

Words and Works of St. Charles of Sezze

“God does not command us to live in hair shirts and chains, or to chastise our flesh with scourges, but to love Him above all things and our neighbor as ourselves.”

Concerning the Blood of Christ: “In a union that is true and real, we are transformed into Him. Drinking of the divine essence in that sea, one takes into oneself all that one is ever able to receive, for in God all things are found.”

St. Charles of Sezze wrote several essays, including:

- The Three Ways— describes three ways through which the Lord showed him his spiritual course.
- Invalid Path of the Soul— speaks of the various stages of a soul leading to perfection.
- Christmas Novena— written to increase devotion to the Infant Jesus.

Sources of information on St. Charles:

www.americancatholic.org

www.catholic-forum.com

web.tiscali.it/sancarlodasezze

“The autobiography of Charles stands as a very strong refutation of the opinion, quite common among religious people, that saints are born saints, that they are privileged right from their first appearance on this earth. This is not so. Saints become saints in the usual way, due to the generous fidelity of their correspondence to divine grace. They had to fight just as we do, and more so, against their passions, the world and the devil.”

Father Serverino Gori



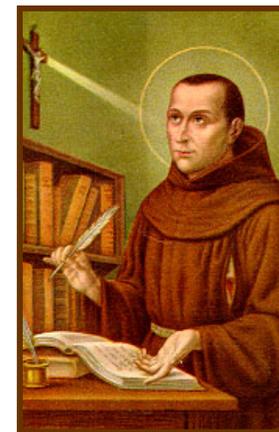
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**Evangelization and the Lives of the
Saints**

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Sanctifying Grace

Often in life, if we compare ourselves to others, we can become overcome by feelings of inferiority. Sometimes it seems as if everyone is more educated, more eloquent, better looking and less clumsy than we are. St. Charles of Sezze was someone who could have let feelings of inferiority take over his life and leave him in a state of bitterness and depression. Born in 1613 in Sezze, southeast of Rome, as Giancarlo Macchione, Charles was a terrible student who could barely read or write. He was struck with a serious illness at age 17, which prevented him from entering the foreign missions as he wished. He did become a Franciscan lay brother when he was 22, but even his community considered him an “accident waiting to happen”. He once nearly burned down the friary when he was cooking onions and the oil in the pan burst into flames!

In spite of these challenges, he never complained and served his community in various menial capacities, as a cook, porter, gardener, sacris-

tan and beggar. He received the stigmata in the form of a visible open wound in his side, which was said to have come from a ray of light emanating from an elevated Host during Mass. He followed the spirituality of St. Francis very closely, and lived a most humble and simple life. He wrote in his autobiography, *The Grandeurs of the Mercies of God*, “Our Lord put in my heart a determination to become a lay brother with a great desire to be poor and to beg alms for his love.”

Here are some simple ways to bring alive the spirituality of St. Charles of Sezze today:

- When St. Charles was struck with the stigmata, he said: “It was between two extremes, that is between pain and sweet bliss, and it seemed as if the spirit wanted to leave the body. I would have sustained whatever great torment or any hardship because of the sweetness.” When we are going through periods of our lives which seem particularly painful, whether physical, emotional or spiritual, let us try to remember that these “wounds of love” can serve to bring us closer to Christ if we allow them to. Let us turn in our moments of greatest pain to the

source of all sweet bliss, Jesus Christ.

- Although he never learned to read and write properly, St. Charles of Sezze was the author of several essays which impressed even theologians, and is most often pictured with a book and quill pen in hand. Don't let your perceived inadequacies stop you from doing God's work in the world. We need to remember that God works through our weaknesses and in spite of them.



- Charles was raised by a very poor, but extremely devout, family of farmers. His family encouraged his vocation, even in his youth. Celebrate his feast day by reminding parishioners of the importance of being active participants in the faith lives of our children. Let us teach them by the example of our own lives, trying our best to live close to Christ and his Church.