

Dr. Massimo Mangialavori

### Case of Arsenicum sulphuratum flavum

Bruno is a 58 year old man, with a sickly and bashful appearance. He is very lean, his shoulders are hunched and his face looks sunken and thin. He has a set false teeth, which can't fit him very well because he often stops himself while talking to put them back in position again.

Despite the fact that it isn't particularly chilly, he is warmly dressed and having unbuttoned his thick coat he keeps it on in my consulting room, taking off only his scarf. He keeps twisting a thick old woollen beret in his hands.

He moves nervously on his seat and only after a few minutes of timidly eyeing a cushion that is on the empty chair next to his, he asks me if he can put it with the one he already has. 'There's no-one sitting there, I'll put it back afterwards.'

Several times during his story he seems close to tears, and finally he starts sobbing quietly.

\*\*\* 'I have had haemorrhoids since I was 35. § They were very painful right from the beginning. They were swollen and I couldn't walk from the pain. They came on because of the strain of my work, I have always been a porter. A porter, see what sort of a body I've got... I started because I had to look after the family when my father died. Fortunately I used to unload the fruit crates, but I went to work when I shouldn't have done while I had TB.

§ It was always bearable until they were operated on... But now they've come back and I couldn't bear to have another operation. § One or two of them were always out, and others would come out if I was constipated or sometimes if I went to stool. If I was on my feet a lot... after a few days at work... especially if it was the grape harvest because added to the work there was the heat and the wine.

§ They would burst out and I would have to stay in my bed because of the pain... § The pain was very, very intense, it went all the way to my temples and my head... I suffered an awful, awful lot... § I felt better if I stayed in bed, they went back in... but as soon as I got up they suddenly came out again...

I also had varicose veins shortly after. § They swelled up very badly and my leg was all black. One leg only was all black, the left one where I had the hernia... § The veins always stand out on that leg. Now my legs go numb and I have bad pains in both my legs and I have to put them up, if I could I'd have my legs up all the time.

§ If they stay down it's a torture, I have to tear them to pieces and it's a torture...'

§ \*\* 'I've worked so much, I can't manage to keep still... I even did voluntary work, as soon as I could, in a home for elderly and disabled people... § The ones who were most worthwhile were always the alcoholics. I got to know a lot of them, I saved many of them, and then there were a lot who had syphilis or who were blind... It wasn't my choice... It was the wish of someone who is higher up. I'm very religious and a regular churchgoer. I even looked after my parents at home when they grew old... Even after an uncle of my father's whom I never knew before. I went hungry and I worked harder in order to look after these other people. But it's my responsibility... Something I felt I had to do.

§ I joined Catholic Action [an orthodox Catholic political movement] as soon as I was old enough to do so. My father was a communist, a hardliner who would have eaten priests for breakfast... But I'm not angry with him. He was very ignorant and he doesn't know what he missed out on. I'm very pleased to be able to say that I was able to bring him back to the faith before he died. Poor man... he led a life of hardship.'

\*\*\* 'My health is very delicate: a draft of air can give me a cough that lasts for weeks... § Very, very much, and I feel it immediately... I get a cough with a bit of dry catarrh and it lasts for quite a long time. § In winter, last year I had it for four months. § If I'm nervous it makes me cough more. § I can cough for a whole hour and then it comes back. Especially in the morning when I get up... § Even for a couple of hours. I don't cough at night, thank goodness. When it's cold I feel it straight away and it always bothers me. It immediately bothers me in my shoulders...'

§ \* 'My diet has always been a mess... When I was little I knew hunger and I went to work while I was still a boy. In the countryside where I lived people ate a lot of milk and butter and pork and fried food and wine... we were good people, but ignorant. § I could live on fruit and never eat anything else in my life. I do eat a lot of fruit and vegetables. I don't like coffee and my favourite food is fruit... § I like all of them, but the kind I like most are juicy ones. § I don't eat any kind of fish...'

§ I had TB twice. When I was about six and then when I was seventeen. My parents worked in Germany for many years and I grew up for a while with my uncles and aunts and then in the sanatorium, where one of the nurses loved me like I was her son and kept me on longer because I was weak and without a family... practically.

I have always been prone to bronchitis, but I always worked like a mule. The good Lord wanted me to live and I am here to show his light in the world. I also had rheumatism and it was only because my father was lent some money that I could get treatment.

§ I only remember that I was in bed for months and I couldn't move because the pains were so strong. If anyone so much as touched my bed I would scream out from the pain... It was really, really painful and I begged everyone not to touch my bed and to let me die in peace. We were very poor and we ate a lot of bread and milk and wine, which they said was good for your blood. They told me that wine was nourishing and we didn't have anything else. Ever since I was cured I haven't been able to digest anything. § I was a young boy and I was hungry... I ate and got better... I was a young boy and I was hungry.

I had an operation for an inguinal hernia a few years ago. § It was strangulating and I had to have an emergency operation...'

§ \*\* 'My sleep is very strange: I hardly remember any of my dreams... I feel all befuddled and have difficulty remembering even what happened during the day. I feel like I'm spinning... Something almost nice happens... I become all pale and after a moment I come back to my senses... § When it's time for me to fall asleep I feel as though I had catalepsy. My wife says that she thinks as though I'm about to die every time I get sleepy and when she tries to talk with me it is as if I was about to faint. I can't recognise anyone. I've had a lot of fainting spells... I was so weak...

§ I didn't fall down on the ground, but people said I would go all white. I manage to stay on my feet and I don't fall down... It still happens now from time to time but it's quite a rare event. I feel sorry because everyone feels scared, but I feel quite well. I feel like I'm going to heaven and people tell me that I always laugh when it happens. § When it happens it's as though there's a jump in temperature in something here inside me and I'm like that for a second and then it's over... I don't know how to explain it.

At first I laugh... but then I feel very anxious and terribly agitated... I know that something very important has happened, but before, I had the feeling that I was

still alive, and I was safe. Now I'm not so worried because I know I'm in the hands of Our Lord.'

§ \*\*\* [HE SUDDENLY STARTS TO CRY]

'I'm disappointed because of my crying and it makes me angry... I've always believed in God ever since I was a little boy... My maternal grandfather was very religious and it was a beautiful thing to be with him. For some years now I've been a member of a spiritual group and I am convinced that Our Lord wanted me to live. But I've always been a blasphemer... and a drinker... When I was young and worked in the market... And even until a few years ago, when they told me what blasphemy was.

§ It was a revelation to feel inside what it means that wine and water are the blood of Christ... But I HAVE to be honest with the doctor, he is like a confessor. I haven't yet managed to stop drinking wine. But I'm trying hard.

You know, I'm very ignorant. I only had three years of primary school [HE CRIES AGAIN]. I couldn't go to school when I was of the right age. I always worked, and when I was little I was very poorly.'

§ 'I don't have many friends. Not any more. I'm so busy working with these poor people that it keeps me far from the world and I've always only mixed with people who I get along with and have an understanding with... There is a bond with my brothers too, but it's something different, it's just a blood tie. They disapprove of the choices I've made, they always have done, but for me there's only one way... You can never rely on those around you just because you were born among them. Life is about growing and finding your TRUE brothers... I don't believe in family ties, they are not the true ones.'

Rx: Arsenicum sulphuratum flavum 200c + placebo.

**Followup after two months:** Despite the fact that the temperature outside is lower than the last time, he is less warmly dressed. This time he leaves his coat in the waiting room and sits down, makes himself comfortable, and starts to talk to me in a more relaxed, intimate manner.

\*\*\* 'I always feel terribly tired although I don't work very much. I could sleep for ever. But I can't because I don't allow myself to. § I'm retired but there's always so much to do at home and I can't bear it if I'm not busy. Now I've got so many things to do in the parrish, there's the old folks' tombola and the group I go to, I'm trying to find a new place for us to meet... It's not easy.

§ I've got three children: Two girls and one boy. The girls went to live a long way away and we don't have a good relationship. They aren't married and they're living with men I don't like, it hasn't been easy for me to accept that because they are outside of the sacrament. My relations with my son's wife are very difficult... She's a very rigid woman and my wife and I would like to do so much to give them a hand but they have their own ideas about how to bring up children and they don't like us to interfere too much.

§ It's not easy to just stand by and watch when your children go about making mistakes, I feel too involved...

§ Going to bed used to be a torture for me and now at least I can sleep. I used to have to make sure I didn't get too tired because if I went to bed too tired then I would be all agitated and I would sleep worse... Perhaps the adrenalin stayed in my body, it was as if I had drunk a hundred cups of coffee... It's not easy to digest a hundred cups of coffee. A bit of wine used to help calm me down when I felt like that and it gave me strength. But I was always in need of strength and I think perhaps that's why I drank a bit too much.

Now I sleep well, although drinking that little bit that I used to take to put me to bed, and going to bed, are a real pleasure. I get up feeling refreshed but then I suddenly feel tired and there are too many things to do. But it can't be helped, this is what I have been called to do...

§ I haven't been able to sleep long... I had pins and needles in my legs. There was burning and numbness in them and I could only get off to sleep at about three in the morning... late at night. In summer I keep them bathed in cold water, the colder the better...

If I drink a bit more than the usual it's not good for me, it bucks me up a bit but then I feel terribly sleepy...'

§ ! 'I fainted again: we were praying... But I haven't fainted again since then. § As my head started spinning I felt I was slipping away and I was smiling... I would only feel better when I had digested my food properly.

§ It used to happen to me really often and I used to have to be careful how I got up and how I stooped down, and not to turn round too quickly or to go up the stairs in a hurry. Now it doesn't happen to me so much, but I don't have so much energy.

& !! 'Now I always urinate a lot and the urine isn't dark like it used to be. Before it was almost the colour of wine if I was tired... Now it doesn't happen any

more and I urinate better. I think I digest my food better too because I'm eating a bit more and it doesn't sit on my stomach and I don't have to get up at night to urinate and my stool doesn't have that horrible smell any more.'

§ !! 'Goodness, that's true... My haemorrhoids have been very good and my liver doesn't feel so heavy either. They were very painful for a few days after I started the remedy but I know how to put up with it by now... Then I didn't feel them again after that... I was forgetting I had them.'

§ !! 'It's better with the cold as well. Just because I had so much faith in you and people spoke so highly of you, I didn't have a vaccination against the flu this year... It wasn't easy because some doctors try to terrorise you into having it... And now the pharmacists have started doing it too... But my wife, who never falls ill, had a terrible bout of flu and I didn't have anything. Nothing... I was pinching myself while I was saying it... But this is a blessing, how can it be that I haven't fallen ill again?...

§ I used to always have a cough with very bad catarrh... Now I go out into the courtyard outside the church not wearing as many clothes and I even played football with the children and I didn't get a cough, I wasn't even out of breath.'

§ ! 'I never played, not even when I was a boy. I don't know the meaning of the word... Perhaps it means to work without getting tired.

§ A very nice little boy asked me to. § One of the ones who came from Turkey and who came to us from a reception centre. He told me in the few words of Italian that he has that when he was just three years old he was already looking after his father's sheep. Then I showed him a picture of Jesus with sheep and children all around... and he smiled so beautifully at me and then he asked me to play football with him. I never even played with my grandchildren and it was cold and I was scared of catching pneumonia... BUT I COULDN'T SAY NO and even if I had died of pneumonia I would have died happy.'

Rx: Ars-s-f 200c as needed.

#### **Follow-up after six months:**

!! 'My digestion is fine and I don't even have the slight headaches or funny turns I used to have and I've been very well all this time. I only had one altogether, whereas I used to have two or three a day...'

§ !! 'It's been better, but I've been sleeping better too and I haven't been working as much. Now I look after the children and they asked me if I want to

read the catechism. I've discovered that I have a certain influence over children, I have only discovered that now that I'm sixty.

§ It's a shame, because I would like to have my own grandchildren, but I can't talk about the catechism to them and it's true that your REAL family isn't the one you have blood relations with...

§ The real blood is the one in the communion, and communion is something you do together, it's a communion. Why do you think so many saints don't eat meat but they do drink wine?

But now I sleep for longer and perhaps I'm better in myself seeing as my digestion is better and I don't feel so tired, and I can cope better and with less anxiety with all the things I have to do.'

§ !! 'I used to have difficulty sleeping because of the pain in my legs, they used to burn and have pins and needles a lot and my ankles swelled up too. I always sleep with my legs uncovered and a pillow under them... But it's a luxury compared to how it was before and I have hardly felt anything compared with how it was a few months ago. My haemorrhoids are a distant memory and I feel really well.'

& !! 'You always ask me about my dreams... I dreamt of a viper who wanted to bite me, like the ones at the feet of the Madonna... but it was nice... a little viper. § I noticed that it was little and I wondered if it was a baby viper... But you can never trust those beasts. But while I was thinking about it it came up to me and then I let it bite me because I thought maybe it had to practice, otherwise it couldn't practice biting what it needed to live... I thought that in the end he's a creature of God too and that he wouldn't poison me.

I woke up and my legs were burning terribly and there were even two red marks on my big toe. I thought it was a sign... and then I saw there were two little nails sticking out of the end of the bed that had pricked me.

§ But I do wonder now just what signs are exactly. I have a need to understand things... But if I want to understand them then I feel I don't have faith and that disturbs me greatly.

§ It disturbed me greatly... Because this sign made me understand a lot of things.'

§ !! 'This winter it's been good and I haven't felt cold very much, I've not even caught a cold...'

§ 'My memory is much better... It didn't use to be... I used to forget everything... I used to forget just about everything, though I could remember things from fifty years ago... I always had to write down what I had to do that day... Now I can remember better, everything seems easier.'

§ \*\* 'That's going nicely too, we go and pray together every night...'