



THE SAINT NURSE OF THE PATAGONIA

Roman Martyrology: Born in Boretto, emigrated to Argentina, settling in Bahia Blanca. Devoted himself entirely to the life of the hospital, and eventually became deputy director.

He spent his entire life working for those most in need and died of cancer in 1951 at the age of 70.

Beatification Date: 14 April 2002 by Pope John Paul II.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Artemides Zatti, one of three sons, was born in Boretto, in the province of Reggio Emilia, on the 12th October 1880, to Louis Zatti and Albina Vecchi, a farming family. Since he was a small child he was accustomed to work and sacrifice, by the time he was nine, he had to drop out of school and started earning money as a hired hand for a wealthy neighbor. In 1897 the Zatti family, forced by poverty, emigrated to Argentina to establish life anew at Bahia Blanca. Here Artemides began to attend the parish run by the Salesians and became a helper to the parish priest, Fr Carlo Cavalli, with whom he often shared work and prayer. He felt a desire to become a Salesian, and was accepted as an aspirant by Bishop Cagliero and, by the time he was twenty, went to the Community at Bernal.

He began studying in earnest to make up for lost time. Providence entrusted him with assisting a young priest who was ill with tuberculosis, and who then died in 1902. The day when Artemides was to receive his clerical habit, he too contracted the disease. When he got back to the community, Fr Cavalli sent him to the mission hospital in Viedma. Fr Evarisio Garrone, with wide experience in the task, was in charge of the hospital. Artemides, along with him, asked and obtained from Mary Help of Christians the grace of recovery, promising to dedicate his entire life to looking after the sick.

He recovered and kept his promise. At first he began to look after the pharmacy attached to the hospital, where he learned how Fr Garrone worked: only those who could need pay. When Fr Garrone died, he took on the entire responsibility. In 1908 he made his perpetual profession. He was completely dedicated to the sick. People sought him out and admired him. For the personnel at the hospital he was not only

an excellent director, but an excellent Christian above all.

This is how his day was spent: "At 4.30 he was already up. Meditation and Mass. Visit to all the sick. Then on his bike he would head out to visit the sick around the city. After lunch he would play an enthusiastic game of bocce with those who were recovering. From 2 pm till 6 pm he would visit those in the hospital again as well as those outside. Then until 8 pm he would work in the pharmacy. Then back to the hospital again. Until 11 pm he would study medicine, and finally, some spiritual reading. Then he would rest but was always available for anyone who called for help".

He gained his diploma as a nurse. In 1913 he led the construction of the new hospital then, much to his displeasure, it was demolished. Without being discouraged he started out afresh. Like Don Bosco, Providence was his first and certain entry in any of the accounting he had to do. Mary Help of Christians never abandoned him. When Don Bosco was dreaming of his Salesian Brothers, he certainly wanted them to be holy like Artemides. In 1950, he fell on the stairs and was confined to bed. After some months, signs of cancer showed up. He breathed his last on the 15th March 1951.

His remains rest in the atrium of the parochial church of San Juan Bosco (Saint John Bosco) in Viedma, expecting the Resurrection.

Immediately after his death people started calling him "the saint nurse of the Patagonia"

and "the kinsman of the poor". At present the local hospital of Viedma as well as one of the main streets in town are called after him, Artémides Zatti. At the front corner of the hospital there is a monument, which witnesses the love of the people.