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The Life of Charles of Mt. Argus

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Introduction

The Catholic Church has a beautiful Preface for the feasts of Holy Men and Women that would be a good starting point for our reflections today. In it the Church prays to the Father: “You renew the Church in every age by raising up men and women outstanding in holiness, living witnesses of your unchanging love.”

Our soon to be canonized—Fr. Charles Houben of Mount Argus—fits that description perfectly. He was outstanding in holiness and a living witness to God’s mercy and compassion toward the sick and suffering. Fr. Charles gave a powerful witness to Christ the Healer, whose Heart was moved to compassion whenever He encountered those who suffer in body or in soul. Our new saint is someone we definitely need to get to know.

God raised Fr. Charles up as part of the renewal of the Catholic Church in Ireland just at the time when Ireland was coming out of the catacombs of 300 years of Protestant persecution. Fr. Charles was a humble man of God who came into the midst of the discouraged, poor and down-trodden Irish people. He performed signs and wonders, giving them new hope that God did care about their afflictions and was still in their midst. When people witnessed the healings of body and soul that God performed through Fr. Charles, they could have repeated what the crowds said of Jesus the Divine Healer: “A great prophet has risen among us. God has visited his people.” (See Luke 7:16) Charles spent his life easing pain, blessing the sick and interceding for them, and giving courage and hope to those who shared closely in the Passion of Jesus.

300 years of Catholic persecution by Protestants had left Ireland in a state of spiritual devastation. The people were illiterate regarding the Catholic faith; they had lost hope; all manner of sin abounded; and there had been no new churches or monasteries built there in over 300 years. The old churches were now in the hands of the government. For three centuries, Catholics had not been free to worship God openly. But now things were changing. In England, John Henry Newman, renounced his faith as an Anglican, and was received into the Catholic Church by a Passionist, Bl. Dominic Barbari. Newman called his times “a second spring....The Church in England had died, and the Church lives again!” he triumphantly cried.

Long before all this, in the year 1720, St. Paul of the Cross was making a 40 day retreat as he wrote the Rule for the Passionists. During that time, Paul received a great longing for the conversion of the British Isles back to Catholicism. He said he wanted to die as a martyr of the Eucharist in a place where this truth of the Catholic faith was denied. In God’s plan, Paul was not to be able to fulfill this dream himself. Nevertheless, one of his spiritual sons, Fr. Dominic Barbari—now a Blessed on his way to canonization—was the beginning of the fulfillment of Paul of the Cross’ desire to go to England. Dominic founded the first Passionist house in England in 1842, arriving there just 12 years after the Catholic emancipation, at a time when there was still a great deal of hatred for the Catholic Church.

Fr. Charles of Mt. Argus who was born in Holland, entered the Passionist Congregation in Belgium shortly after Bl. Dominic died. Later after his ordination as a priest, he was sent to England, where he worked for a few years before being sent to Dublin, Ireland. It was in England that Fr. Charles first met the Irish who had fled Ireland during the potato famine and had come to work in England. Fr. Charles immediately fell in love with the Irish people, a love he kept all his life. His compassionate love became a lasting spiritual legacy he would leave them.

But let’s go back now, and trace some of the steps in the life journey of Charles.

Childhood

Our saint was born John Andrew Houben in Holland on Dec. 11, 1821, the 4th of 11 children born to Peter and Johanna Houben who worked in a flour mill owned by their uncle.

The faith-filled family from which he came is shown in a letter Andrew wrote to two of his siblings who were called to the married state: “Bring them up to know God’s peace; have them pray every morning and night; teach them to recite the rosary in the evening, so that the welfare of their souls will be the most important thing in life for them. We should be thankful to God for giving us such good parents.”

Andrew was shy, quiet, pious, friendly and always cheerful in the family circle. He was known for singing as he went about. This love for song characterized him throughout his life. A slow learner who found study difficult, Andrew persevered in school, possibly because his one desire in life was to become a priest. Although he studied hard he barely made it through school.

Military Life

Like St. Paul of the Cross, Andrew served for a brief period in the military. At 19, he was drafted into the army, but had to spend only three months in active duty. Even then it was said of him that he spent too much time in Church. Once when there was a disturbance in a town, the army was called in and told to fire. Charles was afraid of hitting someone so he aimed his rifle in the wrong direction and just missed killing an officer! Providentially, during his time in the army, Andrew heard of the Passionists, and so when his three months were finished, he decided to become a Passionist.

Family Sorrow

Not too long afterwards, sorrow struck the family. His mother died, and also the uncle who owned the mill where the family worked. Determined to let nothing hold him back, Andrew soon left to join the Passionists in Belgium and was never to see his family or country again. When he received the Passionist habit, he was given the name Charles of St. Andrew. Those who were in the Passionist formation program with him remember him as good-humored and cheerful.

Ordination

When Charles was ordained a Passionist priest on Dec. 21, 1850, none of his family members were able to attend. His father had died in August of 1850, and those who were left could not afford the journey. Coming from such a close family, Charles must have felt this separation deeply. It was as if God asked Charles to sacrifice his family because later he would give him a much larger family among the poor and suffering of the British Isles.

England

A year or so after ordination, Charles was sent to do parish work in England where he first came in contact with the Irish. Their faith and poverty reminded him of his own people in Holland. This was shortly after the potato famine in Ireland during which four million people either died or emigrated to foreign lands. The poorest had fled to England where they found themselves working in deplorable conditions in coal mines or factories. With the compassion of the Heart of Christ, Charles felt their plight profoundly and wanted to help them in any way he could, especially with the consolation of the sacraments.

Ireland

But God had other plans. He did not leave him long in England, but in 1857, Fr. Charles was sent to Dublin where the Passionists had made a new foundation. He arrived at Mount Argus on July 9th, the feast of Our Mother of Holy Hope. Charles was 35 years of age, and this would be his home for most of the rest of his life.

Dublin had a population of less than a quarter of a million, and was far from being a saintly place. Prostitution and intemperance abounded. Murders were common and moral standards very low. Religious knowledge was so poor that many Catholics did not know even the basics of the faith or the most common of prayers like the Our Father and Hail Mary. The Sign of the Cross was the most they knew.

The New Evangelization of Ireland

In a letter written to his uncle not long after his arrival in Dublin, Fr. Charles said: “In spite of the large number of Catholics in Ireland, there are very few priests....We have to hear confessions from morning til night nearly every day....As you know, Ireland is a Catholic country....For more than three hundred years the Irish have been cruelly persecuted but have remained loyal to the Catholic faith in spite of everything.”

The Passionists pioneered Christian Doctrine classes in Dublin, and set about building a monastery and retreat house for priests and laymen, the first of its kind in Ireland. During these years, Charles led a simple life of deep prayer and intercession, along with tireless priestly service to the people whom he called “my people”. He prayed with and for them, and spent many hours in the confessional. He wrote about the Irish people to his brother Peter who had become a diocesan priest: “Thousands of people neither go to confession nor make their Easter Communion....With all my heart I implore you to pray for them, to offer your evening rosary for the conversion of so many great sinners; go to Mass and offer your Communions for this intention....I shudder to think of how often Our Lord is offended in this large city, crucified by serious sins.”

His popularity did not rest on his eloquence as a preacher but on his holiness of life, which all recognized. Charles never really mastered the English language, but he excelled in the confessional and in comforting the sick. When Pope John Paul II beatified him in 1988 he said that “the priestly ministry of Blessed Charles was carried out in continual service to others. His life was characterized by that humble exemplary dedication to service which determines the true greatness of a disciple.” (Beatification homily)

His Gift of Healing

It is for the miraculous gift of healing of bodies and souls that Charles is most remembered. It all began when a mother brought her 12 year old boy to the Passionists and asked them to bless him. The boy had lost the use of his leg. The prayer of Fr. Charles brought healing to the boy, and soon hundreds of people were coming to be blessed and healed. Miracles were so common that neither Fr. Charles nor his Passionist community took much notice of them.

But these healings were not automatic. Some people were not healed. Once an arrogant man demanded, “You must cure my son,” to which Fr. Charles replied, “There is no must with God.” Then he walked out of the room. A similar story was when a mother—with a totally different attitude of heart—came to Fr. Charles and said, “Now, Fr. Charles, you must cure him.” This time, Charles replied good-humoredly, “Well I suppose if I must, I must.” Her child was cured and later became a doctor.

His fame spread even to England where a newspaper recounted the following: there is “a constant pilgrimage of blind, lame and halt” coming to Fr. Charles for cures, and “instances of cures are not infrequent.” When the people were too ill to travel to the monastery, they would send a horse and buggy to bring him to them.

One witness in the process for his beatification said that Fr. Charles had been called to visit his great uncle who seemed to be dying. After Charles blessed the sick man, he said to the family, “There is another sick person here.” No one had told him that a daughter of the sick man was very ill with a fever and the doctor said that unless she got immediate rest and sleep she would die. When Fr. Charles went into her sick room, she was sitting up in bed raving in delirium. He gently put his hand on her forehead and pushed her to lie down. Almost at once she fell into a deep sleep and the next morning was much better. The doctor considered her cure miraculous.

A Dublin businessman who gave testimony in the processes tells how at age 6 or 7, he was stone-blind as a result of an accident. He was taken to Fr. Charles and after he was blessed, the first thing the child saw was Fr. Charles standing in front of him with hands extended. By that evening he was able to see all his family members clearly.

Another famous cure was that of a man whose doctor had said he would not live through the night. The sick man was conscious but could not stir when Fr. Charles came to him. Fr. Charles told the family who waited outside the room that the man would be all right, and this gave them much hope. He said he would visit again in two days which he did. After the second visit the man got out of bed and went about his business as usual. So great was the

His Gift of Healing (continued)

people's confidence in the prayers and blessings of Fr. Charles that they would gather outside any house he visited, and even as he walked along the street, sick people would be brought out of their homes to be blessed by them.

During the construction of the Mt. Argus church, an accident occurred, after which Fr. Charles told one of the workers: "There was an accident here already...tell the other [workers] not to be afraid; there will be no other accident." Then each day for about six months, Charles could be seen walking slowly around the construction area. The workers knew he was praying because they saw him with eyes downcast, and his lips slowly moving in prayer. The workmen had great faith in his promise that there would be no more accidents.

There is another important story of how cures were not automatic. A young married man with a young family was found by doctors to have cancer in an advanced stage, with only a month to live. Because the doctors had told him there was nothing more they could do for him, the man was very depressed and discouraged. His wife said, "We must go to Mt. Argus so you can be blessed by Fr. Charles." Father Charles listened to his story and then prayed with the man, and prayed over the man. After he had blessed him, Charles said, "You are not going to recover from this. In about a month's time you will die. So now prepare yourself to pass from this life to the next." When the man went home he was perfectly at peace. In fact, it was remarked that now there was a peace and joy and radiance in the man. The weeks of life that remained to him became very precious to him, to his wife and family. He spent those weeks surrounded by the love of his wife and family, and he died a peaceful and holy death. The family always believed that they *had* received a miracle—not that of a physical cure, but a different kind of healing, a healing of his spirit and the grace of a happy death.

Many other miracles are cited in the books about our saint, too many to recount here.

Spiritual Warfare

Unfortunately, Father Charles' spiritual ministry did not escape the notice of the devil. Just as in the case of Padre Pio, the spiritual gifts of Fr. Charles provoked the attacks of satan who tried to stop his ministry of healing.

A doctor stirred up fury against Fr. Charles by writing letters to the newspaper with allegations that he was telling the sick they should not go to doctors. An anti-Catholic newspaper reported that the Passionists had told a girl not to go near the doctors. In the meantime, the sight in both her eyes was destroyed. The newspaper claimed that "the poor girl who under proper medical treatment could have been perfectly cured of her disease, is now thrown into a poorhouse by those who under the mask of religion, have done their utmost to ruin her not only in this world but in that which is to come." Years later the doctor withdrew the accusation, but in the meantime, it brought much suffering to Fr. Charles and to his entire community. There is no doubt that Charles never discouraged anyone from seeking medical attention. In fact, at least on one occasion when a woman brought her own sister to Charles for a cure, he said to take her to a doctor because God in his goodness had given doctors the skill to heal.

More trouble erupted when some unscrupulous people with an eye to making a fortune off of Fr. Charles, sold holy water that he had blessed with the relic of St. Paul of the Cross. At this point the Archbishop of Dublin intervened, advising the Passionist superiors that the only way to stop the scandalous practice was to send Charles away. Actually, Charles himself was under suspicion of being involved in this money-making scheme, so he was sent to England for eight years. Charles held his peace, never attempting to prove his innocence. He bowed humbly under the mighty hand of God and went to England for about 8 years. Eventually things calmed down and Charles was able to return to Mt. Argus where almost immediately, the daily pilgrimage of sick and suffering people began all over again.

Outstanding in Holiness

Witnesses remembered him as one who always had time to listen to their troubles, as one who was ready to comfort those in need, and to show them the goodness and mercy of God. They remark how he was *always available* to the sick and suffering, and yet *always in the presence of God*. He loved fresh air, and would often be seen walking in the garden admiring the flowers. But even then, witnesses say it was obvious he was in the presence of God.

Outstanding in Holiness (continued)

Every day he was in close contact with misery and sickness. It would have been easy to become hardened to human suffering, and to begin treating people in a routine, impersonal manner, but to the contrary, Charles was always very *kind and accessible*. A policeman who as a child had been blessed by him said: “he looked at me so kindly and laid his hand on my head...Child though I was, I felt that the man who blessed me was out of the ordinary, on a higher plane than others, but still so accessible....I often marveled at Fr. Charles’ *patience*; he never showed any sign of impatience when he was so persistently and as I sometimes felt, unreasonably followed by people. I often felt inclined to intervene and send them away, but he *never showed any sign of being annoyed with them*.”

Charles walked with a limp and very unsteadily as a result of a horse and buggy overturning with him inside it. But he never complained. He had a *great sense of humor* and was as natural as anyone in the community, enjoying their get-togethers, and *happy when called upon to sing*. In fact, he had a natural talent for singing. He sang a lot at community get-togethers, as well as in the Church and in the choir. His favorite piece was the Ave Maria. Once he tried to teach some of the students how to sing but one of them who was tone deaf drowned him out and thus ended his endeavor. At Mt. Argus he used to be heard humming the Dutch national anthem. On Good Friday each year, Charles participated in the solemn singing of the Passion, taking the part of Christ. When the Passion narrative was finished, there would be tears in the eyes of many, caused by his very appearance and general bearing as he entered into the meaning of what was being proclaimed.

Fr. Charles was really a very ordinary man with ordinary human weaknesses, but he admitted them and persevered in overcoming his faults. Charles urged people to turn to Jesus whose death on the cross gives us the power to overcome our sinful inclinations: “The means to become perfect is to mortify our predominant passion. As a Captain in the time of battle in order to gain the victory, endeavors to arrange the soldiers at that point where he sees the greatest dangers are to be overcome, so we should do the same. As long as we strive to overcome our little passions, we shall not be easily overcome by the strong ones. What is the means to be used to overcome our passions? It is to meditate on the Passion of our Lord. A person who is proud, for instance, if he sees that Jesus Christ is derided, mocked, sent from one place to the other, and yet kept silence, he sees a great motive for humility in Our Lord. Another is impatient. He may look to the Crucifix and find a model of patience.”

Devotion to the Passion

The simplest discourse on the Passion of Jesus was enough to move Charles to tears. He used to carry with him a small crucifix, sometimes placed on top of his devotional book, but more often locked in his left hand palm. From time to time, he opened his hand, looked affectionately at the crucifix and reverently raised it to his lips. He also loved the Way of the Cross and usually made it daily.

Fr. Charles was heard often to pray: “O Lord, let your Passion be so realized and verified in me that I may never die in sin.” Charles was deeply aware that he was a sinner who must plead for God’s mercy.

Throughout his healing ministry, he encouraged souls to remember the Passion of Christ. As I said, not all who came to Fr. Charles were cured physically. Some he simply encouraged to bear their cross in union with Christ, while others he advised to prepare for death. He realized that in some cases the cross of suffering must be carried bravely. Writing to his own sister, he hoped that she would “bear her illness with resignation because this is God’s will, and with devotion, since this will be to her advantage. She must not lose heart in her sufferings and should think of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ...May my sister grow used to saying these words, ‘Blessed be God! Thy will be done! I adore your holy will! My God, I thank you for this illness, for crosses,’ etc.”

On another occasion Fr Charles wrote to his brother: “I was sorry to hear that you have been ill. I hope you will recover soon. I was very pleased to hear that you have been totally resigned to God’s will. Oh, holy will of God! May his will be always obeyed, honored and blessed by men! Oh, holy will, oh blessed will! Our happiness in this life and in the life to come lies in carrying out God’s will...”

Fr. Charles himself had learned this lesson in his own life. He advised his sister not to lose heart but to think of the Passion of Christ as he had learned to do. The exhausting nature of his ministry, the loneliness and separation

Refuge Always at the Foot of the Cross

from his family, the continual pain in his leg that resulted from the accident with the horse and buggy, were for him opportunities not to lose heart but to think of the Passion of Jesus and become more united with Him.

Eventually, Charles' own health began to deteriorate. He wrote to his nephew: "Let us ask the Infant Jesus to give us the virtue of patience and of complete submission to the will of God in all that we do and in all the suffering we have to bear, especially in our last illness and at the hour of our death. Let us ask him not only for the strength to resist temptation and to persevere in his divine love, but also for the grace of being able to pray always, since through prayer, we acquire divine love and perfection, perseverance and eternal happiness. May our divine Savior share the eternal glory of heaven with us. Amen."

For Fr. Charles, his place of refuge was always at the foot of the cross where his suffering and the suffering of others could be seen in their true light, as he himself had written: "The cross patiently borne for the love of God helps greatly for our eternal salvation....Strive to think every day for a few minutes on the bitter sufferings of Jesus Christ....May Jesus and Mary always reign in our hearts."

His Strong Prayer Life

Witnesses in the processes tell us that Fr. Charles was known as a man of continuous prayer. The practice of the presence of God was a key element in his life. He wrote: "Let us endeavor in all our trials to have God before our eyes; the neglect of this practice has been the reason for so many faults. Let us have God before our eyes day and night, and we shall advance in perfection."

It is important to note that even though constant demands were made on his time, Fr. Charles never gave the impression of being caught in a whirlwind of activity. On the contrary, he always seemed totally absorbed in the presence of God. The heart of all his ministry was the ministry of prayer and intercession. Before blessing people, he recalled events from the Passion. Then he prayed silently before leading the pilgrims in prayer. And finally he prayed over each person individually. His blessings were a way of teaching people how to pray and meditate on the Passion.

Witnesses remarked that he was a man of uncommon holiness, absorbed in prayer, always having a prayer book or crucifix in his hand. They remembered his wonderful smile as he spoke words of comfort to the sick and suffering. Before blessing a sick person Charles usually prayed spontaneously for some time.

In a letter to his uncle he wrote: "Pray at all times, desiring that God's will be accomplished completely in your regard. From the Imitation of Christ by Thomas a Kempis, we learn to ask our good, merciful God for these graces: the graces of prayer and perseverance; prayer and a happy death."

His Devotion to Mary

For Fr. Charles, Mary was the "Refuge of Sinners," the one to whom he could turn for help in time of need. He saw her as an example all Christians were to imitate. "We should love and serve the Blessed Virgin and imitate her virtues. She ought to be our book, our model, our mother." Charles' devotion to Mary, though simple and childlike, was firm and courageous. He kept in his room De Montfort's True Devotion and also the Secret of Mary, and would recommend these books to others.

His confessor said: "He would speak of the great Mother of God as his own dear Mother, and the sweet name of Mary was always on his lips. When he spoke of her Immaculate Conception or her sufferings at the foot of the Cross of her divine Son, his face would light up with unusual brilliancy. Above all, Mary was for him the one in whom we trust now and at the hour of our death."

Toward the end of his life, while he was at table with the community in the refectory (dining room), suddenly he stood up oblivious of anyone else in the room, and he called the name Mary, Mary. He placed his left hand over his heart and extended his right hand on high, transfixed and motionless, with his gaze fixed on the ceiling. Everyone looked but saw nothing on the ceiling. For some moments he remained motionless until the superior brought him back

His Devotion to Mary (continued)

to himself by calling out loudly: "Fr. Charles, Fr. Charles, you are disturbing the community." Fr. Charles immediately sat down as if nothing had happened.

The mission of Charles of Mount Argus was to bring healing and hope to the crucified ones of this world: the poor, lonely, sick and dying. To them he would frequently say: "Have faith; pray to Mary."

At the end of his life, deeply aware of his own sinfulness, all his trust was placed in Jesus our Hope and in Mary his Mother. Like St. Paul of the Cross he would say, "All my hope is in the Passion of Jesus and the Sorrows of Mary." After his death the Passionists found a prayer to Mary to obtain a good death among his papers. (See at the end of these pages)

Witnesses to His Holiness

The Passionists with whom he lived gave personal accounts of this holy man: "He was quite affable and liked by all. I never knew anything against his obedience." "It could certainly be said of him that his every conscious thought and act was directed to God. He was certainly holier than the holiest person I have ever known." "He was always affable to all who came to see him, especially the poor. The very sight of the man did good. He sought no recognition or precedence. I never saw him give any sign of annoyance. He was always kind." "If he had any predominant fault, I would say it would be a little temper or impatience. This was my impression ... from the way he pulled away from those who sometimes tried to pluck his cloak. This seemed to be an indication of his strong mind. He was not a man to be trifled with. He was not morose. He used to take part in the recreations of the community. One would feel quite at home in his company."

"My recollection of Fr. Charles is as of one never out of the presence of God. He was a man of simple faith. If his exterior appearance represented his soul, then he was entirely on fire with the love of God. He possessed the prudence of simplicity; a man entirely without guile. He was most uncomplaining, even when unreasonable demands were made on his services....I am inclined to say that fortitude was preeminently one of his virtues, even heroically. He bore opposition and trials for love of God....He was remarkably obedient even in hard things. He observed poverty fully....He was the essence of humility and kindness. I do think these virtues were practiced by him in an heroic degree."

"During his last illness I was especially struck by his resignation to God's will. 'I cooperate with God's will' was his way of putting it. He suffered very severely but very patiently....His habit of prayer and invocation was uninterrupted by his sufferings." Another Passionist remembered some of his prayers during his illness: "My Jesus, I embrace this affliction for love of you. I desire to suffer in order to please you." His attitude impressed not only the community but also the doctor attending him.

His Death

God allowed Fr. Charles to experience a fear of death, and particularly a fear of losing his immortal soul. This may have had something to do with scrupulosity, but also may have been vicarious suffering endured for others. The Holy Spirit's gift of the Fear of the Lord makes us so realize the goodness and majesty of God that we have a holy fear of offending God and losing Him forever. Fr. Charles' fear of death made him think of it often, and prepare himself well over many years. When the end finally came it was calm and peaceful as Fr. Charles went home to God on Jan. 5, 1893. No struggle with death was evident, nor did any of those physical pains which are common at last moments manifest themselves. One last breath drawn with the same apparent ease and fullness as at any other time, and his heart then ceased to beat...His soul was with its God.

After news of his death spread, a constant stream of people came to venerate his body. The chronicler of the community said the spacious church was crammed everywhere with people, while thousands were outside although it was raining and the mud was half a foot deep. Another witness said that such extraordinary crowds had never been seen at Mount Argus, and people came from every corner of Ireland. The roads were blocked and people waited a long time even to get into the Church. For five days the people came but there was no sign of decomposition in his body. **One newspaper said tens of thousands of people came to say goodbye to the saint of Mount Argus.**

Finally he was buried on Jan. 10th, and as the coffin was lowered into the grave, Charles' mission took on a world-wide scope, no longer confined by space and time. Now his compassion could reach out over the whole world, to all who turn to him and sought his intercession in their need.

It is in relation to the Passion of Christ that we can understand the significance of the life of this holy Passionist. At his religious profession he had committed himself to keeping alive the memory of Christ's Passion. Charles understood the intimate link between the Passion of Jesus and the ongoing Passion in the lives of the Mystical members of the Body of Christ. He saw the face of the suffering Christ in those who came for his blessing, and his soul responded with love and compassion, knowing that whatever he did for the least of Christ's members, he was doing to Christ Himself.

Conclusion

In our time, the Holy Spirit has given us in Charles of Mt. Argus a patron for the Ministry of Healing which has experienced such a wonderful renewal in the Catholic Church. For almost 30 years, Charles was visited daily by hundreds of people who came to receive his blessing and be prayed over for physical, emotional and spiritual healing. There are many accounts of the physical and spiritual healings obtained through his prayer.

Charles was always ready to go at a moment's notice to visit the sick and dying in whom he saw the suffering Christ. In his own daily sufferings he drew strength from the Passion of Christ, whose compassionate love he was able to mirror to others. His prayer was centered on the mystery of the cross which he saw continued in the crucified members of Christ in the world of his time. The Passion of Christ gives hope to overcome any suffering. No suffering is wasted. Annually to this day, there is a famous Novena of Hope at Mt. Argus in his honor. It shows that Fr. Charles is still pierced to the heart at the sight of human misery, that he still comforts the brokenhearted and heals the sick and desolate.

Even in the midst of a very active ministry, Charles lived immersed in the loving presence of God, giving the Church an example of how in our own lives there must always be the fusion of action and contemplation.

Pilgrims continue to visit his grave, looking for healing and hope. People afraid of death find comfort from a saint who himself was afraid of death. Those fretting about exams come to invoke the help of one who was a slow student. The sick know how much Charles himself suffered and compassionated those who suffer. The poor know his solidarity with them since his family was so poor they couldn't even travel to attend his ordination. Even today Passionists have witnessed persons suffering from cancer and those in comas all helped by Fr. Charles. People in the field of entertainment take to him because of his excellent singing voice. Emigrants and the lonely recognize that he understands them.

The Collect for His Feastday, January 5th

O God, Blessed Charles of St. Andrew gave himself wholly to the service of others and brought healing to those who were wounded by sin and suffering. Grant that, following his example, we too may spend our lives helping and caring for our brothers and sisters. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

His Prayer for a Happy Death

Mary, sweet refuge of miserable sinners, when my soul is on the point of leaving this world, oh my most sweet Mother, by the sorrow you endured when assisting at the death of your Son on the Cross, assist me with your mercy. Drive the infernal enemy far from me, and you yourself come to take my soul to yourself and present it to the eternal Judge. My Queen, abandon me not. You, after Jesus, have to be my comfort in that terrible moment. Entreat your beloved Son in his Goodness, to grant me the grace to die clinging to your feet, and to breathe forth my soul in his wounds, saying, 'Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.' Amen."

Charles of Mount Argus was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI June 3, 2007.