



To Promote the Canonization of Mother Seton

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## Blessed Are Those Who Die in The Lord

"Certainly my own health has not improved despite my prayers to Mother Seton. Nonetheless I know that she can restore me to excellent health in a flash of a second, if such be God's Holy Will. Even though she does not seem to answer my prayers, my confidence in her does not waver, it stands solid on the conviction that she knows what is best. My health and my destiny are completely in her hands; her glorification is in our hands—if we would but clasp them in fervent prayer to her alone when we need special assistance."

The above paragraph was one of the last messages composed by Father Burgio before he became critically ill. It illustrates perfectly his single-minded devotion to the Cause of the woman for whom he had labored so diligently for twenty-one years as Vice Postulator. With selfless generosity and boundless enthusiasm Father Burgio expended all his energy in this Labor of Love. He felt that his quarter-century in the priesthood was a gift from Divine Providence (because "I was ordained to die") in order to make Elizabeth Bayley Seton known and loved.

Rev. Salvator M. Burgio, C.M., was born in Brooklyn, N. Y., on August 15, 1895, the son of Salvator, a native of Palermo who came to America in the year 1878. He completed his studies in St. Joseph College, Princeton, N. J., and then entered St. Vincent's Seminary, Germantown, Pa., in 1920.

### Special Ordination

He was ordained a priest on June 11, 1927, by special Papal dispensation, so that he could have the privilege and the consolation of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass before he died. A victim of tuberculosis, his study desk was a bed, and he went to his classes in Theology from his sickbed and back to his bed. It was anticipated that he would not live long after his ordination in 1927. He did live, however, and in 1952 celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary as a priest of God.

Some of his seminary days were spent in a health retreat in suburban Philadelphia. There he was visited one day by a priest, who had learned of the bedridden student's presence in the sanatorium. From that visit grew a close friendship and a long

association in ecclesiastical ceremonies. For his visitor was then the official Master of Ceremonies and now Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the Right Rev. Monsignor Thomas F. McNally, LL.D.

Convalescence was slow over a period of five years. Father Burgio had to learn to walk all over again, as a result of having been confined so long to his bed. It took time to build up his strength. He was fond of Liturgy and began to assist Monsignor McNally in Pontifical ceremonies. In those early days it required several days of complete rest to store up energy in advance and one or two days afterwards to recuperate. On weekends he would celebrate Sunday Mass and help in other services at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Jenkintown, Pa., during the first years of Monsignor McNally's pastorate.

### Assisted at Canonizations

Through his frequent assistance at Pontifical functions came his acquaintance and later close friendship with the late Cardinal Dougherty, to whom he became a traveling companion until the day of the death of His Eminence on May 31, 1951. In the course of his travels, Father Burgio assisted the Papal Master of Ceremonies in twelve Canonizations, several Beatifications, and many other Papal functions in Rome. He was Assistant to the Papal Master of Ceremonies at the International Eucharistic Congress in Manila, and himself served as the Papal Master of Ceremonies at the National Eucharistic Congress in St. Paul, Minn. He was Master of Ceremonies at many other Pontifical functions throughout the world. One of his distinctions was that of Honorary Member of the Academy of Sacred Liturgy in Rome.

His attendance at the magnificent ceremonies of Canonization in St. Peter's heightened his interest in these Causes, although he did not presume to hope that he would ever have a part in a Process undertaken for the glorification of a Saint upon earth. Through his acquaintanceship with officials of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, he added to his store of knowledge of the internal processes of a Canonization and the exacting requirements of the Holy See.

(Continued on Page 4)



REV. SALVATOR M. BURGIO, C.M.

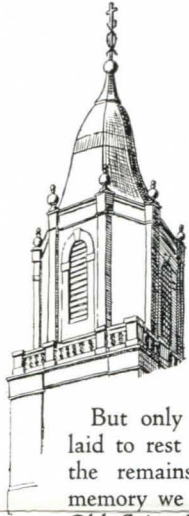


# EULOGY PREACHED AT THE MEMORIAL MASS FOR FATHER SALVATOR M. BURGIO, C.M.

September 12, 1959

OLD ST. PETER'S CHURCH  
NEW YORK CITY

BY THE RT. REV. MSGR. JOSEPH B. CODE



But only a few days ago we laid to rest in God's good earth the remains of him in whose memory we are gathered here in Old Saint Peter's Church, Barclay Street. It is not surprising that we come here. It is a holy place. It is an historic place in the annals of American Catholicism. It is the place which Father Burgio loved perhaps better than any other Church in all America. It was his wish that it might have seen the passing of his shroud. It was here he came often. It was here he came not so very long ago to mark the silver jubilee of his priesthood. I remember that day very well. The Church was filled with friends who joined with him in thanking God for the graces which had been his as a priest for a quarter of a century. It was a happy day, filled with music, sunshine, and much rejoicing.

But there was something else about that day. There was something that gave it a very special flavor. That something was Mother Seton who also joined, but silently and unseen, in what went on here where once she had made herself one with Christ's elect on earth; where once she had felt her chains fall off, like Saint Peter's, when she was absolved for the first time; where for the first time she became one with Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and where for the first time she began to lead little children—this time her own—to God's Altar in preparation for their Eternity.

It was also because of this that Father Burgio, in the mystery of his Eternity, comes here this morning in what may be considered his last earthly salute, this time in the stateliness of death, to her who so largely made his life what it was and who made this church a shrine of love and holiness throughout America.

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We ask foolishly what such a man as Father Burgio would wish to hear said in his praise were he still alive. Perhaps still more foolishly, what he is wishing to hear, if the dead know so much about transitory things.

It was a question that never bothered him. Next to his soul's salvation there was but one particularly personal thought, one concern, namely, that of the Cause, for which he had worked and fought so valiantly that it would go on apace; that personal predilections would be submerged in the all-important business of praying God that Mother Seton would soon be canonized; that we would get on our knees and center our attention and our prayers on Mother Seton herself irrespective of the accomplishments of those who had come after her.

But he did more. He suffered for the Cause. Even after he was marked for death, he kept on working, when others would have given up. But if God demanded of him this sacrifice, God saw it given cheerfully; and may God in His goodness accept it as Father Burgio's first great step in Eternity in helping to bring about what he so ardently desired on earth, so very selflessly.

Therefore it may be seen that in Father Burgio's death it was not merely the passing of a man. It was the passing of a moment. The two are historically related. Far away from his grave, in time and distance, his memory and example will survive his death, particularly as an encouragement to those who love Mother Seton and wish to see her canonized. Indeed, one may hope that when the Cause is taken up again it will be with the conviction that there is an added force behind it, one which must be reckoned with, for Father Burgio and his work can never be separated. It was his life on earth. How otherwise could it be but at least part of his greater life in Eternity.

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"The Lord gave him wisdom and understanding, exceeding much; and largeness of heart as the sands of the sea." Thus wrote the author of the Third Book of Kings in the fourth chapter.

Father Burgio was such a man. This should be his epitaph. He made no pretense to great learning beyond that which had come his way as he prepared himself for the priesthood and the care of

souls. And yet he was a man of learning and possessed great knowledge. Anyone associated with him in the Cause can pay tribute to his grasp of problems, his diligence in solving them, his unbounded energy, his eagerness to right a wrong immediately upon his discerning it; his ability to see the funny side of things and people, and his forbearance of those who would take themselves too seriously. He hated lies and deception, just as he hated iniquity and loved justice.

Above all he was honest with himself, with his fellow men, and with his Creator.

This is the measure of learning, for those of us who know the difference between right and wrong, between Time and Eternity. It is wisdom of the first order, and it is understanding. In Father Burgio it was accompanied by a largeness of heart, as the sands of the sea, as those who knew him can testify.

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First of all, of course, Father Burgio was a priest of God, "one called by God, as was Aaron," another Melchisedech. He fulfilled his vocation in many ways. His confreres in Saint Vincent and many others can readily testify to his priestliness of life, his loyalty to his Community, his faithfulness to duty, his service to the Church, his imitation of Christ, his dedication to God.

One of the greatest trials he had to bear, in his last months, was his inability to say Mass. In its place he had days and nights of terrible suffering, which stretched into weeks and then into months, until he was worn out, until the gold was refined at last and the dross drawn off; until the Liberating Angel came to lift him into Eternity.

But although unable to say Mass, he still was the priest of God, preaching from the pulpit of his bed the priest's complete conformity to God's Will in everything.

In those last days, Father Burgio was not dismayed at death. Although he had loved the world to the limit of his large capacity, he did not love it any more. He had already bidden it farewell. He



could look back on many things without regret, even to the good things which God had given to him—his days of childhood and a happy home, a loving family, the company of priests and other friends, the confidence and intimacy of many great men in the Church, on this side of the Atlantic and in Rome. He could look back contentedly on those who had worked with him in the Cause, and to the places he had loved above all others on earth . . . to Rome, to his Eternal City, where he knew the last and the greatest of his earthly concerns would be fulfilled some day; to this great city of ours, because of what it had witnessed of Seton days and tears, and because of its other precious memories.

He could look back on Livorno, where once he had gone to gather up lovingly the letters of Mother Seton so that they might repose in her native land—out on the Ohio—Father Burgio's great gesture of thanks for the assistance which Mother General Mary Zoe and the Cincinnati Sisters had so graciously given him in the work to which he had dedicated himself. He could look back on Germantown, and on Darby—where the wonderful Sisters of Mercy had nursed him in his last illness; and finally on Emmitsburg—on Seton Valley—where he had dreamed dreams for the Cause and had made so many of them realities; to the house in which Mother Seton died and to the one where she had taken her first steps to possible sainthood; to God's Acre where she lies, awaiting the Resurrection; to the long white-crossed rows of sleeping women, many of whom had been his friends in the Cause and who had greatly helped him; and, finally, to Mother Paula's grave, his dear, close friend who had walked with him in many a difficult hour when the Cause was first given into his hands by his superiors.

To all of this, little by little, he had turned aside, once it had been reviewed in love and thankfulness. It was the past. Now was the great business of Eternity.

He had even forgotten that his life had been a hard one, once that he had taken up the Cause in obedience to his superiors. Indeed, in later years his destiny had been one of conflict. Often he was a prophet lost amid the hills. Often he walked alone in utter loneliness.

How strange this all seems now, and how unnecessary! In the stillness of this Church I ask: "Why was it that he had it so difficult to bring about something that all of us here, to some extent, will credit ourselves for its accomplishment?"

This morning the words of Saint Luke about the two men at Emmaus come to me: "Their eyes were held that they

should not recognize him." But when the day of wrath comes, and that book is brought out, written once and for all, which contains all the material for a world's judgment, we shall see much more of what Father Burgio was and did; how even his most simple act to promote the Cause was a solvent force to pierce the hard rind of apathy and neglect which had characterized it before he took hold of it; how the overtones of his talks brought back to us the memories of things that had been forgotten, or to which ears had been closed in favor of other interests. In the meantime we can only conclude that this was his heroic contribution to Mother Seton's Cause of Canonization. He was a man raised up by God—let there be no mistake about it.

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Have I represented Father Burgio as a marble figure? No one who knew him, no one who has read the more intimate of his letters, can picture him otherwise than a man essentially human, twinkling with fun, rippling with vitality. Even as we commit his soul into the Hands of God, with those severely impersonal prayers which the Church dictates to us, we are haunted by a thousand human memories of him, recall a hundred enduring characteristics—his simple charm, his fondness for good cheer, his large-hearted hospitality, and a charity so secretive that only the recipient knew anything about it. Indeed, "If the world did know the heart he had, 'twould deem the praise it yields him scantily dealt," as Dante says in his *Paradiso*.

Human? God knows he was human, as are all of us; and for his human frailties let us pray that already he has received the pardon he always desired at the Hands of his Creator. And for the wideness of his human sympathies, may he find a generous reward from the God of All Love and Understanding.

And yet, Father Burgio would not be satisfied if we merely wrote of him: "This man endeared himself to his fellow men." Instead he would say: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have redeemed my pledge. Now I await my reward of immortality."

\* \* \* \* \*

The doctrine of immortality belongs to that core of truth which is not normally confirmed by experience. Yet the less vividly it is imagined the more firmly it can be grasped. For Father Burgio, however, there were moments when flashes of sensible feeling seemed to light the aridities of belief. Not long before his death he spoke to me of the

(Continued on Page 4)



### Apostolic Postulation

FOR THE CAUSE OF  
CANONIZATION  
OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

### Elizabeth Ann Seton

Foundress of the  
SISTERS OF CHARITY  
IN AMERICA

HIS EMINENCE  
GAETANO CARDINAL CICOGNANI  
Prefect of the  
Sacred Congregation of Rites

HIS EMINENCE  
CLEMENTE CARDINAL MICARA  
Cardinal Relator of the Cause

HIS EXCELLENCY  
MOST REV. FRANCIS P. KEOUGH, D.D.  
Archbishop of Baltimore

VERY REV. LUIGI BISOGGIO, C.M.  
Postulator General (Rome)

REV. SALVATOR M. BURGIO, C.M.  
Vice Postulator

### Mother Seton's Daughters

Communities of the Sisters of Charity

St. Joseph College ----- Emmitsburg, Md.  
Marillac Seminary ----- St. Louis, Mo.  
Mt. St. Vincent-on-the-Hudson,  
New York, N. Y.  
Mt. St. Vincent ----- Halifax, N. S.  
Mt. St. Joseph ----- Cincinnati, Ohio  
St. Elizabeth's ----- Convent, N. J.  
Seton Hill ----- Greensburg, Pa.



Central Office

### Mother Seton Guild

EMMITSBURG, Md.

#### Guild Membership

Yearly ----- \$1.00  
Perpetual ----- \$10.00

Deceased May Be Enrolled

Address all communications to

MOTHER SETON GUILD  
EMMITSBURG, MARYLAND



# Blessed Are They Who Die in The Lord

(Continued from Page 1)

## Appointed Vice Postulator

Thus almost the entire first half of Father Burgio's quarter-century in the priesthood seemed to have been designed as a preparation for his selection, in September 1938, as Vice Postulator for the Cause of Mother Seton's Canonization. The choice by the Visitor, Very Rev. William M. Slattery, C.M., was approved by the Very Rev. Charles Souvay, C.M., Superior General of the Congregation of the Missions, in Paris, and finally, the appointment was made by the Very Rev. Giuseppe Scognamillo, C.M., Postulator General, in Rome, with the approbation of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in accordance with the procedure for the appointment of a Vice Postulator.

In February, 1939, he received his Mandate while he was in Rome as a Conclavist to His Eminence, Cardinal Dougherty, at the election of His Holiness, Pope Pius XII. The Cardinal was among the first to be received in audience by the Pope, and Father Burgio accompanied him. On that occasion, His Holiness blessed the Cause of Mother Seton.

The work of a Postulation is laborious and time-consuming. Few realize the details involved in the Process of Canonization. The world knows and acclaim the great day of triumph when the Holy Father infallibly declares a Servant of God a Saint. Few have any awareness of the years of study and toil expended by scholars and investigators working in

obscurity at the documentation and other tasks to make possible that great day of Canonization. In the performance of his part in these labors, Father Burgio has been unstinting. Through his years of devotion the only reward he hoped for was that the beginnings made in his assigned work might see fruition in the Canonization of Mother Seton.

Father Burgio's health had gradually worsened these last few years. During the summer of 1958 he suffered several coronary attacks. Discouraged by persistent weakness, he entered Fitzgerald Mercy Hospital in November for a check-up. Surgery resulted. Refusing to be daunted by his condition, he returned to New York to recuperate. On January 23 he was brought back to the hospital in Philadelphia for further surgery. He passed away on August 28. His funeral Mass, which was sung by the Very Rev. Sylvester A. Taggart, C.M., provincial of the Eastern Province of the Vincentians, was presided over by His Eminence, John Cardinal O'Hara, C.S.C., archbishop of Philadelphia, who also gave the absolution. The sermon was preached by the Right Rev. Msgr. Thomas F. McNally, vicar-general of the archdiocese of Philadelphia.

At Father Burgio's request, Mass was offered for the repose of his soul at Old St. Peter's, Barclay Street, New York City, following his funeral. The celebrant was the Most Rev. Cuthbert M. O'Gara, C.P., bishop of Yuanling, China, and the eulogy was given by the Right Rev. Msgr. Joseph B. Code who has been associated for years with the promotion of Mother Seton's Cause of Canonization.

May God grant Father Burgio the joy of reunion with his beloved Mother Seton.

# Eulogy for Father Burgio

(Continued from Page 3)

continuance of his work on a higher, loftier plane, closer to God, unencumbered with the shadows and the pitfalls of human life.

Could it have been that God, in His ineffable sweetness, was vouchsafing Father Burgio the vision of the Cause Complete as his Viaticum?

It is interesting to note that Father Burgio died on the anniversary of Mother Seton's birth—the Feast of St. Augustine.

Saint Teresa of Avila wrote in her autobiography: "To those who really love God and have put aside the things of this world, Death must come very gently." Death came very gently for Father Burgio. Outside the window as he died the skies were strewn with clouds, just as they have been since the dawn of Time, but the man who lay there had fallen asleep, and for us who loved him it is not hard to think that in the skies of his awakening he saw for the first time as on a cloud the Majesty of God approaching him.

*Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.*

*How incomprehensible are His judgments and unsearchable His ways.*

*For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?*

*Or who has first given to Him, that recompense should be made Him?*

*For of Him, and by Him, and in Him, are all things.*

*To Him be glory forever. Amen.*

## Mother Seton Guild

Emmitsburg, Maryland

Form 3547 Requested

The Mother Seton Guild, as the Apostolic Postulation, is the official organization for the Cause under the jurisdiction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Rome.

Guild members not only share in the noble work of making Mother Seton better known and loved by means of literature, etc., but their membership subscriptions and donations make possible this promotion.

The MOTHER SETON GUILD BULLETIN is issued quarterly to Guild members.

**ETERNAL REST GRANT UNTO HIM, O LORD!**