



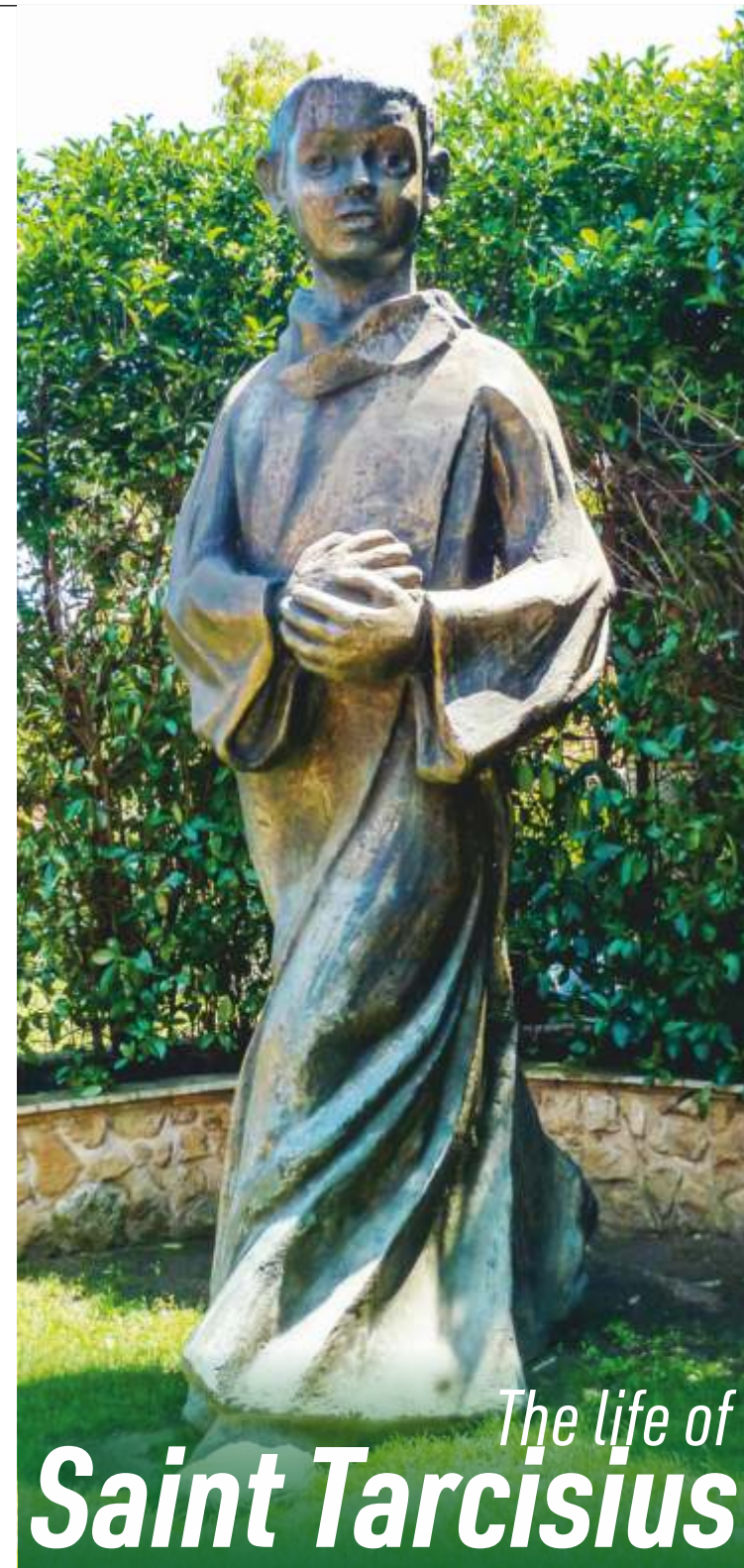
*It explains that the consecrated Host which the little Martyr had defended with his life, had become flesh of his flesh thereby forming, together with his body, a single immaculate Host offered to God.*

*St Tarcisius' testimony and this beautiful tradition teach us the deep love and great veneration that we must have for the Eucharist: it is a precious good, a treasure of incomparable value, it is the Bread of life, it is Jesus Himself who becomes our nourishment, support and strength on our daily journey and on the open road that leads to eternal life.*



*O God, You have graciously called me to serve You upon Your altar.  
Grant me the graces that I need to serve You faithfully and wholeheartedly.  
Grant too that while serving You, may I follow the example of St. Tarcisius, who died protecting the Eucharist, and walk the same path that led him to Heaven.  
St. Tarcisius, pray for me and for all altar servers.  
Amen.*

[http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20100804.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100804.html)



*The life of*  
**Saint Tarcisius**



*This boy seemed too young for such a demanding service! "My youth", Tarcisus said, "will be the best shield for the Eucharist". Convinced, the priest entrusted to him the precious Bread, saying: "Tarcisus, remember that a heavenly treasure has been entrusted to your weak hands. Avoid crowded streets and do not forget that holy things must never be thrown to dogs nor pearls to pigs. Will you guard the Sacred Mysteries faithfully and safely?". "I would die", Tarcisus answered with determination, "rather than let go of them".*



*While Tarcisus was dying a Pretorian guard called Quadratus, who had also, secretly, become a Christian, carried him to the priest. Tarcisus was already dead when they arrived but was still clutching to his breast a small linen bag containing the Eucharist. He was buried straight away in the Catacombs of St. Calixtus.*

*Pope Damasus had an inscription carved on St Tarcisus' grave, it says that the boy died in 257. The Roman Martyrology fixed the date as 15 August and in the same Martyrology a beautiful oral tradition is also recorded. It claims that the Most Blessed Sacrament was not found on St Tarcisus' body, either in his hands or his clothing.*



**Who was St. Tarcisus?** *We do not have much information about him. We are dealing with the early centuries of the Church's history or, to be more precise, with the third century.*

*It is said that he was a boy who came regularly to the Catacombs of St Calixtus here in Rome and took his special Christian duties very seriously. He had great love for the Eucharist and various hints lead us to conclude that he was presumably an acolyte, that is, an altar server. Those were years in which the Emperor Valerian was harshly persecuting Christians who were forced to meet secretly in private houses or, at times, also in the Catacombs, to hear the word of God, to pray and to celebrate Holy Mass. Even the custom of taking the Eucharist to prisoners and the sick became increasingly dangerous.*

*One day, when, as was his habit, the priest asked who was prepared to take the Eucharist to the other brothers and sisters who were waiting for it, young Tarcisus stood up and said: "send me!".*



*As he went on his way he met some friends who approached him and asked him to join them. As pagans they became suspicious and insistent at his refusal and realised he was clasping something to his breast that he appeared to be protecting. They tried to prize it away from him but in vain. The struggle became ever fiercer, especially when they realised that Tarcisus was a Christian. They kicked him, they threw stones at him but he did not surrender.*