

THE BULLETIN

“So the faith was planted: so it must be restored.”

Eight Pond Place, Oyster Bay, NY 11771

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Our Best Friend

Adapted from a sermon by The Most Rev. Clarence Kelly
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Many years ago there was a certain military officer who despised the Catholic religion. He despised the Church in spite of the fact that he was baptized a Catholic and was raised a Catholic. Something happened along the way to change him. It was due, perhaps, to the anti-Catholic spirit that reigned in many of the countries of Europe before the French Revolution. In any case, this baptized Catholic became a sworn enemy of religion and never missed an opportunity to express his contempt for the Catholic Church.

Now, this officer had a servant, who loved the Church and his Catholic faith. These were the heart and soul of his life. Furthermore, he was a good and faithful servant to his master. He had a little room in the officer's house, where he had mounted a crucifix. Every day he knelt before that crucifix to say his prayers. His master, the military officer, did not know he had a crucifix hanging on his wall. But one day he saw it, and he was quite upset. He ordered his servant to take it down. A short time later the officer became dangerously ill. His sickness progressed quickly and the doctors announced that he would die; there was no hope for survival. He likely had but hours to live. His servant, as we said, was a good man. He practiced true charity. He was not only kind to those who were kind to him, but he was kind even to those who persecuted him. In spite of the irreligious attitude and intolerance of his master, this servant nevertheless loved him. He could not let his master die without making an attempt to save his soul.

Risking the wrath of the dying man, the servant

approached his bed. He moved very close so that the dying man would be sure to hear what he had to say. He said: “Sir, there is someone waiting outside, Who is none other than your best Friend. He is most desirous to come in and be reconciled to you. May I admit Him?”

The dying officer thought for a moment. He was somewhat surprised and he wondered who it might be that his servant was speaking of. He gave his permission to let the man come in. The servant left the room. He ran to his own room and took hold of his crucifix, the same crucifix that the officer had ordered to be removed from the wall. He ran back to the room of his master. He approached the bed. He held up the crucifix before the eyes of the dying man and he said: “O dear sir, here is your best Friend, the One Who, your whole life long, has shown you so much kindness and bestowed so many benefits upon you, and Whom you nevertheless have hitherto only repulsed and persecuted. He is infinitely merciful. He longs to be reconciled to you before your death. Do not turn Him away this time.”

The man received a kind great grace of conversion. The Crucified One used this kind and gentle servant to reveal His own Sacred Heart to the dying man. The officer reached for the crucifix. He took the crucifix into his hands. He lovingly pressed it to his lips. He kissed the wounds of His Savior. With tears in his eyes, he asked his servant to fetch the priest. The priest was soon at the bedside of the dying man. The officer made a humble and contrite confession of all his sins. He was quite evidently filled with perfect contrition for