

## The Miraculous Healing of Gershom Chizuma

On July 1, 2000 Mother John Marie White, Superior General of the Congregation, along with four other Baptistine Sisters gathered in the Vatican's Clementine Hall to hear reports on the miracles and heroic virtues of Ven. Alfonso Maria Fusco, Founder of the Sisters of St. John the Baptist, presented to the Holy Father by representatives of the Congregation of the Saints. This ceremony marked the official approval of the beatification of Venerable Alfonso Maria Fusco and is the last step before recognition of sainthood is accorded by the Church.

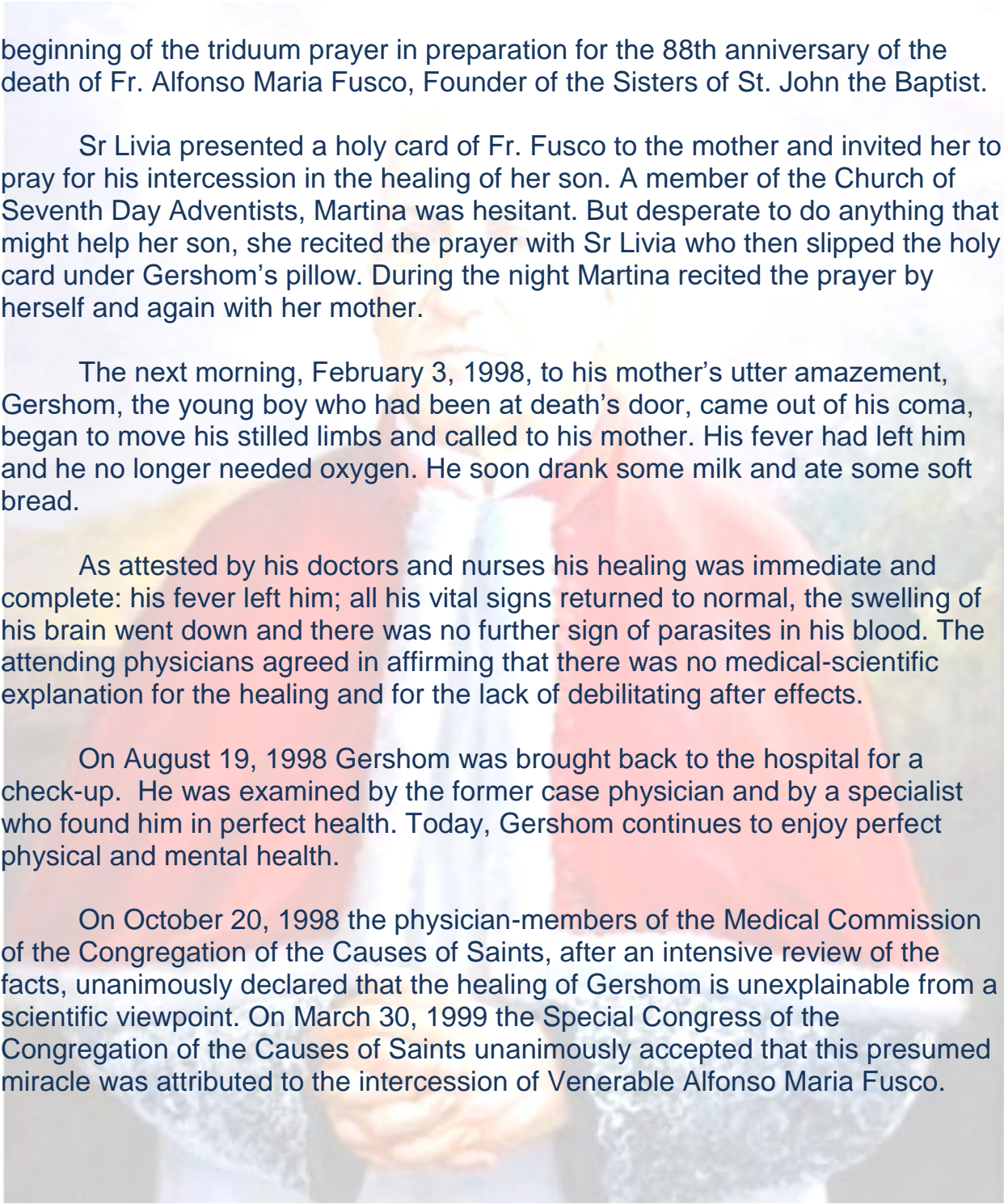
For Fr. Alfonso Fusco the dramatic healing of Gershom Chizuma in Zambia, Africa was the compelling event that needed for his beatification.

Gershom Chizuma, was born on May 19, 1994 at Mumbwa, Zambia. He was a healthy and lively child until January 18, 1998 when he fell ill with a high fever and suffered convulsions. His parents took him to the outpatient clinic located within the confines of the "Canfisa" Camp. There he was diagnosed with clinical malaria and given a shot of chloroquine. After a brief improvement, Gershom's health dramatically worsened and he was transferred to the Central Hospital of Kitwe.

Gershom fell into a deep or third degree coma. The doctors diagnosed that he suffered from "cerebral malaria, one of the most lethal complications of malaria" that causes a comatose-convulsive state. On January 2, 1998 the results of blood tests confirmed the diagnosis and revealed that 20% of Gershom's red blood cells had been invaded by parasites.

Gershom was treated with the classical medicines for this form of malaria, but this treatment produced "absolutely no result whatsoever" and further complications of sepsis and pneumonia set in. Martina, his mother, noted that for two days as she sat by his bedside, her 4 year old son become more lifeless, bleeding from his mouth and sinking deeper into a coma. The duty nurse could induce no reaction to pain stimuli. On the morning of February 2, 1998 the case physician's medical notes stated: "the prognosis for Gershom Chizuma is very grave; he is expected to die.

In God's Providence, on that same day, February 2, 1998, Sr. Livia Caserio, directress of the "San Martino Shelter for Children" came to Gershom's hospital to visit another child in the same ward as Gershom. There she encountered Gershom's mother who was utterly distraught. In speaking words of encouragement to Martina, Sr Livia recalled that the day was February 2, the



beginning of the triduum prayer in preparation for the 88th anniversary of the death of Fr. Alfonso Maria Fusco, Founder of the Sisters of St. John the Baptist.

Sr Livia presented a holy card of Fr. Fusco to the mother and invited her to pray for his intercession in the healing of her son. A member of the Church of Seventh Day Adventists, Martina was hesitant. But desperate to do anything that might help her son, she recited the prayer with Sr Livia who then slipped the holy card under Gershom's pillow. During the night Martina recited the prayer by herself and again with her mother.

The next morning, February 3, 1998, to his mother's utter amazement, Gershom, the young boy who had been at death's door, came out of his coma, began to move his stilled limbs and called to his mother. His fever had left him and he no longer needed oxygen. He soon drank some milk and ate some soft bread.

As attested by his doctors and nurses his healing was immediate and complete: his fever left him; all his vital signs returned to normal, the swelling of his brain went down and there was no further sign of parasites in his blood. The attending physicians agreed in affirming that there was no medical-scientific explanation for the healing and for the lack of debilitating after effects.

On August 19, 1998 Gershom was brought back to the hospital for a check-up. He was examined by the former case physician and by a specialist who found him in perfect health. Today, Gershom continues to enjoy perfect physical and mental health.

On October 20, 1998 the physician-members of the Medical Commission of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, after an intensive review of the facts, unanimously declared that the healing of Gershom is unexplainable from a scientific viewpoint. On March 30, 1999 the Special Congress of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints unanimously accepted that this presumed miracle was attributed to the intercession of Venerable Alfonso Maria Fusco.