Meet a new young saint! Nunzio Sulprizio

This Sunday, October 14, in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis will formally declare as saints Blesseds Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Oscar Romero, as well as five other holy men and women: Mother Catherine Kasper, Father Francesco Spinelli, Nazaria Ignacia March Mesam, Father Vincenzo Romano – and young Nunzio Sulprizio.

Nunzio was featured in a recent issue of OSV Newsweekly, and is a wonderful example of youthful holiness to share with your Catholic kids:

Nunzio Sulprizio was born April 13, 1817, in Italy's Abruzzo region. As a child, he was pious, attending Mass as often as possible. Both of his parents died when he was a child, and he was taken in by an uncle, a blacksmith who exploited his nephew by not allowing him to go to school and forcing him to work in his shop.

Sulprizio suffered from poor health for most of his short life, but that did not stop his uncle from forcing him to carry heavy weights over long distances in cold or hot temperatures. An untreated injury caused Sulprizio to contract gangrene in one of his legs. He was sent to a hospital in Naples.

Sulprizio later became friends with a soldier, Col. Felice Wochinger, who became like a surrogate father and paid for his medical care.

Despite his physical sufferings, Sulprizio was known to be a gentle, patient soul who often kept Jesus company before the tabernacle. He is known to have said, "Jesus suffered a lot for me. Why should I not suffer for him?" and "I would die in order to convert one sinner."

Sulprizio met and impressed St. Gaetano Errico, a priest and founder of the Missionaries of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, who told Sulprizio that he would be welcome in his order when he was old enough, according to CatholicSaints.info.

His health showed signs of improvements, but Sulprizio would eventually contract bone cancer. His leg was amputated, but that did not stop the disease from spreading. One of the last things he told Col. Wochinger before he died was, “Be cheerful. From heaven I will always be helping you.”

Shortly after his 19th birthday, Sulprizio died on May 5, 1836.

In July 1859, Pope Pius IX declared Sulprizio venerable and in 1891, Pope Leo XIII praised his heroic virtue, comparing Sulprizio to St. Aloysius Gonzaga in that they both provided the Church with an example of youthful sanctity.

On Dec. 1, 1963, Blessed Pope Paul VI beatified Sulprizio. During the ceremony, the pope said, “Blessed are you young, young people, who have the time to do good. It is a grace, it is a blessing to be innocent, to be pure, to be happy, to be strong, to be full of ardor and life.”

On June 8, after the confirmation of a second miracle through Sulprizio’s intercession, Pope Francis said Sulprizio would be canonized on Oct. 14, during the synod on youth, in the same ceremony in which Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Oscar Romero will be raised to the altars.

“This blessed boy shines through the innocence of his life and the intimate participation in the mystery of the Cross,” Cardinal Angelo Amato, the former prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, said earlier this year.

Said Cardinal Amato, “In a particular way, in light of the Synod of the youth, His Holiness has convened this fall, the figure of Nunzio Sulprizio is a model.”