

# CAUSE P.J. TRIEST

News on the beatification

**Servant of God** Peter Joseph Triest

“ I am happy when, in imitation of  
Jesus Christ, my Master,  
I can sacrifice for you  
my rest, my health and even my life.”

P. J. Triest



## NEWS FROM THE CAUSE

No news is good news. We are all familiar with this saying and are happy to apply it to the Cause. After the completion and preliminary submission of the positio, it is indeed rather quiet. Relator General Fr. Vincenzo Criscuolo has requested that he and his staff be given sufficient time to study the positio. One question came up to check whether there is any record of Father Triest's visit to Rome in the Vatican archives. Further investigation of the Vatican archives revealed that this was not the case, and so this answer was passed on. No further questions came up for the time being, which is of course positive and encouraging.

Meanwhile, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints has a new prefect, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, replacing Cardinal Becciu in October of last year. Once the green light is given to entrust the positio to the historical commission, we will certainly be able to meet the new prefect to allow him to get to know Father Triest better.

We are pleased to present a new permanent exhibition on Father Triest and a new publication. This newsletter will tell you more about it. There is also a collection of stories in the making which will be published soon, in Dutch for now, which takes the reader on a walk through Father Triest's life, using stories. It will be a new way of getting to know Father Triest in his own time and in the circumstances in which he lived.

Of course, we continue to urge people to go to Father Triest in confidence and to pray to him for his intercession. Both the Sisters of Charity and the Brothers of Charity have sent us news of this. We strongly recommend the prayer for the beatification and the novena. And please do not hesitate to pass on any answered prayers to us!

Bro. René Stockman  
Promoter of the Cause

## FATHER TRIEST, A TRUE PERSON OF CHARITY

There is no doubt that Father Triest and charity are intrinsically connected. His life was marked by charity and what was special about it was that he gave it a very personal and new interpretation. What can we learn from Father Triest for today and for our commitment to charity?

First of all, Father Triest teaches us that charity must always be rooted in God's love and be nourished in God. Based on a deep prayer life, Triest really lived in and from God's love, and God's love increasingly became the true foundation of his life, and everything he did was marked by it. In his homilies and conferences, we see a true growth in the way he speaks about God's love and the place he accords God's love in his life. These eventually become mystical reflections, authentic testimonies to the deep connection with God that had grown in Triest. "How you should burn with love, dearly Beloved, when you are so fortunate to receive, indeed, your God. My heart, strengthened by your grace, will burn with sparks of love for you." This is pure mysticism, a language that we also find in the medieval Flemish mystics. It is this mystical experience of God's love that stirred Triest so much and made him so loving towards his fellow men, especially the poor.

He was truly convinced that only this divine love gave him powers to become very loving himself. He passed on this conviction to his brothers and sisters. Here, we hear the well-known phrase: "Pray and meditate, for remember that



a religious without the spirit of prayer is like a soldier without weapons, a bird without wings, a city without ramparts, a body without spirit or soul.” It cannot be put more clearly: without prayer we will never be able to persevere in love. A human love that is rooted in God’s love is able to move mountains. “Love gives us the strength that nature cannot provide,” was one of his most inspirational phrases.

The encounter with God that he experienced in prayer was carried through into his encounter with his neighbour. In a spiritual way, his neighbour became a new meeting place for him with God. He was particularly struck by the words of Jesus in Matthew: “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40). This sounded like an invitation to Triest to see, meet, and love Jesus himself in his neighbour. How many times did he not repeat this in his conferences? “We shall nurse the sick humbly and respectfully, seeing them as though they were suffering Jesus himself.” Without explicitly stating it, Triest very clearly indicates the difference between charity and philanthropy. The latter is simply about helping others in their time of need, whereas charity is about loving others and helping them based on this love.

Father Triest saw the important emotional note at the heart of charity: compassion. It is the emotional embodiment of love, where we allow ourselves to be



touched, yes, really touched, by the suffering of the other. It is as if we feel the suffering of the other in ourselves. When it comes to caregiving, one will quickly sense whether the person caring for us does it with a deep sense of compassion, or whether they have

been hardened and devote themselves unemotionally to the sick person. Again, Triest expresses it very aptly: “Our love must be sincere. Our affection must be characterised by true brotherly tenderness. Our carefulness must be infinite, and we must fulfil our duty wholeheartedly.” Wholeheartedly, that is the nucleus of true charity, where we allow ourselves to be touched in our hearts by our neighbour’s suffering.

It is from this deep sense of compassion that we will then go to the other in service to help them, to comfort them, to care for them, to heal them. Again, Father Triest is very original when he describes this service as a reflection of the service that Jesus himself showed, and refers to the washing of the feet, where Jesus became the supreme humble servant. It thus becomes a double movement: on the one hand, to see, meet, and love Jesus himself in the one we help and care for and, on the other hand, to be with the other in a serving way, like Jesus, in such a way that the one we serve may see and meet Jesus

in us. “You resemble God through your love and charity; you share in the mission of Jesus Christ. Because you recognize in the poor the person of Jesus Christ suffering, they recognize in you the person of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Consoler. You cannot imitate Jesus Christ more perfectly than by coming to the aid of those who live in misery.”

Service is the final component of charity. When Father Triest sums up his mission in three words, the third word is ‘service’. “I am to offer you my example, my instruction, and my service.” So simple, yet so essential: no instruction without first setting an example, and let each instruction unfold into



tangible service. Here, we recall the captivating words he spoke in his famous homily in Ronse, when he was allowed to preach in public for the first time after five years. “I owe you my vigils, my care, my efforts, my rest not only at one moment but at every moment, every day and every night, even if the paths are remote, rough, and muddy. Call me whenever you want and do not spare me, do not be afraid of disturbing me. I am happy when, in imitation of Jesus Christ, my Master, I can sacrifice for you my rest, my health and even my life.”

With what we learn from Father Triest about charity, we can evaluate, test, adjust, and purify our own commitment to our neighbour and, above all, be careful that we do not allow our charity to be diluted into philanthropy, whereby we only count on our human strengths and efforts and forget to draw from the real source of charity: divine love. A real challenge for us all!

Bro. René Stockman

## THE CAUSE OF PETER JOSEPH TRIEST: THE THIRD TIME IS THE CHARM

The question may be asked why the Congregations, founded by Peter Joseph Triest, waited so long before starting the process of beatification. A key related question is: have no attempts been made in the past to start this process?

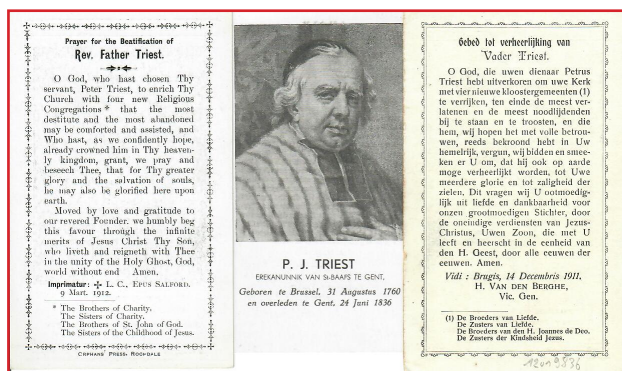
When we browse through the archives of the Brothers of Charity, we encounter three moments in which the opportunity of the cause came up for discussion. Twice it ended without further follow-up, while the third time it led to the effective start of the process.

The first known mention of a possible start of a process of beatification was at the centenary of the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity in 1907, where both in Belgium and in the Netherlands, the collection of declarations



for healing obtained through the intercession of the Founder was started, and that in light of a possible start-up of a process.

The great stimulator was Brother Petrus who, with the approval of the General Council, made a first prayer to implore the “glorification of Father Triest”. This prayer was approved by the Vicar General of the Diocese of Bruges on 14 December 1911, and the English version by the Bishop of Salford on 9 March 1912. From that moment on, the prayer was said by the Brothers of Charity and also passed on to the other Congregations founded by Peter Joseph Triest.



During that period, two volumes were also drawn up with declarations of answered prayers coming from both Belgium and the Netherlands, both started in 1909 and continuing until 1918.

In 1919, the General Chapter of the Brothers of Charity stipulated that the prayer to obtain the Beatification of the Founder would henceforth be prayed daily in the community after the Rosary, which also happened in varied ways in the other Congregations, in order to obtain the beatification or to honour the memory.

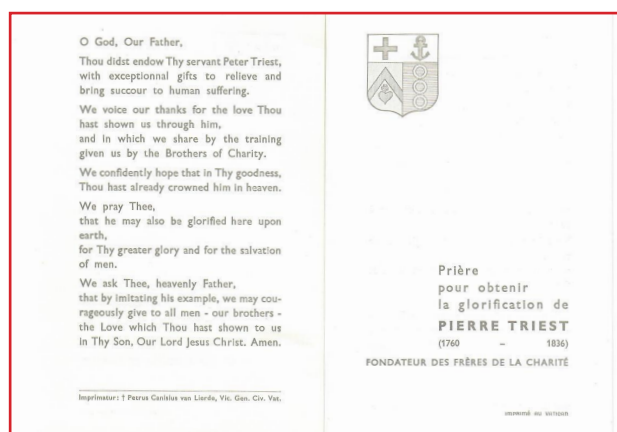
Perhaps the circumstances of war may have deterred the Congregations from taking concrete further steps towards a formal start of a process. Their attention was mainly focused on the rebuilding of the monasteries and institutions and the reinforcement of the discipline within their own ranks, which had weakened at many points during the war period.

In the meantime, work continued on the writing of several biographies about Father Triest, both by the Brothers of Charity, the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary and the Sisters of the Childhood of Jesus, each time with the intention, in addition to the mere historical facts, to gain more insight into the charisma from their Founder.

The second time that a trial was explicitly considered was in 1955, in preparation for the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Congregation in 1957. On 14 March 1955, it was explicitly discussed within the General Council of the Brothers of Charity, and agreements were made to sit together again with the other Congregations, and also to obtain further information about how the process would proceed. Already on 24 March 1955,

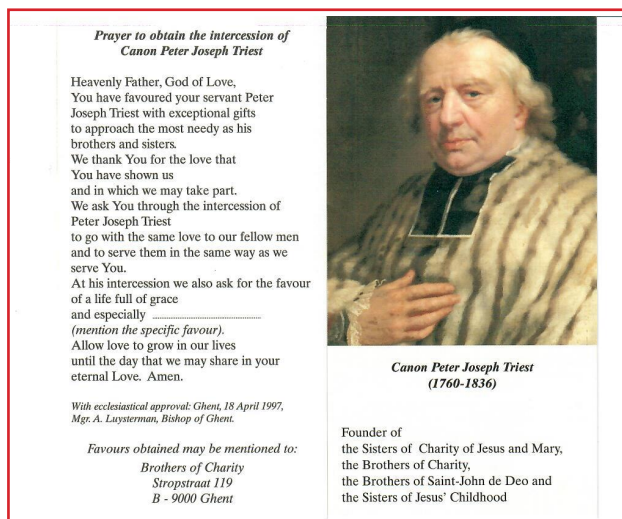
there was an extensive conversation with Mgr. Joliet of the diocese of Ghent on this subject and there were also contacts with the postulator Odilon Jacobs who looked also after the cause of the now Blessed Edward Poppe.

On this occasion a new prayer was also prepared, with the imprimatur of Mgr. Van Lierde, the Vicar General of the Vatican. This prayer was widely distributed, also within the former pupils' associations of the schools who were strongly involved in the commemoration of Father Triest's birth. On 29 September 1957, a solemn celebration, with the inauguration of a stained-glass window, was held by the Brothers of Charity in the National basilica of Koekelberg and on 25 June 1961 in Ghent, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Founder, a memorial was erected by the three Congregations. It became a period of great attention for the Founder, with at the same time reflecting further on a possible process. But even this did not come to a concrete realization, due to major changes that took place in the Church around the Second Vatican Council.



In the period after the council, the wish for a possible cause was totally snowed under, but the call was heard by the Congregations to get to know the Founder's charism better. In the 1990s this resulted in the writing of a biography by Bro. Orest and the collecting and publishing of all the Founder's writings. "Triest Sessions" were also organized for the members of the three Congregations to get to know the Founder's charism better and a "Triest Route" was also created in which the main places in Belgium linked to the life of Father Triest were visited.

It was in 1996 that the three Triest Congregations, under the impetus of the then Superior General of the Brothers of Charity, Bro. Waldebert Devestel, that once again raised the question of the expediency of the cause. As the three Congregations were already indicated that they were prepared to do so, a new prayer was formulated which was approved by the then bishop of Ghent on 18 April 1997 and widely distributed within the Congregations. This may be considered as the start-up of the third attempt, which ultimately resulted in the formal start of the process on 26 August 2001.



Bro. René Stockman

## A NEW MUSEUM

At the Generalate of the Brothers of Charity in Rome, the pandemic period was used to prepare a large room to house a permanent exhibition on Father Triest.



In collaboration with the Dr. Guislain Museum, this exhibition was set up in August 2020, in which the life and charism of Father Triest are evoked in a comprehensive form.

There are, of course, very few visitors to the General House at the moment, but those who have had the opportunity to visit the exhibition fully agree that the project has been more than successful.

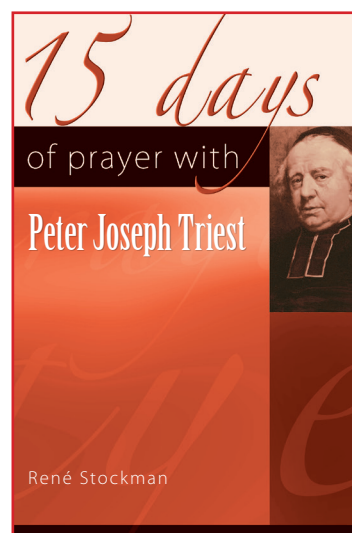


The life of Father Triest is presented chronologically by means of pictures, each time supplemented by objects that illustrate a particular phase in his life. A guide has been developed in five languages, so that individual visitors can get to know Father Triest in their own language. Of course, there is also an opportunity to purchase the various publications on the Founder. Bro. Venance Kapita is the head of the new museum and will be happy to welcome any interested visitors. So, in addition to the Vatican Museum, Rome now has a new museum!



## A NEW PUBLICATION

We are also pleased to announce a new publication. Bro. René Stockman wrote 15 meditations inspired by texts of Father Triest which have now been published in three languages. In English and French, the publication was included in the well-known series '15 Days of Prayer with...' from New City Press and Nouvelle Cité, the publishing houses of the Focolare Movement. In Dutch, it was published by Betsaida.

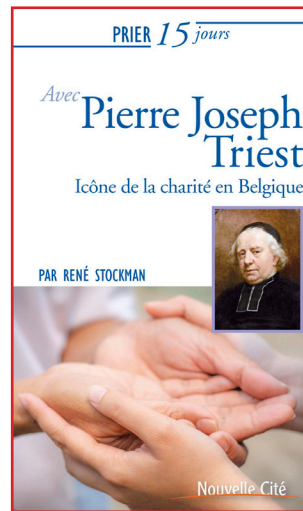


Together with the previously published biography, this



is a welcome addition to get to know Father Triest's life as well as his charism by means of his own texts, and as an aid to convert it to a present-day context. It reminds us of the call of Vatican II in which religious were urged to make a double movement: a movement to the past to get to know their charism and the story of the Founder better, and a movement to the present, the *aggiornamento*, to be able to properly convert this charism to the present time.

Throughout *15 Days of Prayer with Peter Joseph Triest*, it once again becomes clear how relevant Father Triest's charism is. Especially in these turbulent times with new forms of suffering and poverty as a result of the pandemic, Father Triest will continue to inspire us not to close our eyes and ears to those who come to us for help.



## FATHER TRIEST DEVOTION IN THE PHILIPPINES

In the Philippines, the brothers and associate members have been undertaking various steps to promote the devotion to Father Triest.

On the occasion of the 260<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Founder's birth, a committee of brothers organized a contest to raise awareness and interest in the beatification of Father Triest. The committee had made a number of suggestions to each community to strengthen the devotion to Father Triest. Each community had to decorate a devotional space.

The following entries received an award:



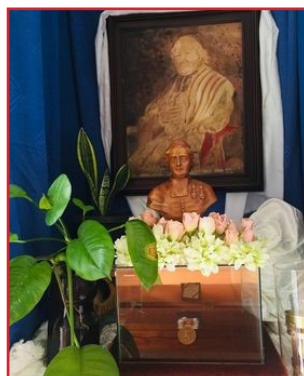
Our Lady of Fatima Community  
Bicol, Philippines



San Pedro Calungsod Community  
Gingoog, Philippines



Our Lady of Charity Community  
Baguio City, Philippines



Most Holy Rosary Community  
Manila, Philippines

Bro. Joel Ponsaran

## TESTIMONY OF SR. FLORENCE KHOMWENDO

On 16th August 2020, I received a phone call from Sr. Beatrice A. Ingasiani, of the Missionary Sisters of the Catechism, to pray for one of her community members, Sr. Florence Khomwendo, who is battling lung cancer. She had just received her first chemotherapy (the doctors prescribed 4 sessions) and the reaction was really bad that she felt like she was dying. I accepted the request to pray for her, but I proposed if we could do so through the intercession of the Servant of God Canon Peter Joseph Triest, to which Sr. Beatrice agreed. I also told her to inform the sick sister that we were praying for her and I sent them the prayer for the Beatification of our Founder and that they should let us know of any miracle or progress of her health. Equally, I told our Postulator and Superior General Bro. René Stockman, and other friends in Italy, the United States of America, England, Zambia, Kenya, East Timor, and our brothers of the St. Dominic region in Tanzania, to join us in praying for the recovery of Sr. Florence Khomwendo, through our founder. I also extended an invitation to our Sisters of Charity in Rwanda, through Sr. Yvonne Ngomba. They responded positively to the invitation. During this invitation, Sr. Ruth Ndlovu from Zambia responded enthusiastically that she would also ask the intercession of the Servant of God Canon Peter Joseph Triest for the recovery of her friend, Sr. Miyanda of the Religious Sisters of Charity, who is suffering from breast cancer.

Before coming to Italy, Sr. Florence Khomwendo, a native of Uganda, was diagnosed with lung cancer in Kenya and received some initial treatment there without success. Consequently, last year, in 2019, she was transferred to Italy for further treatments. It was discovered by her doctor that the cancer was still localized and she had to undergo 4 sessions of chemotherapy. When I learned about her case, she had just started treatment and she was very sick and almost

dying, according to Sr. Beatrice who is her caregiver and introduced her to us.

Since we started praying, she has improved remarkably and it even surprises her. Immediately after starting our prayers on 17th August 2020, I received the following text from Sr. Beatrice after I had inquired to know more about the history of her illness,

“She had surgery on her left hip twice but now it [cancer] has moved to the chest. Since you are praying she feels much better. Today, she ate a lot of ugali. Right now, she is walking outside.” This was a very encouraging sign indeed, bearing in mind a day before, she was bed-ridden and almost dying with no appetite. I told Sr. Beatrice, “We continue to pray for her. I have told my friends in Asia, Europe, Africa, and America. It’s good that she is aware that we are praying for her.” To this message, Sr. Beatrice responded, “She is very happy you are praying for her. On 24th next week, she needs a special prayer as she will go for chemotherapy for 24 hours. I will remind you on that day. Imagine since you started [praying] yesterday she feels much better.” This positive evolution intensified my devotion to our founder even more and I also prayed for the recovery of Sr. Miyanda in Zambia, whom I later learned she is also gradually improving. I was convinced and I told Sr. Beatrice that “we will double our prayers, hopefully, she recovers and that chemotherapy will not be needed.”

On 25th August, I re-assured Sr. Beatrice that I have been praying through our founder for Sr. Florence’s recovery and I believe also those I invited to pray do the same. Of which Sr. Beatrice responded, “...I believe your community is praying and my sister is so happy.” She continued by writing, “Sister is very happy with your prayers. She said her doctor told her they will call her for an x-ray. Her situation is better and she will not continue her second chemo, so pray harder. I think your founder [is] mediating.”

On 14th September, Sr. Beatrice phoned me to share some good news that Sr. Florence is surprisingly doing extremely well. That she was to undergo 4 sessions of chemotherapy, but since we started praying, her doctor discovered what appears like she may not continue with chemotherapy anymore, after they ascertain with a scan and other tests if recovery has occurred without a scientific explanation. In Sr. Beatrice’s own words, “...she is improving rapidly, so the doctors said she has to do scanning next month on 4th and other tests. If the results are okay, she will not continue with chemo.”

I shared this good news with the postulator and with all the friends who have been praying for her to continue praying for her full recovery. I also asked Sr. Beatrice to schedule a phone interview (on 16th September) with her so that I can speak directly to her to know what exactly happened and her experience. We continue to pray for a miracle, through our beloved Founder,

Canon Peter Joseph Triest, so that God can manifest through him to be officially recognized as a Saint.

Bro. Venance Kalolo Kapita, Vice-Postulator

## TESTIMONY OF BRO. GEORGE TIRKEY

**Bro. George:** “My name is Brother George Tirkey and I am a Brother of Charity. Originally, I am from India but I have been living in Belgium for several years already, specifically in the Holy Angels Community in Ghent. I would like to share my experiences of my sickness, which lasted 7 months.

It was March 2020, right before the first Covid-19 lockdown in Belgium, and I had returned from a visit to my family in India a few months earlier. I felt pain in my mouth caused by a few teeth that were loose. So, I went to the dentist and he referred me to a specialist at Jan Palfijn Hospital. After consultation with this doctor on 16 June 2020, he proposed treatment by a specialist at Ghent University Hospital. The appointment for a consultation was made immediately. A lot of tests were done and a few days later I heard that I had carcinoma of the cavum oris, jawbone cancer with metastasis to the mouth and neck.

When I heard the diagnosis on 10 July 2020, I was shocked and very sad. I was very concerned because, 4 years ago, a young brother named Paul, who was 30 years old, died of the same sickness in India. I had never been seriously sick before, and so feeling that something was wrong with me was a profound experience in my life.

The team of doctors at the Ghent University Hospital proposed to start chemotherapy. At first, I could easily take it, but then, as the treatment went on, I completely collapsed and was brought back to the hospital for 6 days. I could not eat, I had difficulty drinking, and the symptoms of my chemo, which included hair loss, dizziness, sleepiness, the loss of taste and smell, caused me to feel very weak. On 9 September 2020, they placed a PEG tube, so for several months I got my food through this tube, directly into the stomach. The home health nurse came by every day to connect and disconnect the tube. After a month, Bro. Godfried Bekaert got permission to disconnect the tube every day since he is a brother nurse.

After a new consultation and PET scans, the doctor proposed to start curative chemoradiotherapy. It takes 4 weeks for the carcinoma to stabilize or 7 weeks with 50% healing. We chose to go with the 7 weeks and then go to the University Hospital every day for the chemoradiotherapy. Step by step, we noticed an improvement by taking in soft food and drinks, thanks to the kitchen of the Dr. Guislain Institute. They prepared extra soft food for me. It was tasteless for very long, but I had to eat.”



**Bro. Godfried:** “I am Bro. Godfried, Bro. George’s confrere in the community, and in the past, I was a nurse at the Dr. Guislain Hospital. During all this time, I tried to understand Bro. George’s suffering, both physical and mental, by offering him the necessary care he needed every day at home. I also accompanied him every time he had to go to the hospital for a consultation, or his daily chemoradiotherapy.

Due to Covid-19, I was not allowed to enter the units of the hospital, I could just go as far as the reception area. But we agreed that, after his treatment, we would find each other in the hospital chapel. There, I took my time to pray for him, after which we went back home together. So, during these months, I was spending a lot of time with Jesus in the hospital chapel.

As a retired brother nurse, it rekindled my love of nursing and taking care of others, specifically in this case my own confrere, Bro. George. I tried to understand that all of his days were different as he was taking a lot of medication and especially what he was thinking in his heart and his mind during his suffering. Empathy was important. Bro. George was afraid, he experienced fear, uncertainty about the future, loneliness, the hidden tears and the pain, so many emotions, and many sleepless nights. He was far away from his family but fortunately they were able to stay in touch digitally. Of course, his family was also very concerned about the whole situation and his sickness. He is very thankful to the brothers who came to visit him. It gave him courage. He also wants to thank those many people who promised to pray for him. It was important for him to know that he was not carrying his cross alone. He got telephone calls, cards, visits... Many people were thinking of him in their prayers.

Bro. George and myself are very grateful to the doctors for their timely discovery of the sickness and for their good treatment, to the hospital’s social workers, to the hospital’s priest who brought him Holy Communion in his room on Sundays, and to the nurses. We are also thankful for the follow-up done by our GP, the home health nurse who came by twice a day, the taxi drivers, because for a time we were not allowed to use public transport, and the makers of the special food (for the tube), which they provided on time.

I proposed to Bro. George to pray specifically to Father Triest from the date that we heard the diagnosis on the 10 July 2020, and we have been doing so until now. With deep devotion, we have said the prayer for the beatification of our Founder P. J. Triest every day, with the relic in our hand, which we hold during our personal prayers and together, asking for healing. We believe that, in the name of Jesus, many things can

happen that give light and strength, and everything is possible if we love God. God does not forget his people when we ask for something. With a deep faith and confidence that God wanted to offer his graces and blessings, we prayed for the special intercession of Father Triest. That Father Triest may help us bring healing.

Bro. George grew stronger, remained faithful to his daily community prayers, followed the daily digital Holy Mass, and made more time for his personal encounter with God through prayer.

The existence of God in his life deepened his faith. It is a testimony that God is with him and that Father Triest was hearing our prayers for restoring his health. Slowly, many things started to change in his life and in his body. The pain had gone and he was feeling stronger. He was able to stop all the medication, and as he started to eat and drink normally, he became more active and could take part in the community life again for longer.”

**Bro. George:** “I have a new experience in my religious life of inner happiness and joy. I was broken and sick, I got new life.”

**Bro. Godfried:** “There was another consultation and a PET scan, the results of which came a few days later, on 18 January 2021, when the doctor told us during a separate consultation. The days that we had to wait were quite stressful, though we had complete trust in the expectation that everything would be OK. Everything was indeed very good and everyone was surprised, including the doctor who told us with a smile that Bro. George’s mouth, jawbone, and neck were clear. The doctor was very happy to inform us of this unexpected result of the treatment and that Bro. George was cured. We said a special thank you to the doctors. A moment we will never forget.”

**Bro. George:** “I was feeling like myself again. It is a great miracle in my life, one that I will never forget. So, I will continue to put the rest of my life in God’s hands to be his servant as a Brother of Charity.”

**Bro. Godfried:** “Bro. George and I have been witnesses of a long suffering and carrying the cross of Jesus during 8 months and we believe that Father Triest has answered our daily prayers. Now, we continue, but we consider our prayers to Father Triest as thanksgiving prayers. God says: See! I will not forget you. I have carved you on the palm of my hand.”

*Bro. George Tirkey and Bro. Godfried Bekaert*

For a full list and more information about ordering publications on Father Triest - including the publication *15 Days of Prayer with Peter Joseph Triest* on pages 4 and 5 - please visit our website at [www.causapjtriest.org](http://www.causapjtriest.org)  
You can also order by contacting the Cause Secretariat using the details below.



[www.causapjtriest.org](http://www.causapjtriest.org)

**QUESTIONS, FAVOURS,  
AND ANSWERED PRAYERS**

All questions concerning the process of beatification, favours received, and prayers answered can be directed to the Cause Secretariat.

Secretariat of the P.J. Triest Cause

**BELGIUM**

Postulatio P.J. Triest  
Stropstraat 146  
9000 Gent  
BELGIUM  
Phone: (+32) 9 241 19 38  
E-mail: [causatriest@fracarita.net](mailto:causatriest@fracarita.net)

Publisher: Bro. René Stockman, f.c.

**ROME**

Postulatio P.J. Triest  
Casa Generalizia Fratelli della Carità  
Via Giambattista Pagano 35  
00167 Roma  
ITALIA  
[www.causapjtriest.org](http://www.causapjtriest.org)