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A TRIBUTE TO JOE AND CAROL FURNARI



IN HONOR OF JOE FURNARI

**AN EXCERPT FROM
PARABLE OF THE ROSE***By Joe Furnari**Minor edits were made for brevity and clarity.*

From childhood my father came to me and said "My Son, I am entrusting you [with] this single vine that shoots up on the far side of this bush. Work with loving care and soon there will begin to bloom many roses to bring you joy." ...

Full of excitement as I first began my task I didn't notice that all along the arching stem, needle like thorns lurked in waiting to attack the soft flesh of my hands. After my first encounter with the hidden thorns, I ran to my father to complain. He chided me, "Did you think that task I have given you would be without these difficulties, will you on the brink of manhood run away from your task at the first sign of hardship." Not receiving the sympathy I had expected I obediently but reluctantly began to return to my labor. "Come Here", my father's voice as if shot from a mighty cannon boomed across the room. Startled, I turned, it wasn't an angry face that shone before me. Smiling gently, he called, "Come here Son". While he mended my torn flesh we talked over the many different ways there were to care for my vine in order to avoid the thorns that hid themselves waiting to attack. Before leaving my father's side he gave me a strong pair of gloves. "Always wear these while working with your vine.

They will protect you from the thorns, for even if you are careless the thorns cannot penetrate through them. Remember this also, although I seemed angry you have made me very happy by coming to me for help. Do not be afraid. Come to me. I will be here when you need me."

With my father's guiding hand my task had become a joy. Each day brought new surprises. My vines after being nourished were now showing signs of life. A small bud appeared and day by day, drinking in my clear water and basking in the sunlight it slowly began to spread its petals. My first rose burst forth in all its glory. The days that followed were full of joy and happiness, of caring and being cared for.

By remembering each day to put on my father's gloves the thorns became less and less a problem. Soon there burst forth many more roses on my vine. All the vines around me had also begun to bloom, and as one, their fragrance and beauty surrounded the hillside and captured the hearts of all that came near. ...

Morning came. I was awakened with a start. Knocking on my window furiously, the gale like winds and darting rain pellets were trying to come in. MY ROSES! Panic overtook me, my heart began to beat wildly. Dressing rapidly, I raced down, reached quickly for my gloves, raced out into the storm.

The young roses still full of youthful vigor were holding their own against this mighty foe. My first rose still weak hung there, helpless. Having been battered from side to side as a fighter who has had too many fights and taken far too many blows it was ready for the final knockout blow. "No!" I shouted. "I will still fight to keep my rose alive". Throwing off my gloves I wrapped my hands about my rose hoping that their warmth would offer some shelter. The wind continued to howl all around me,

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rain pellets struck savagely at my unprotected hands ... till I was no longer able to keep my hands around my rose. Unprotected now my rose was battered about until it was ripped from my vine and sent sprawling along the ground only to be torn apart and blown wildly into many directions. Full of despair I fell to the ground, blind to all else around me, my only thoughts were of my beautiful rose lost to me forever.

My father came out to me. He led me. I followed blindly as a robot follows the command of his master. In the protection of his warmly lit home, he bathed me, put on dry clothing, then bandaged my battered sashed hands. Oblivious to all pain and the storm that raged outside I safely cradled myself at my father's feet and fell into a troubled sleep.

In my dreams all I could think of was my rose. Soon a huge, beautiful rose began to come into being. The stem that fed this rose trailed far off into the horizon. Everything seemed so real I could hardly believe I was dreaming. As my dream enfolded I found myself wandering among many roses. I suddenly realized that what I had first thought to be one huge, beautiful rose, in reality was rows and rows of roses as far as my eyes could see. This beauty all around overwhelmed me. My body began to tremble and quiver all over. From the center of each rose bright yellow golden rays shown forth. All light was coming from these rays. The roses were not being nourished by an outside source, such as our sun. Their nourishment came from within. The light shown forth from its yellow golden center over pure white, continued on over the petals which ranged in color from yellow golden to pure white of soft pink gradually on to bright red. ... There was no sun, wind, or rain here.

A thought suddenly came to me. This must be where all lost roses go. Hope sprang up in my

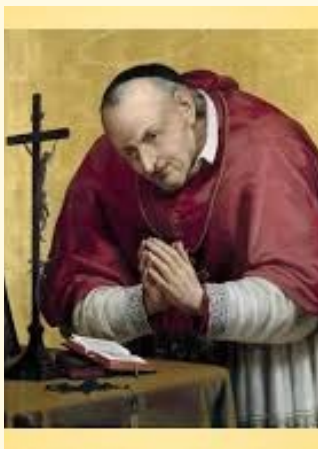
heart. If this is so, then my beautiful rose might be here too. Racing up and down the paths I realized for the first time that all the roses were identical. It would be impossible to recognize my rose. I raced on. Even though they looked the same I knew I would know my rose and my rose would know me. Having raced for what seemed like hours I stopped for a moment. Sitting there looking up and down the nearby path I saw it. MY ROSE! My heart leapt for joy. Not only did I find the rose I had thought was lost but my rose too like all the rest was now more beautiful than I could have ever imagined. This is not the listless rose that clung desperately for life. This strange source of power had restored my rose far beyond its natural beauty. Moving in closer I saw for the first time there were no thorns on the stems of these roses. All were smooth in perfection. Alongside many of the roses were short and long growing stems reaching up with no roses attached at their ends.

All was perfection except for a small tear that remained on the petal of each rose. I reached out to wipe away the tear from my rose. A powerful voice cried out, "No! Do not touch my roses." "Who are you?" my frightened voice questioned. "You may call me the Keeper of the Roses. All these roses have been given to me by my father. They have been put in my care. They no longer need your kind of food for life. My roses have been given the water of life. They will be fed and nourished through me forever. There will no longer be wind to rip their petals nor thorns to cause pain or mar their beauty."

"But the tear on each rose? Why do they cry? Are they unhappy here?", I asked. With the patience of one who loves deeply he replied, "There is only joy and happiness here. As you have seen there are many stems waiting patiently for the roses that will come and make their home with them. The tear then is simply a reminder that my garden of roses is not yet complete. When the lost rose finds a

SAINTS & US TODAY

St. Alphonsus Liguori



As Christians, one of the biggest challenges many of us face when it comes to prayer is that we don't always find it easy to begin our prayer sessions with God, or sometimes, we don't know exactly what to

say to Him. When this happens, it means that we may have forgotten an essential truth: that God is our friend and we can speak to him as our best and most loving friend because He is.

Saint Alphonsus Liguori knew this truth well. He expressed it when he said: *"Acquire the habit of speaking to God as if you were alone with Him. Speak with familiarity and confidence as to your dearest and most loving friend. Speak of your life, your plans, your troubles, your joys, your fears."*

Saint Alphonsus Liguori was born on September 27, 1696, in Marianella, Italy. Ordained a priest in 1726, Alphonsus left a promising legal career to serve the poorest and most overlooked souls in his community. He made it his mission to teach these poor people how to pray to God with the openness, trust, and confidence they would have with a close friend.

St. Alphonsus Liguori, pray for us that we might pray in the way that you taught, with an open heart to God, our loving and faithful friend, mentor and teacher.

By Deacon Michael Alfano

home on the last stem then I myself will go to each one and wipe away that final tear and all will have been made new. You must return now. Your task is not complete. Your vine needs mending. Your roses need your care. Be faithful to your father's teaching. Be faithful to your vine and one day we will meet again."

I awoke to the noisy chirping of the birds. The sun was shining bright. I had slept through the storm. Looking up I saw my father's gentle understanding face. He never left my side. Should I tell him of my dream? Should I tell him I have found new hope again? No, I have no need to tell him. One who loves as deeply as he already knows, by the sparkle that returned to my eyes. The beat of my heart. By every breath I take.

By my side stood the tools my father gave me to care for my vine. As I put on my gloves I thought, "It wasn't a dream, it was real. There is a garden of roses out there. 'Be faithful,' the Keeper said, 'and we will meet again.' I believe him! I believe him." This was all I could say as out the door I went back to the care of my vine.

I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME SHALL NOT DIE. HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME SHALL BE GIVEN A NEW LIFE.

To read more reflections and writings by Joe Furnari, please check out

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Joe Furnari