

Hints for prayer

Psalm 103

Psalm 103 is a hymn of praise to God, an exhortation to bless the Lord for His infinite goodness, mercy, and forgiveness.

Bless the LORD, my soul;
all my being, bless his holy name!
Bless the LORD, my soul;
and do not forget all his gifts,

Who pardons all your sins,
and heals all your ills,
Who redeems your life from the pit,
and crowns you with mercy and compassion,

Who fills your days with good things,
so your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
The LORD does righteous deeds,
brings justice to all the oppressed.

He made known his ways to Moses,
to the Israelites his deeds.
Merciful and gracious is the LORD,
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.

He will not always accuse,
and nurses no lasting anger;
He has not dealt with us as our sins merit,
nor requited us as our wrongs deserve.

For as the heavens tower over the earth,
so his mercy towers over those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our sins from us.

As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.
For he knows how we are formed,
remembers that we are dust.

Prayer

O God, in whose eternal design family life has its firm foundation, look with compassion on the prayers of your servants and grant that, following the example of the Holy Family of your Only Begotten Son in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity, we may, in the joy of your house, delight one day in eternal rewards. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

(collect, Mass for the family)



The tenderness of a mother

with Redenta Olivieri



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Allow me to introduce myself: I am Redenta Olivieri.

Vicenza, July 4, 1779 – Treviso, January 13, 1857

God's embroideries are perfect, both on the front and on the reverse.

My childhood was not easy. At the age of seven, after the death of my father, my mother entrusted me to the care of the Soccorsetto, a boarding school for girls in our city, Vicenza. There I grew up, received a good education, and learned to sew and embroider, to pray, and to teach. Leaving my family was a wound for me... and that pain shaped in me a particular sensitivity. Perhaps that is why, while I was still young, the youngest girls were entrusted to me, for whom I became not only a teacher of sewing and embroidery, but also a mother, giving them my care, my affection, and my tenderness.

At the Soccorsetto I also met Father Angelico. He was the director, but soon became like a father to me. From him I received the most beautiful gifts of my youth: fatherly affection, the example of a simple yet strong faith, and the safeguarding of my family's great inheritance. In fact, when my mother was no longer able to manage the goods left by her husband, she asked Father Angelico to act as our administrator. His precision, as well as his integrity, became for me a true school of life! He was like a needle in God's hand, weaving His fabric... It was Father Angelico who introduced me to Don Antonio Farina in the Parish of San Pietro, and he immediately entrusted me with the care of the girls of the Pious Work of Saint Dorothy.

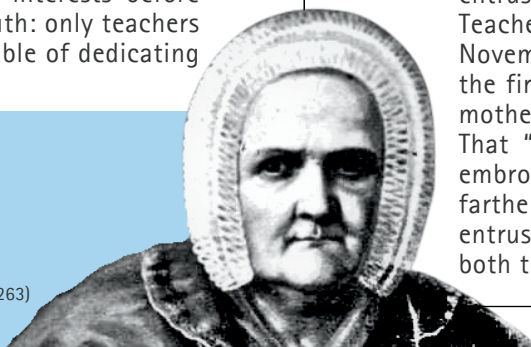
With Don Giovanni Antonio, a deep harmony soon grew between us, a bond that would mark us forever. Given the difference in age, I became for him like an older sister in whom he could find trust and support. For me, he was a brother, but also a priest—a guide to whom I could entrust my faith. When, in 1831, the new School of Charity reopened, he entrusted me with the direction of the girls' work and, after the death of Father Angelico, also the economic management of the entire school, which had moved next to my home on Via San Domenico. The first years were rather serene, and when life led us through difficult trials, the Lord guided us toward something great, until then unimaginable. In November 1835, the scourge of cholera reached Vicenza, and a few months later the Bacchiglione River overflowed several times, flooding our neighborhood. Those devastating situations became an opportunity for us to dedicate ourselves even more to our girls. Unable to send them home, we opened the doors of our house, offering them meals, a place to sleep, and clean clothes. It was costly for our small resources, but we did it with all our hearts, entrusting ourselves to Divine Providence. Shortly afterward, when one of our collaborators began to create obstacles by putting her personal interests before those of the girls, the Lord helped us to understand an essential truth: only teachers "called by vocation" and consecrated to Him in love would be capable of dedicating themselves entirely to the great mission of educating young girls.



Do not doubt that you are all dear to me more than you think... remember that I love you as a true mother.

Redenta Olivieri, in a letter to a nun

(A. I. Bassani, Una donna un istituto una città. Redenta Olivieri e le dorotee di Vicenza, p. 263)



A "feminine sensitivity" yesterday... ...and today!

The Church recognizes the indispensable contribution of women in society, with a sensitivity, an intuition, and certain distinctive abilities that are usually more characteristic of women than of men. For example, the special feminine attention toward others, which is expressed in a particular way—though not exclusively—in motherhood.

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 103

**Like Redenta, we too care for those who are close to us...
...and express our tenderness!**

Some questions to reflect on



- When and where can I show my tenderness?
- I reflect on the events of my life and ask myself: what is the "red thread" that the Lord has traced in it?

A practical step for today

- I will offer a smile to those I meet.
- I will try to listen patiently to those who speak to me.

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Through that circumstance, seemingly negative, God was sending us a new calling. Don Giovanni Antonio felt that voice strongly and, entrusting himself to Him, gave life to the Institute of the Sisters Teachers of Saint Dorothy, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts. It was November 11, 1836, when I and two other young teachers began to take the first steps of this wonderful divine work, in which I became a tender mother, a gentle yet strong guide for many girls and sisters.

That "yes" was only the beginning of a thread in the most beautiful embroidery of my life: that of charity, destined to extend far, much farther than I could see... But I knew I was in good hands, because I had entrusted myself to God, who weaves His marvelous embroideries "on both the front and the reverse," making them masterpieces of beauty.