

**SUPERNATURAL**

## Naples: Saint Charbel reveals the true answer to human suffering

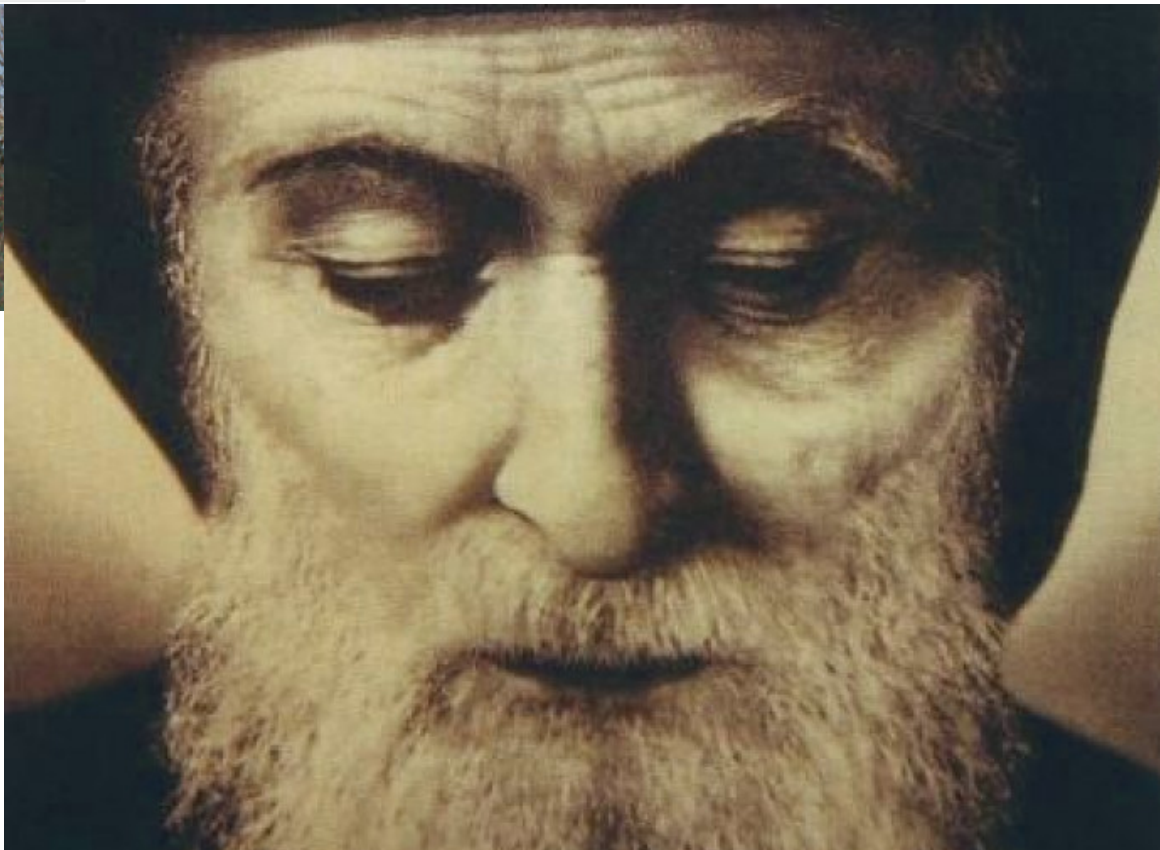
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Not only Saint Januarius also Saint Charbel Makhoul is popular in Naples, Italy. On Thursday, 24 July — the liturgical memorial of the Maronite hermit — the rector of the church of San Ferdinando di Palazzo, Monsignor Pasquale Silvestri, decided to

administer the saint's oil to the 500 or so faithful gathered there at the end of Holy Mass. The 'oil of St Charbel' is now widely used in Italy. It is blessed by Maronite priests at the monastery of Annaya, north of Beirut, at the saint's tomb, and sent to anyone who requests it. This oil has brought comfort and consolation to many Christians throughout the world, as well as to people of other faiths, particularly Muslims. It has often been, and continues to be, the means chosen by God to grant miraculous healings.

**In fact, on 24 July, Monsignor Silvestri recounts that, while anointing the crowd, he feared he would run out of oil** before anointing everyone present. "I turned the ampoule upside down to dip my finger in the last few drops, but despite my fears, I managed to anoint everyone who asked for it.' Having finished, I mechanically replaced the ampoule in its case, and as I did so, I realised it was full again. I couldn't believe my eyes, so I shone a light on the area and saw that the ampoule was full again."

**This testimony was written by the Rector himself in an official letter,** complete with his stamp, and dated 27 July. It was addressed to Fr Elias al Jamhoury, procurator and postulator of the Maronite Order in Lebanon. Monsignor Silvestri called on his collaborator Leo to testify to the miracle. Leo can hardly believe his eyes: the oil in that small bottle must surely have run out, given the large number of people present. The Rector continues, "I showed the ampoule to everyone present and told them what had happened. They saw it and can confirm the truth of the events recounted".

**One never gets used to miracles,** even if they are performed by Saint Charbel, who seems to have performed almost thirty thousand of them — at least among those documented. And each time, our faith is given a much-needed boost. Our faith which is so 'adult' that it is lukewarm; so up to date that it is languid; so modern that it is incredulous. Tumours disappear into thin air; deaf people can hear; lame people can walk; and even surgical operations are performed by the saint himself, who seems to pay little heed to the strict rules of the medical profession and hospital regulations. Faced with all these astonishing accounts, which almost make Padre Pio seem like an amateur, the 'simple' multiplication of oil in Naples seems insignificant. Instead...

**... instead it has much to say at this crucial moment in Italy's history.** The oil of Saint Charbel is a powerful sign of the consolation that God wants to give to the suffering, both physically and spiritually. While the Church seems unable to offer anything but insipid political compromises in the face of suffering and insists exclusively on human relief (see palliative care), a loud call comes from above to the Church's mission: to denounce evil, oppose it and rise to a higher plane of prayer and supernatural means.

**It's not to say palliative care is not useful,** but that it must not be absorbed by the treacherous rhetoric of the 'fight against unnecessary pain'. It is by no means the true answer to human suffering, and neither is assisted suicide, which is the radical denial of the meaning of life. The answer to suffering can only come from above to illuminate its redemptive potential and provide us with what we need to endure it without being overwhelmed by it. We must be honest: physical, moral, and spiritual pain has nothing attractive about it. In fact, it is devastating for the human person — a victory of death over life. If there is nothing beyond the biosphere and reality ends at the horizon as seen by the human eye, then there is no story; pain is pointless and it is better for it to end as soon as possible using the means available in each historical era. While Stoicism certainly has the appeal of heroism, it too is ultimately subject to the logic of a world turned in on itself. Suicide thus becomes the ultimate act of affirming a rationality that claims to dominate life and death, but which, in reality, simply cannot wait for a Redeemer.

**The oil of Saint Charbel is a powerful reminder that we should not try to solve life's problems alone,** nor should we get lost in a maze of reasoning that seems plausible, prudent and realistic (politics is politics!), when in reality it is merely acceptance of the demonic strategy of facing life and death, joy and suffering without elevating ourselves any higher. The miracle of the humble Lebanese hermit lies in the power of simplicity: a little olive oil can work wonders when combined with the most sublime and powerful thing in man: faith, which translates into prayer that is both insistent and humble. It is the prayer that the Lord Jesus asks of us insistently in the Holy Gospel, and it is never fruitless. It is the lack of suppliant faith that makes life fruitless, the silent or uncertain response to his question: 'Do you believe that I can do this?' (Mt 9:28).

**Saint Charbel repeats this question to our distracted and desperate world,** but above all he addresses it to the Church: do you believe that this world needs nothing more than the light of faith and the oil of divine consolation? Do you still have the

courage to respond to the complex reasoning of arrogant realpolitik with the simplicity of faith? Even in 2025, after centuries of the demythologisation of Scriptures, the rationalisation of mysteries and scientific absolutism, do you believe that the arm of the Lord has not been shortened (cf. Num. 11:23) and that the flour in the jar has not run out and the oil in the jug has not diminished (cf. 1 Kgs. 17:16)?

**In Naples, Saint Charbel has shown the Church the true path** to show to those who invoke assisted suicide: blessed are those who have the simplicity to grasp it.