

# Charles of Sezze

BY PATRICIA MATHSON

## FEAST DAY: JANUARY 18

John Charles lived with his family in Italy in the town of Sezze. As a boy he was a shepherd and watched over his family's sheep out in the fields. He went to school, but he could barely read and write. This humble person became a saint because of his love for God and his service to others.

### *Became a Franciscan*

When he grew up, John Charles wanted to become a priest, but didn't do well enough in school to go to the seminary. He was disappointed, but he didn't give up. He prayed to God and joined the Franciscan order as Brother Charles. When we don't get to do something we hoped for, we can remember the example of this saint.

### *Served the Poor and Sick*

Brother Charles loved God with all his heart and shared God's love with others. He saw the face of Jesus in other people. He reached out to people who were

sick or poor and helped them in any way he could. He also cooked for the other Franciscans and worked in the garden. Like Brother Charles, we can help other people by our caring actions each day.

### *Helped People Sick With the Plague*

In 1656 the plague came to Sezze and many people suffered. Brother Charles devoted himself to caring for the victims day after day. He struggled with health problems himself, but didn't let that get in the way of helping others. The simple friar was canonized a saint because of his love for God and his service to others.

### *What Can We Do?*

\* Let's talk about this saint. What did he do as a boy? Why couldn't he be a priest? What did he decide to do? How can we handle disappointments? Why is prayer important? How did Brother Charles help others? How can we help other people?

\* Let's share ways to help people who are sick: Call a sick relative to let them know you are thinking of them. Make a get-well bag for a sick friend that includes fun items such as a one-person game, a book to read, and a cheery note. Visit an elderly neighbor who is recovering from surgery. Think of other ideas too.

\* Let's donate new toys for the children's hospital playroom. This helps children have something to

## JANUARY SAINTS

- 1 Mary, Mother of God
- 2 Sts. Basil and Gregory
- 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
- 5 St. John Neumann
- 6 St. André Bessette
- 12 St. Marguerite Bourgeoys
- 13 St. Hilary
- 23 St. Marianne Cope
- 27 St. Angela Merici
- 28 St. Thomas Aquinas

do while they get better. We can bring in items such as puzzles, trucks, card games, and musical toys. This is a great project for all ages that benefits sick children in the local community.

### *Prayer*

God of hope, thank you for the gift of each day and the example of saints. Help us to make a difference in the lives of others, especially the poor and sick like Saint Charles of Sezze. May we bring hope to other people today and always. Amen.

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Patricia Mathson has many years of experience in faith formation as a DRE and holds a MRE degree from the University of Dallas. She is the children's ministry coordinator at Hope Family Center in Des Moines, IA. She is the author of many books including *Prayers and Activities on Service* (Twenty-Third Publications).

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