brave enough - we here at Lidcombe would be very willing to share with you the resources, experience and insights gained!
Around the Archdiocese...

**Liturgy in Schools: Intensive Course**
Presented by Fr Tim Deeter
6-7 March
The Catholic Adult Education Centre,
3 Keating Street, Lidcombe
Course cost: $150 Tel: (02) 9643 3660
Registration closes March 3

**Centre for Thomistic Studies**
Courses for 2008 commence
Monday 25 February
Venue: Polding Centre, level 5
Fees: Standard $200 per year
Concessions available for students
Enquiries: Phone 9759 8014 or evening 9550 0231

**Catechist Ministry Certificate:**
N.B courses require a minimum of 10 students to run. Bookings are required two weeks in advance

- **Foundations of Religious Education (MC02)**
  Mary Carolan
  Polding Centre, 133 Liverpool Street, Sydney
  Monday, Tuesday 10am to 2pm
  February 25, 26

- **Understanding the Sacraments of Initiation (MI07)**
  Denise Humphreys
  CCD Miranda, 50 Kiora Road Miranda
  Thursdays, 10am to 1pm
  February 28, March 6, 13, 27, April 3

- **Ministry (MC05)**
  Robert Milan
  CCD Office, Hoxton Park
  21 Twentieth Ave, Hoxton Park
  Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 9.30am to 2.30pm
  March 25, 26, 27

**World Youth Day Update**
We are encouraging students over 16 years of age to register as part of a parish pilgrim group. The registration package includes meals, free transport around Sydney, the pilgrims’ bag and updates on WYD activities. For further information visit [www.wyd2008.org](http://www.wyd2008.org)

**Catechist Gathering**
Monday 28 April
Dooleys Catholic Club
24 John Street, Lidcombe
10.30am to 1.30pm

**WYD Cross and Icon**
hosted by the CCD
Thursday 20 March
at Ashfield Boys High School
1.15pm – 2.30pm
If you would like to attend please contact Therese Touma on (02) 9390 5122

**Right To Life Conference 23 February**
1.30pm - 6pm then 6.30pm till late at the Grand
Pittwater Function Centre Ryde RSL
For more information: Telephone (02) 9299 8350

**Spiritual Pampering an evening retreat for women with Mother Ann Marie, O.P and the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia Congregation**
Theme: The Dignity & Vocation of Women
Date: Thursday 28 February Time: 5-9pm
Location: Common Room, Notre Dame University
RSVP & Contact details: Joanne Lucas 93905290

**Lumen Verum Apologetic Talks**
every Friday at 8pm. All are welcome.
St Michael’s Parish Hall Belfield.