



The **PILGRIM**

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December 2004

The PILGRIM is a periodical from the **Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)**. The **PFMC** is a ministry of lay Catholic evangelization and healing through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.



PLEASE VISIT PFMC DISPLAYS for YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFTS

PLEASE HELP THE PFMC - PLEASE REMEMBER US THIS CHRISTMAS - KEEP "The PILGRIM" COMING to YOU in 2005

Our displays include a variety of religious books, pamphlets, pins, angel dolls and children's books, medals, statues, holy cards, rosaries, CD's and tapes and much more for your Christmas gift selection. Much of the inventory was brought back from holy places or shrines visited on pilgrimage. All of the inventory is available for donations.

Please help the **PFMC** by including us on your shopping tour. We can order anything for you. We try to be open from **10 AM to 5PM, Monday through Friday**. We may open on request. Call **(856) 768-9228** to let us in on your shopping plans.

Please do not forget the **PFMC** this **Christmas**. Put the enclosed coupon and envelope with your **Christmas** mailing list. Consider including a little something for the **PFMC** on your gift list. We greatly appreciate your support.

We are all volunteers, and operate the **PFMC**, including publishing and mailing "**The PILGRIM**," on divine providence. We deeply need your help to keep "**The PILGRIM**" coming to you in **2005**. If we have not heard from you in the **last 12 months**, you will be automatically cut from future monthly mailings. Bulk mail is not normally forwarded or returned so we do not know if you have moved. Please contact us if you desire to keep receiving

The **November** MESSAGE, from **GOSPA, Our Lady, Queen of Peace**, to an alleged visionary from **Medjugorje, Bosnia-Hercegovina**, is presented beginning on page 16 (centerfold page) with REFLECTION and PRESS BULLETIN.

"**The PILGRIM**" at the address we have on file.

The attendance at **PFMC** events and participation in **PFMC** pilgrimages has been so adversely affected since **9/11/2001**, we are considering taking steps to close the **PFMC** operations at **Epiphany House**. Please pray that attendance, participation, and support increases to the level necessary to maintain **PFMC** operations at **Epiphany House**.



A PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, allow the volunteers at this Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC) to act as instruments of faith, trust, and peace, particularly through use of all the healing gifts of the Holy Spirit. Help to restore health in each person that comes seeking help. Open up hearts that are closed and that have become hardened due to the effects of sin. Let each volunteer that acts as your instrument pour into each wounded child a sense of Your warmth and Your light of truth.

Oh Jesus, give us faith, trust, and peace so that we may be able to know we are under Your Blessed Mother's mantle of protection. Help us to understand the greatness and importance of having peace in our hearts. Help us to spread this peace from our hearts to the whole world. Lord, Your Blessed Mother continues to intercede for us with You before Your Father. Please respond to her in your Holy Will for us. As Your Blessed Mother consecrates every child to her Immaculate Heart, she crushes the head of Satan and foils Satan's plans to destroy family and world.

Lord, strengthen all plans for peace, and help us to reconcile ourselves with brothers and sisters throughout the world. Let us offer our lives so that peace will reign in the whole world. Let us never be afraid to take on and enter into the attitude of sacrifice and union with Your Holy Cross. AMEN

(Kathleen prays from the heart for each issue.)

"**The PILGRIM**" for **December 2004** is dedicated to "**Mary, Immaculately Conceived Heart of a Woman and Mother.**" See page 3 for an "**IN THIS ISSUE . . .**" Table of Contents listing.

CHRISTMAS WISHES from OUR HOUSE to YOURS



Welcome. Come in a little closer and sit down by the fire. It's really cold out and the wind is blowing so hard. But the fire is going and the hot chocolate is ready, so come on it.

I was hoping that you would stop by. Christmas is a time for sharing and we have wanted to share our Christmas with you. I know that a lot of the world sees Christmas as a time for spending money and making lists. Presents under the tree and lights around the house make for a festive occasion. But Christmas is so much more. Come and sit by the fire while I share with you the story of the first Christmas.

Close to two thousand years ago, in a small town called Nazareth there lived a young girl whose name was Mary.

Mary was engaged to a local carpenter named Joseph who was descended from King David's family.

One evening, an angel came to Mary and told her that she had found favor with God. That God had chosen her from all of the other women on earth to bear His Son. The angel also told Mary that she would name the Son of God, Jesus, and that He would be great, and would be called the Son of the Most High God and the Lord God would give to Him the throne of His father, David.

Now, Mary questioned all of this saying, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" (Luke 1:34) That is when the angel told her that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and overshadow her and cause her to conceive. Then the angel told Mary, "For nothing will be impossible for God." (Luke 1:37) I can see Mary, bowing low to the floor and saying these words, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

Can you just imagine how Joseph must have felt when he found out that the one he was engaged to was going to have a child? Knowing that they had never been together, he must have thought that she had been unfaithful to him. He must have suffered such a broken heart believing this. But an angel appeared unto Joseph and said, "Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord

appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21)

Now isn't that just a wonderful way to begin the Christmas story! To think that God loved us enough that He allowed His only Son to come down to earth, to be born a tiny babe. . . . wait a minute, I am getting ahead of my story.

Now the time is nearing that Mary will deliver the baby. She and her husband, Joseph, are traveling to Bethlehem to pay taxes and to be counted. The trip must have been very long and the road dusty. I can see Mary now, great with the child that is growing inside of her, tired from their journey, and ready to get off of the tiny donkey that had carried her so far. I am certain that she was more than ready for a rest. Now they are approaching the city. Such a busy place, people everyone.

Joseph stops at the first Inn, "Do you have a room for my wife and I? She is about to have a baby and we need a place where she can rest." Then came the answer that he would hear all throughout the city, No Room!! There was no place for Mary to go. No place for the Savior of this world to be born. No clean hospital, no soft bed. There was no room for Jesus to come into this world. Finally, Joseph came upon a small Inn on the outskirts of town. They didn't have rooms either but they did offer their stable and some fresh, warm hay. Such humble beginnings. Think about it for a minute. The Son of the Living God, The Lord of all creation, Savior of the world, to be born in a stable.

After Jesus was born, there were wise men who traveled far to find him. They were led by a bright star. When they came to the place where Jesus was they presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

This story has been told in many different ways and for hundreds of years, but there is one thing that never changes. Jesus is the Son of God. He came to this earth to give himself for your sins. He is the Savior and King. The Great I AM, Prince of Peace.

Jesus is the reason for the season. Not colored lights,

The volunteer Board of Directors and Staff of the PFMC recognize and accept that the final authority regarding the alleged apparitions, locutions and related messages at, and to the recipients from, Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as all other private revelations, rests with the Holy See, to whose judgment we willingly submit. We give total allegiance to our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and its Magisterium, particularly Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. See page 5 for additional PFMC information. While those presenters who work with the PFMC are selected for their personal qualifications and commitment to the Church, their comments and presentations are those of individual Catholics and no endorsement by ecclesiastical authority is to be presumed.

decorated trees, santa clause, or reindeer. It isn't the presents under the tree that you wait with such anticipation to open. It is about the first Christmas present ever given to man. The gift of Jesus to us from God, our heavenly Father. This holiday season let's take the time to remember what Christmas is really all about Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Son of the Most High God, born as a tiny baby in a stable behind a crowded inn.

The old Christmas carol is so familiar to us. You know. . . *Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus, lay down his sweet head.* . . the song could have almost been finished there. He laid down His sweet head and so much more. He gave His life so that you might live. He knew when He left God the Father in heaven, what was going to happen. Jesus has always been. In John 1:1-5 it says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Jesus knew why He was coming to earth. He knew about the betrayal, about the mockery of the trial, the beating and He knew about the cross. He came anyway. He did it for you and for me. He died for you, are you living for Him?

Merry Christmas from our house to yours!

(Written by: Pat J. Thornton

<http://www.auburn.edu/~thornpj/cstory.htm>)

"*THÉRÈSE*" – THE 2004 MOVIE

This movie is opening in more theaters nationwide based on its initial success in just 34 theaters. Please try to see it in a theater near you. Visit www.theresemovie.com or print a list of theaters from http://www.theresemovie.com/en/showing/theatrical_print.html.

If you miss it in the theaters, plan to buy it on videotape or DVD and watch it with your family.



MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR

Dear Friends in the Lord,

We write this *December* note to express our sincere thanks for your tremendous support in helping us succeed in fulfilling our goals and objective as spelled out in the *late 1980's* when we were called to "Bring

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pilgrims to my Son through *Medjugorje*" and "Bring pilgrims to me through *Medjugorje*."

The *PFMC* was established with many goals and objectives because we were guided by the *Holy Spirit* to be as inclusive as possible. *Keith* was supportive of every goal and objective while working to expand his own base of financial support for the *PFMC*. After *20 years each* in two different long term employment situations, he has now retired from both. He is not yet collecting *Social Security*. He works full time as a volunteer at the *PFMC*. We can no longer rely on his full time employment income for the shortfalls in financial support for the *PFMC*.

"*The PILGRIM*" has been written, organized, published, and mailed only through your generosity and the generosity of volunteers that have come month after month to put it into the mail for you.

Many have suggested establishing a subscription rate but we have felt that so many who read **"The PILGRIM"** could not afford the rate we would have to ask that we have resisted establishing a subscription rate at all.

Would you subscribe at \$30 per year for 10 issues? We know that we are going to have a **February-March 2005** issue mailed in **March** and an **August-September 2005** issue mailed in **September**. This latter may combine with **July** if we are on pilgrimage in early **July 2005**.

The **PFMC** is totally run on your donations and Divine Providence. This is why we put into each edition of **"The PILGRIM"** an envelope and a donation slip. We also ask for your prayers of petition. The petitions are collected, and brought to a shrine of pilgrimage. Until that time, we pray for you and the petitions submitted daily.

We realize that there are numerous causes and organizations that ask you for donations, and this makes us even more grateful for your support. You honor us with your gifts. We want you to know that we do not take your generosity for granted.

Any gifts of money go directly to helping us pay the bills of keeping the **PFMC** and **Epiphany House** open. We also ask that if any wish to give gifts of annuities or make us beneficiaries of life insurance policies or IRA accounts that you honor us with your gifts and make possible the events that we hold, such as retreats and conferences, and days of recollection and various classes. We try hard to support the local parishes by bringing in speakers and holding healing services. And with pilgrimages, we bring people the memorable gift of opening of the heart, mind, and soul to God.

We thank you again for making all this possible, and give to you our promise to work with zeal in the service of our Roman Catholic Church. We ask Our Lord to bless you abundantly, and to envelope you in His most Sacred Heart through His Mother's most Immaculate Heart. Have a beautiful **Advent**, a **Merry Christmas**, and a **Happy New Year**.

(Kathleen and Keith for the **PFMC** Volunteer Staff)

TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE JESUS CAME

Twas the night before Jesus came
And all through the house
Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.
Their Bibles were lain on the shelf without care,
In hopes that Jesus would not come there.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed,
not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.
And Mom in her rocker with baby on her lap,
Was watching The Late Show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter,
I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!

When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But angels proclaiming that Jesus was here.
With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray,
I knew in a moment that this must be The Day.

The light of His face made me cover my head;
It was Jesus! Returning just like he said.
And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth,
I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.
In the Book of Life which He held in His hand
Was written the name of every saved man.

He spoke not a word as He searched for my name,
When He said "It's not here" my head hung in shame.
The people whose names had been written with love
He gathered to take to His Father above.

With those who were ready He rose without a sound
While all the rest were left standing around.
I fell to my knees, but it was too late;
I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.
I stood and cried as they rose out of sight;
Oh, if only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear;
The coming of Jesus is drawing near.
There's only one life and when comes the last call,
We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

(Author Unknown)

<http://www.butlerwebs.com/holidays/poems.htm#Twas%20The%20Night%20Before%20Jesus%20Came>

PLEASE MARK YOUR 2005 CALENDARS for **PFMC** EVENTS

See **Conference Corner** on page 31 as well as **Bulletin Notices** on page 31. Most **PFMC** events will be preceded by their own **PFMC** information sheets with reservation forms.

January 2005

7 January 2005, Friday: Deadline for reservations in **PFMC** block of rooms at **HILTON HOTEL**.

28 January 2005, Friday: Father Bill Halbing plans to visit the **Upper Room** of the **PFMC** and hold a **Healing Service** after he celebrates **Holy Mass**.

February 2005

4-9 February 2005, Friday through Ash Wednesday: 2005 Retreat Conference (RC), 3-Day Extension (3DX), and Youth Track (YT) events will take place in the **HILTON HOTEL**, Cherry Hill, NJ. The RC and YT run from *Friday, 4 February 2005* through *Sunday, 6 February 2005*. The 3DX runs from *Monday, 7 February 2005* through *Ash Wednesday, 9 February 2005*.

Father Bill Halbing will speak on *Friday* and *Saturday*. Linda Schubert from *Miracles of the Heart Ministries* and author of "Miracle Hour" will be the keynote speaker for *Saturday night* and stay for the 3DX. Father Michael Semana will sing **Holy Mass** on *Saturday* and *Sunday mornings*. Father John McFadden will speak on *Sunday afternoon*. Vinny Flynn, founder of *Still Waters* and *Spirit Song Ministries* will lead the **Divine Mercy Chaplet** on *Saturday* and *Sunday*. He will also share his witness for the **Year of the Eucharist**. Father Glenn Hartman has agreed to bless the participants and the facility as he did last year.

The enclosed orchid color information packet with registration forms is also available at: www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith/2005/05RET2.pdf. Please consider registering with the **PFMC** as early as possible so we can make better plans to accommodate you. Pray that those called will register early.

Please call the **HILTON HOTEL** at 1-800-HILTONS (445-8667) or (856) 665-6666 with your reservation for hotel rooms within the **PFMC** room block. They will not charge your credit card for more than the first night until you arrive, check-in and are ready to check-out. Our room block is scheduled to close on 1/7/05 so we need reservations before *Christmas*. Consider giving a **PFMC** registration and the **HILTON HOTEL** reservations as *Christmas* gifts to your loved ones. Put these gifts as requests on your own *Christmas* gift lists.

If you would like a group of information sheets for the 2005 RC/3DX/YT, please call (856) 768-9228.

PILGRIMAGES for 2005

We are still in the planning stages for our 2005 pilgrimages and hope to have at least one pilgrimage to **Medjugorje**.

We know there will be a **New Jersey** based pilgrimage to **Medjugorje** from 5 to 13 September

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2005. This pilgrimage will be coordinated by **Rafael Villongco**, (732) 441-0567 or (732) 441-1513. The **Spiritual Director** will be **Father Donald Calloway, MIC**. Please visit the **206 Tours** hosted: <http://www.pilgrimages.com/fralloway> for more information.

The volunteers of the **PFMC** will coordinate several pilgrimages in 2005:

9 to 14 October 2005: **San Giovanni Rotondo (Saint Pio of Pietrelcina)** with **Father Glenn Hartman, Saint John Neumann Parish** in **Sicklerville, NJ** as **Spiritual Director**. The Double Occupancy Package Price is \$1899 with a Single Supplement of \$200. The Package price includes everything but Medical / Traveler's Insurance the cost of which is age dependent. Add-on fares from other cities to **Newark, NJ** are available. Information sheets will be mailed to anyone who asks for them. Please visit: <http://www.pilgrimages.com/frhartman> hosted by **206 Tours** for more information.

1 to 7 August 2005: **Lourdes** via **Frankfort, Toulouse, and Pau**. We are looking for a priest **Spiritual Director** for this pilgrimage and may adjust the dates to match the **Spiritual Director's** availability.

What would you like to do with regard to visiting **Medjugorje** or any other shrine or holy place recognized by the **Magisterium** of the **Roman Catholic Church** as a worthy place of pilgrimage?

Please let us know the times of the year you might

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Brendan Williams, as well as many of *Mary's* other beloved priests

from the Philadelphia and Newark Archdioceses as well as the

Brooklyn, Camden, Harrisburg, Metuchen, Norwich, Pittsburgh,

Rockville Center, Scranton, Trenton and Wilmington Dioceses.

Father Glenn Hartman, is reviewing every issue.

OFFICE HELP, ASSEMBLY, LABELS and MAILING: Too many wonderful pilgrims and volunteers to mention them all by name.

want to go on pilgrimage and interim stopover points. We can go via a number of airports with moderate layovers in the airport. We have always preferred to spend at least a day visiting holy places around the airport by arriving early and departing late.

If you would like us to set up a pilgrimage or a retreat cruise for your prayer group, parish, or school, with or without *PFMC* coordination, please call (856) 768-9228 for estimates on your ideas.

CHRISTMAS VIRUS WARNING!!!

Be on the alert for symptoms of hope, peace, joy and love. The hearts of a great many persons have already been exposed to the Christmas virus, and it is possible that people everywhere could become contaminated. This could become an epidemic if not checked quickly. It would pose a serious threat to what has, up to now, been a fairly stable condition of conflict and distrust in the church and world. Some signs and symptoms of the Christmas virus:

- * A tendency to think and act with others in mind;
- * An unmistakable ability to enjoy the present moment;
- * A loss of interest in judging or condemning other people;
- * A loss of interest in conflict and arguing;
- * A loss of the ability to worry (a very serious symptom!);
- * Frequent, inexplicable episodes of appreciation;
- * Frequent feelings of connectedness with others;
- * Frequent attacks of smiling and/or humming;
- * An inexplicable sense of contentedness;
- * A peculiar loss of self-centeredness;
- * A tendency to let go of control and allow things to happen;
- * A tendency to read the Bible and pray;
- * An increasing susceptibility to friendliness in others, and
- * An uncontrollable urge to share it with others.

Be on the alert! The Christmas virus is highly contagious! Some suggestions to avoid a download into your system (soul):

- * Stay away from people who believe in God;
- * Keep your mind closed to new spiritual messages;
- * Focus on your self-serving priorities;
- * Find excuses to avoid worship and praise of God;
- * Do not open messages that speak of: Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Peace, Joy, Faith, Hope, Love.

Pass this warning on immediately!

For many, it is already too late, and their systems have been wiped clean by it.

(from Dottie Lyons)

MARY of CHRISTMAS

I know not how, dear Lady love,
To offer you my praise,
I cannot fashion as I wish
The words that I would raise.
You stand afar, celestial Queen,
The stars are in your crown,
They spangle at each gesture's path
And dust upon your gown.
Perhaps I might recall the night
You knelt beside the crib,
The night when doors and casements shut
And left a mountain's rib,
Alone, exposed, to hoard you close
Beside the new-born Child
And seek in Joseph's kindly eyes
For something worldly-mild.
To counteract such mundane chill
I hereby set my heart,
Dim mirror of an Infant's warmth,
Its flaming but a part,
A small, sad part of Endless Love
That came on Christmas day
To show a mother wonder-bright
To guide us on our way.

(Anonymous)

<http://www.xmaspoetry.com/mary-of-christmas.html>

THE MISSING JESUS

About a week before Christmas the family bought a new nativity scene. When they unpacked it they found 2 figures of the Baby Jesus. "Someone must have packed this wrong," the mother said, counting out the figures. "We have one Joseph, one Mary, three wise men, three shepherds, two lambs, a donkey, a cow, an angel and two babies. Oh, dear! I suppose some set down at the store is missing a Baby Jesus because we have 2."

"You two run back down to the store and tell the manager that we have an extra Jesus. Tell him to put a sign on the remaining boxes saying that if a set is missing a Baby Jesus, call 645-3787." "Put on your warm coats, it's freezing cold out there."

The manager of the store copied down mother's message and the next time they were in the store they saw the cardboard sign that read, "If you're missing Baby Jesus, call 645-3787."

All week long they waited for someone to call. Surely, they thought, someone was missing that important figurine. Each time the phone rang mother would say, "I'll bet that's about Jesus," but it never was. Father tried to explain there are thousands of these scattered over the country and the figurine could be missing from a set in Florida or Texas or California. Those packing mistakes happen all the time. He suggested just put the extra Jesus back in the box and forget about it. "Put Baby Jesus back in the box! What a terrible thing to do said the children." "Surely someone will call," mother said. "We'll just keep the two of them together in the manger until someone calls."

When no call had come by 5 PM on Christmas Eve, mother insisted that father "just run down to the store" to see if there were any sets left. "You can see them right through the window, over on the counter," she said. "If they are all gone, I'll know someone is bound to call tonight." "Run down to the store?" father thundered. "It's 15 below zero out there!"

"Oh, Daddy, we'll go with you," Tommy and Mary began to put on their coats. Father gave a long sigh and headed for the front closet. "I can't believe I'm doing this," he muttered.

Tommy and Mary ran ahead as father reluctantly walked out in the cold. Mary got to the store first and pressed her nose up to the store window. "They're all gone, Daddy," she shouted. "Every set must be sold."

"Hooray," Tommy said "The mystery will now be solved tonight!" Father heard the news still a half block away and immediately turned on his heel and headed back home. When they got back into the house they noticed that mother was gone and so was the extra Baby Jesus figurine. "Someone must have called and she went out to deliver the figurine," my father reasoned, pulling off his boots. "You kids get ready for bed while I wrap mother's present."

Then the phone rang. Father yelled "answer the phone and tell 'em we found a home for Jesus." But it was mother calling with instructions for us to come to 205 Chestnut Street immediately, and bring three blankets, a box of cookies, and some milk.

"Now what has she gotten us into?" my father groaned as we bundled up again. "205 Chestnut." "Why that's across town. Wrap that milk up good in the blankets or it will turn to ice before we get there. Why can't we all just get on with Christmas? It's probably 20 below out there now. The wind is

picking up. Of all the crazy things to do on a night like this."

When they got to the house at 205 Chestnut Street it was the darkest one on the block. Only one tiny light burned in the living room and, the moment we set foot on the porch steps, my mother opened the door and shouted, "They're here, Oh thank God you got here, Ray! You kids take those blankets into the living room and wrap up the little ones on the couch. I'll take the milk and cookies."

"Would you mind telling me what is going on, Ethel?" my father asked. "We have just walked through below zero weather with the wind in our faces all the way." "Never mind all that now," my mother interrupted. "There is no heat in this house and this young mother is so upset she doesn't know what to do. Her husband walked out on her and those poor little children will have a very bleak Christmas, so don't you complain. I told her you could fix that oil furnace in a jiffy."

My mother strode off to the kitchen to warm the milk while my brother and I wrapped up the five little children who were huddled together on the couch. The children's mother explained to my father that her husband had run off, taking bedding, clothing, and almost every piece of furniture, but she had been doing all right until the furnace broke down.

"I been doing washing and ironing for people and cleaning the five and dime," she said. "I saw your number every day there, on those boxes on the counter. "When the furnace went out, that number kept going through my mind, 645-3787, 645-3787, that is what it said on the box." If a person is missing Jesus, they should call 645-3787, 645-3787. That's how I knew you were good Christian people, willing to help folks. I figured that maybe you would help me, too. So I stopped at the grocery store tonight and I called your missus. I'm not missing Jesus, mister, because I sure love the Lord. But I am missing heat. I have no money to fix that furnace."

"Okay, Okay!" said father. "You've come to the right place. Now let's see. You've got a little oil burner over there in the dining room. Shouldn't be too hard to fix - probably just a clogged flue. I'll look it over, see what it needs."

Mother came into the living room carrying a plate of cookies and warm milk. As she set the cups down on the coffee table, I noticed the figure of Baby Jesus lying in the center of the table. It was the only sign of Christmas in the house. The children stared wide-eyed with wonder at the plate of cookies my mother set before them.

Father finally got the oil burner working but said you need more oil. I'll make a few calls tonight and get some oil. Yes, sir, you came to the right place, father grinned.

On the way home father did not complain about the cold weather and had barely set foot inside the door when he was on the phone.

"Ed, hey, how are ya, Ed?" "Yes, Merry Christmas to you, too." "Say Ed, we have kind of an unusual situation here I know you've got that pickup truck. Do you still have some oil in that barrel on your truck?" "You do?"

By this time the rest of the family were pulling clothes out of their closets and toys off of their shelves. It was long after their bedtime when they were wrapping gifts. The pickup came. On it were chairs, three lamps, blankets, and gifts. Even though it was 30 below, father let us ride along in the back of the truck.

No one ever did call about the missing figure in the nativity set, but as I grow older I realize that it wasn't a packing mistake at all.

Jesus saves, that's what HE DOES.

(Author Unknown)



SACRAMENT of HOLY EUCHARIST

The Sacrament of Holy Eucharist is the true body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ, who is really and substantially and sacramentally present under the appearances of bread and wine.

Christ's sacrifice on the cross reconciled us with the Father and opened the Father's kingdom of heaven to us. Because the Father lives in eternity and continually sees Christ's sacrifice, the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist re-presents Christ's sacrifice for us. When the priest celebrates the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the Father's sight we are present at Christ's one sacrifice. When we approach for reception of the Holy Eucharist, in the Father's sight we are approaching Christ Himself on the cross as He gives us His body, blood, soul and divinity.

The Sacrament of Holy Eucharist involves a sacramental covenant, an exchange of persons. When Jesus gives His body, blood, soul and divinity to us, we give our body, blood, soul and humanity to Him. We give ourselves to Jesus by preparing for heaven, by truly loving God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and by truly loving one another.

The matter of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist is bread, freshly made from pure wheaten flour, and wine, as the pure natural juice of the grape. In the Latin Rite the bread is unleavened; in the Eastern Rites it is leavened.

The form of the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist is the words of institution pronounced by the celebrant: "This is My body," and "This is My blood." As the celebrant says, "This is My body," the bread is transubstantiated into Christ's body, blood, soul and divinity. A moment later, when the celebrant says, "This is the cup of My blood," the wine is transubstantiated into Christ's body, blood, soul and divinity. More completely, the words of institution are: "Take this, all of you and eat it: this is My body which will be given up for you." And, a moment later, "Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of My blood, the blood of the New and Everlasting Covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of Me."

Holy Eucharist is a sacrament of the living. We must be in the state of grace to receive it fruitfully. It is good to receive the Sacrament of Penance frequently.

The separate consecrations of bread to the body of Christ and wine to the blood of Christ occur through concomitance.

Holy Eucharist is one of the three sacraments of initiation. The other two are Baptism and Confirmation.

<http://www.secondexodus.com/html/catholicdefinitions/eucharist.htm>

THE SAINTS and the EUCHARIST

April 5th - Saint Vincent Ferrer

Saint Vincent never came near the tabernacle unless he felt interior purity and was spotlessly clean on the outside.

April 7th - Saint John Baptist de la Salle

"Be convinced that there is in your life no more precious time than that of Holy Communion and the moments following, during which you have the happiness to be able to speak face to face, heart to heart, with Jesus."

April 8th - Saint Julie Billiart

Julie suffered a nervous disorder which affected her limbs, producing a paralysis which lingered for thirty years. She heroically offered the sufferings she incurred to the Sacred Heart in reparation for the sins

of the world, especially those committed against the Holy Eucharist.

April 11th - Saint Gemma Galgani

“It is not possible to have a union of love more profound and more total: He in me and I in Him; the one in the other. What more could we want?”

April 16th - Saint Joseph Benedict LaBre

Known as “The Beggar Saint of Rome,” Saint Joseph spent his nights sleeping in the open arches of the Coliseum and his days praying in churches. While in the presence of The Blessed Sacrament, he would have a luminous glow on his face revealing the intense fire of love for The Blessed Sacrament. Spending five to six hours at a time before the tabernacle, his face, normally colorless, glowed with a rosy hue all the while.

September 13th: Saint John Chrysostom: (347 - 9/14/407)

Called “The Doctor of the Eucharist”, in one of the most forceful passages in his writings, said: “How many in these times say: would that I could gaze upon His form, His figure, His garment, His shoes! Lo! Thou seest Him, touchest Him, eatest Him. He gives Himself to thee, not merely to look upon, but even to touch, to eat, and to receive within... Consider at Whose table thou eatest! For we are fed with that which the angels view with trepidation and which they cannot contemplate without fear because of Its splendor. We become one with Him: we become one Body and one Flesh with Christ.”... “Jesus, for the burning love He bore us, wished to unite Himself so closely to us that we should become one and the same with Him for such is the dream of true lovers.”... “Holy Communion makes us eager for virtue and prompt to practice it, at the same time imparting deep peace, and thus rendering sweet and easy the road to holiness.”

September 15th: Saint Catherine of Genoa (1447 - 9/15/1510)

Wishing to enter the religious life at the age of 13, it was decided that she was too young to do so. After her father’s death, she married (at the age of 16) and was quite unhappy. She tried to find consolation in the gaities and recreations of her world. She had, however, not lost her trust in God. While kneeling for a blessing before the chaplain at her sister’s convent, she was suddenly overcome by a great love of God and a realization of her own unworthiness. Within the next day or two she had a vision of our Lord carrying His cross which caused her to cry out: “O Love, it be necessary I am ready to confess my sins in public!”

Then she made a general confession of her whole life with such sorrow ‘as to pierce her soul’. On the feast of the Annunciation she received Holy Communion, the first time with fervor in ten years, and shortly after became a daily communicant, so remaining for the rest of her life. Soon, she and her husband changed their lives and devoted them to the care of the sick.

October 1st: Saint Therese of Lisieux

“The best means to reach perfection is through receiving Holy Communion frequently. Experience sufficiently proves it in those who practice it.”

October 1st: Feast of our Guardian Angels

Remember that every time we are in the Presence of our Eucharistic Lord, our Guardian Angels are there along with us Adoring The Lord and protecting us at the same time. There is no need to fear.

October 4th: Saint Francis of Assisi

“Everything in man should halt in awe,” said Saint Francis: “Let all the world quake and let Heaven exult when Christ the Son of the living God is there on the altar.” Saint Francis used to spend entire nights before The Blessed Sacrament burning with love for Jesus, saying over and over all night long, “My Lord and my God.”.

October 7th: Feast of Our Lady of The Rosary

Our Lady as The Living Monstrance is indeed a “House of Gold” containing a “Tower of Ivory”. She is also the real “Ark of The Covenant”.

October 15th: Saint Teresa of Avila

“There is no greater aid to holiness than frequent Communion. How marvelously the Lord shows His power therein.” Saint Teresa said that in this world it is impossible for all subjects to speak to the king, and

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they must do so by way of a third party. “But to speak with Thee, O King of Heaven, there is no need of a third person - for everyone that wishes can find Thee in the most Blessed Sacrament.”

October 16th: Saint Gerard Majella

Father Tannoia, who wrote the life of Saint Gerard, tells us one day he saw Saint Gerard praying before the tabernacle. Suddenly Gerard cried out, “Lord, let me go, I pray Thee! I have work that I must do!” In his short life of only 29 years, he became the most famous wonder-worker of the eighteenth century. His mother testified after his death, “My child’s only happiness was in church on his knees before The Blessed Sacrament. He would stay there till he forgot it was dinner time. He was born for Heaven.”

October 19th: Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

To Saint Margaret Mary, Jesus said: “Behold this Heart which has so loved men that It spared nothing, even going so far as to exhaust and consume Itself, to prove to them Its love. And in return I receive nothing but ingratitude, by the contempt, irreverence, sacrileges, and coldness with which they treat Me in the Sacrament of Love.”

October 24th: Saint Anthony Mary Claret

Saint Anthony had always been especially attracted by devotions honoring The Blessed Sacrament. During his school days he had been so captivated by a book his father gave him, “The Goodness of Our Sacramental Lord”, that he had committed it to memory! Kneeling before The Blessed Sacrament, he would pray: “Oh my God, grant me a place by the gates of hell, that I may stop those who enter there, saying: Where are you going, unhappy one? Back, go back! Make a good confession. Save your soul! Don’t come back here to be lost forever.”

November 14th: Saint Joseph Moscati

When this busy doctor was asked how he managed to cope with his demanding schedule, he replied: “By the daily reception of Jesus in the Sacrament of The Holy Eucharist.”

November 16th: Saint Gertrude

Saint Gertrude once said: “Each time a person receives Holy Communion, their place in Heaven becomes greater and their stay in purgatory is shortened.” While she was meditating on The Blessed Sacrament and wondering how our Lord could bring Himself so low as to live on our altars in the form of bread, Jesus Himself told her this story.

A little prince, living in a huge palace filled with toys and games of all kinds, looked out of the window one day and saw some poor children playing in the street. Noticing the little boy looking out, his tutor asked him: “Would you like to stay in the palace today or go out and play with those children in the street?”

“I would love to go out and play with them,” answered the prince.

Permission was granted, the prince put on the oldest clothes he had and played all day with the poor children in the street. It was one of his happiest days. Then our Lord said to Saint Gertrude: “I am like that little prince, I like to be with you men and women. Whoever keeps people away from Communion deprives Me of a great joy.”

(Rose Santucci, members.aol.com/saint35/4-a.htm)

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

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The Real Presence Association, Inc.
7030 West 63rd Street, Chicago, Illinois 60638.

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THE CHRISTMAS MYSTERY

522 The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the “First Covenant.”¹⁹⁵ He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming.

523 Saint John the Baptist is the Lord's immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way.¹⁹⁶ “Prophet of the Most High,” John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last.¹⁹⁷ He inaugurates the Gospel, already from his mother's womb welcomes the coming of Christ, and rejoices in being “the friend

of the bridegroom,” whom he points out as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”¹⁹⁸ Going before Jesus “in the spirit and power of Elijah,” John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom.¹⁹⁹

524 When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.²⁰⁰ By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to his desire: “He must increase, but I must decrease.”²⁰¹

525 Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family.²⁰² Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest.²⁰³ The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night:

The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal
And the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.
The angels and shepherds praise him
And the magi advance with the star,
For you are born for us,
Little Child, God eternal!²⁰⁴

526 To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom.²⁰⁵ For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become “children of God” we must be “born from above” or “born of God.”²⁰⁶ Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us.²⁰⁷

Christmas is the mystery of this “marvelous exchange”:

O marvelous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.²⁰⁸

Footnotes: 195 Heb 9:15.

196 Cf. Acts 13:24; Mt 3:3.

197 Lk 1:76; cf. 7:26; Mt 11:13.

198 Jn 1:29; cf. Acts 1:22; Lk 1:41; 16:16; Jn 3:29.

199 Lk 1:17; cf. Mk 6:17-29.

200 Cf. Rev 22:17.

201 Jn 3:30.

202 Cf. Lk 2:6-7.

203 Cf. Lk 2:8-20.

204 Kontakion of Romanos the Melodist.

205 Cf. Mt 18:3-4.

206 Jn 3:7; 1:13; 1:12; cf. Mt 23:12.

208 LH, Antiphon I of Evening Prayer for January 1st.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, Harmony Media, Inc., PO Box 9179, Salem, OR 97305)

SANCTUARY of LIFE

In The Gospel of Life, Pope John Paul II wrote, “the family...by its nature is called to be the ‘sanctuary of life’”(no. 11). This means that adults, especially parents, have a mission in the world.

Ephesians 3:14-15 gives us the first key to understanding this mission. “I bow my knee before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.” Scripture says that God is the original Family of Persons whose life is love. He saves us by transforming us into a family, His family.

We imitate God, and God intends for us to participate in saving others in the same way He saves us. Pope John Paul II continuously stresses the importance of the family, even saying, “the future of the world and the Church passes through the family” (The Christian Family in the Modern World, no. 75). Both the destiny of the natural order and of the supernatural order depends upon the correct functioning of each individual family. Be Fruitful and Multiply.

(UNKNOWN)

THE NIGHT of CHRISTMAS

A priest told me once in his first Parish. After the Midnight Mass on Christmas Day he personally locked the church. With the keys in his pocket he went to his room and had a good sleep. At 7:30 he got up and went back to church intending to have one hour of prayer all to himself. He opened the side door leading to the sacristy, turned a light on and then turned on a couple of lights for the church. As he opened the sacristy door and walked into the church, he literally froze. Most of the pews were occupied by strange people clad in the poorest of clothes and all were in total silence. No one so much as wiggled and nobody cared to look at him. A small group was standing by the Nativity scene contemplating the manger in total silence.

The priest recovered quickly and in a loud voice asked them how did they get in? Nobody answered. He walked closer to them and asked again who let them in? A woman answered totally unconcerned: “Strange things happen on the night of Christmas”. And back to total silence. The priest went to check the main door and found it locked just as he had left it. He now determined to get the facts and turned his face to the pews; but the pews were empty. The people had vanished.

He kept this puzzle to himself for sometime. Unable to hold it any longer, he told me just what I have told you. Could I help with any plausible explanation? Let

me hurry to say that the priest in question is a model of sanity and is as well educated academically as most of the priests I know, if not better.

My explanation was and still is as follows: Those were dead people who were doing their purgatory, or part of it, in the church. It is safe to assume that we atone for our sins where we committed them. Those people were immersed in total silence. Why? Consider the irreverences committed before the Blessed Sacrament: how many people act in church: chatting, giggling, looking around. After Mass some people gather in small groups around the pews and turn the church into a market place with regard for Christ's Real Presence in the Tabernacle. Why did they vanish? They did not vanish. . They simply became invisible: but they remained tied to their pews unable to utter one single word to atone for their disrespectful chatter while they were living.

The Blessed Sacrament is no laughing matter. There is a price tag to all we do or say. In the end it is God who gets the last laugh—so to say. Those people had to give the Blessed Sacrament the adoration and respect that Christ deserves. For how long ? Only God can answer that. Why did the priest see them ? So he could pray for them and for all other poor souls detained in other churches as well as anywhere else, so they do not need miracle.

Why did they clad in poor clothes? To atone for their vanity while living. People often use clothes not so much to cover their nakedness but as a status symbol to impress others. But God is not impressed by, say, mink coats. Also people walk into church with hardly any clothes. In the summer months it is not unusual for people ---mostly women—to go to receive Holy Communion in the most indecent clothing. The pastor may or may not put up with it; but God will have His day in court about this. Rags could be an appropriate punishment for these excess.

A nun in purgatory revealed to another nun in the 1880's " It is not, however, on All Souls' Day that the most go to Heaven."

In the writings of Saint Margaret Mary we find the following exhortation: In union with the Divine Heart of Jesus make a short pilgrimage to Purgatory at night. Offer Him all your activities of the day and ask Him to apply His merits to the suffering souls. At the same time implore them to obtain for you the grace to live and die in the love and friendship of this Divine Heart. May He never find you any resistance to His Holy will ,nor any wish to thwart His designs for your regard. Fortunate will you be, if you succeed in obtaining deliverance for some of these imprisoned souls , for you will gain as many friends in heaven."

O you my Christian friends who read these lines, priests, religious or devout lay-people, help to spread this devotion. It is so simple, and requires so little effort; moreover, you will be rewarded for it.

"On awaking this morning, on the Sunday of the Good Shepherd," wrote Saint Mary Margaret two hundred years ago, "Two of my suffering friends came to take leave of me; today the Good Shepherd received them into His Eternal home. The left with untold joy and happiness. When I asked them to remember me, the replied: "Ingratitude has never entered heaven"

(by Segundo Llorente, S.J. from *Heralders of Divine Love*, 58 Wayne Road, Monroe, CT 06468)

MASTER of the WAY

Dear Lord of all my sunny days,
I raise my voice in joy and praise.
I see the beauty of Your earth
As once again there is rebirth.
I hear the little birds that sing
And lift my voice to Thee, my King.
The fragrant flowers along my way
Add color to my life each day.
But life must have some cloudy days;
There may be storms along my way,
It seems the birds forget to sing
And to Your promises I will cling.
Dear Lord, You promised You would be
My anchor on life's stormy sea,
My shepherd and my guide each day,
The light before me all the way.
You send the sunshine and rain,
You share our joy and all our pain.
We bow our heads to Thee in prayer,
Assured that You are always there.
Dear Lord, I thank You for Your love,
The blessings from Your throne above.
You are my strength from day to day,
Oh Lord and Master of my way.

**(Gertrude B. McClain. *Salesian Inspirational Books A*
Salesian Missions Publication #51626)**

THE CHRISTMAS ENVELOPE

It's just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past 10 years or so.

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas---oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it---overspending...the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma -- the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else.

Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way.

Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended; and shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church, mostly black. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes.

As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge defeat.

Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them." Mike loved kids---all kids---and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That's when the idea for his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church.

On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years.

For each Christmas, I followed the tradition---one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to

a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on. The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.

As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there.

You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning, it was joined by three more. Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation watching as their fathers take down the envelope.

Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit, will always be with us.

May we all remember Christ, who is the reason for the season, and the true Christmas spirit this year and always.

(from Sowing Seeds Ministry)

MARY'S MANTLE

Place under the cape, the artist said,
Those needing protection.
"This could be a squeeze,"
I thought,
Reaching for the 64-crayon box.
"Let's see how wide your lap is, Mary"

I drew them like a garden,
Stirred them like soup,
Sharing the bell-shaped space,
Wrists brushing:
War's victims,
With dusty toes, eyes like charred wood,
Glad of a fabric roof, a soft shield.

For the grieving, a place near the heart,
No word but a beat, unstoppable.
For artists, pianists, gardeners, cooks,
Spots near either hand.

Bright borders for those who finger
Reverently the texture of the cloth.
For the lonely and sick, balm of the curved hand.

If kindness takes a shape,
This perfect dome shelters them.
Yin and yang of the calm face:
For happy ones, clean view
Bursting from the hot-pink
Dance palace of joy.

In the house of Mary, they all fit.
A big porch, a window lamp,
A mother's call, "Come home."

(Kathy Coffey, Saint Anthony Messenger, May 200?)

WHY MAKE a CONSECRATION to the HEARTS of JESUS and MARY

We have already spoken of how we are incorporated into Christ at Baptism. Now we shall speak of the life which comes to us in Baptism in terms of consecration: "To consecrate means to make sacred, to make holy. So to speak of our consecration is to speak of God's activity in making us holy, His activity of giving us a share in His in His own Holiness. At Baptism we receive a share in God's life, a share in His holiness. Christ is the mediator of this grace life. We are baptized into Christ, into His death and resurrection. In Baptism we become holy by sharing in the holiness of Christ. We belong to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

"On our part, we must respond to God's consecration of us. We must live out the consecration of Baptism. We must realize what God has done for us in Christ and live according to this awareness. We need to live the life of holiness and grow in it. In other words, we must develop the life of grace, the Christ-life. "What God has done for us in Christ involves Mary. God has given us a Christ-life, our life of grace, and Mary is the mother of this Christ-life. Consequently, living out our life consecration to God—living out the Christ-life—includes allowing Mary to increasingly be the Mother of our Christ-life.

Consecration to Mary, therefore, is an aspect of our consecration to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is intrusting ourselves entirely to her maternal love so that she can bring us ever closer to Jesus, so that we can increasingly live out our consecration to God in Christ.

At Fatima, Our Lady asked that we consecrate ourselves to her Immaculate Heart. Mary shows us her heart is a symbol of her love for God and us. She asks us to make a return of her love to her, to consecrate ourselves to her, to give ourselves to her completely.

She wants us to entrust ourselves to her completely so that she may help us love God and neighbor.

"As stated above, consecration to Mary is an aspect of our consecration to God in Christ and she has asked for consecration to her Heart so that she may assist us. Christ, in turn, invites us to live out this consecration to Him through consecration to His Sacred Heart. We see the Divine symmetry consecration to the Immaculate Heart helps us to live out our consecration to Christ Who reveals His Heart as a symbol of His life of love in all of its aspects, including His tremendous love for each of us individually. His Heart also asks for our love in return, a return which ideally is summed up in consecration to Jesus' Heart.

Through this consecration we give ourselves completely to Jesus through the Immaculate Heart. In this consecration to Jesus, we promise to strive to live according to His Father's will in all things".

(Shepherds of Christ Associates Spirituality Handbook)

CONSECRATE YOUR CHILD to the INFANT JESUS

Jesus knows what it means to be a child. Weak. Vulnerable. Small. He no doubt cried in His parents' arms. He relied on Mary and Joseph's loving protection when the family fled into Egypt because of King Herod's desire to kill Him. In His humanity, Jesus sought to identify Himself with us. One beautiful and traditional way of identifying ourselves with Him is through devotion to the Infant Jesus. Knowing what Jesus must have experienced as a child, we can entrust to Him the protection of our own children and grandchildren.

In fact, we Marians have had a longstanding tradition of honoring the Infant Jesus during the Christmas season. In 1944, the first year the Marians settled in Stockbridge, MA, they began an annual tradition of praying to the Infant Jesus in the week leading up to Christmas.

Indeed, Christmas is an ideal time for parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts, and uncles to honor Jesus by helping to bring their children closer to Him. Why not consecrate them anew this Christmas, giving them into His care for the coming New Year? Through this consecration to the Infant Jesus, we share in the mystery of His love for us, love that we find and celebrate especially in the Christmas season.

And as you carry out your holiday routines and traditions, remember to keep the Christ Child at the

center. This Christmas, in these troubled times; we want so much to bestow gifts that last a lifetime. And spiritual gifts are more precious than material ones. So, instead of thinking only about what material gifts you can give your children, I suggest you think of what you can give them spiritually. Pray for them. Consecrate them to the care of the Infant Jesus.

A Prayer of Consecration

O Infant Jesus, our beloved King,

Through the hands of Your loving Mother, I consecrate (name), my child (godchild, nephew, niece) to You.

Place him/her under Your protection, save him/her from illness and all harmful influence.

Keep him/her pure and permit that he/she may grow, like you, in grace and virtue before God and men.

Bless (name), Infant Jesus. Amen.

(by Father Joseph MIC "Marian Helpers" Winter Issue 2003)

THE HAND

Thanksgiving Day was near. The first grade teacher gave her class a fun assignment -- to draw a picture of something for which they were thankful.

Most of the class might be considered economically disadvantaged, but still many would celebrate the holiday with turkey and other traditional goodies of the season. These, the teacher thought, would be the subjects of most of her student's art. And they were.

But Douglas made a different kind of picture. Douglas was a different kind of boy. He was the teacher's true child of misery, frail and unhappy. As other children played at recess, Douglas was likely to stand close by her side. One could only guess at the pain Douglas felt behind those sad eyes.

Yes, his picture was different. When asked to draw a picture of something for which he was thankful, he drew a hand. Nothing else. Just an empty hand.

His abstract image captured the imagination of his peers. Whose hand could it be? One child guessed it was the hand of a farmer, because farmers raise turkeys. Another suggested a police officer, because the police protect and care for people. Still others guessed it was the hand of God, for God feeds us. And so the discussion went -- until the teacher almost forgot the young artist himself.

When the children had gone on to other assignments, she paused at Douglas' desk, bent down, and asked him whose hand it was.

The little boy looked away and murmured, "It's yours, teacher."

She recalled the times she had taken his hand and walked with him here or there, as she had the other students. How often had she said, "Take my hand, Douglas, we'll go outside." Or, "Let me show you how to hold your pencil." Or, "Let's do this together." Douglas was most thankful for his teacher's hand.

Brushing aside a tear, she went on with her work.

The story speaks of more than thankfulness. It says something about teachers teaching and parents parenting and friends showing friendship, and how much it means to the Douglases of the world. They might not always say thanks. But they'll remember the hand that reaches out.

(Author Unknown - kmesserbrig@comcast.net)

PFMC DISPLAYS and / or PRESENTATIONS



Kathleen and Keith are available to participate in Parish or prayer group meetings with witness, and/or videotape or slide presentations, followed by a question and answer session. The experiences and continuation of the **PFMC** ministries for Our Lady and her Son in this time of manifestation of Our Lord's mercy and graces are shared at no cost.

Free will offerings are accepted. This is especially true for books, tapes, and religious articles, when they are made available in displays at the presentation sites. Recipients are asked to donate at or above the suggested value posted on each article on display.

Displays may be set up without a presentation.

We are willing and have offered to set up displays in parishes for all the weekend Holy Masses. We'll come on Saturday afternoon in time (about 2 hours) to set up before the first vigil Holy Mass and stay through Sunday afternoon or evening until after the last Sunday Holy Mass (Volunteer staff pending).

Displays in parishes are particularly beneficial when good Catholic religious goods or book stores are not convenient to the parishioners. With Christmas and other Holy Days coming up along with school events as well as First Communion, Confirmation, etc., consider religious gift shopping.

Ask your pastor if he would allow the **PFMC** to set up a display in the basement, school cafeteria, or gymnasium, or wherever we could have about 20 large tables with display material on them.

(Keith and Kathleen Werner)

MESSAGE of 11/25/2004 via Maria Pavlovic Lunetti

Dear Children! At this time, I call you all to pray for my intentions. Especially, little children, pray for those who have not yet come to know the love of God and do not seek God the Savior. You, little children, be my extended hands and by your example draw them closer to my Heart and the Heart of my Son. God will reward you with graces and every blessing. Thank you for having responded to my call.

(The **PFMC** upholds the final decision of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church led by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, as to the authenticity of messages to alleged visionaries from Medjugorje.)

REFLECTION on the MESSAGE of 11/25/2004

PRAY FOR MY INTENTIONS

Mary, Mother of the Church and our mother, is walking with us. She is awakening us and she is calling us. In this time of Advent, which is approaching, she is inviting us to pray for her intentions. The Mother knows better than us, because she has already made the way, which we must still cross. She has lived on this earth and she entered into the glory of the heavenly fatherland, which is our goal, the goal that she also desires for us. We will not make a mistake if we put our prayers, our desires and our intentions into her heart and into her hands, because she knows better than us what we need, what is necessary for our families and for the world in which we live. "God created us without us, but he will not save us without us", said Saint Augustine. We have the responsibility for our lives and the lives of others. God desires that we are co-creators of a new and a better world.

This is why Mary calls us to pray and to feel the responsibility for all those who did not yet know the love of God, and who do not seek God, the Savior. Human freedom is wounded, but the desire remains in the heart, the desire of God, that nobody and nothing can fill, except God alone. Mary calls us to prayer, and prayer is to come in touch with the desire that is in us, the desire of God.

If the human heart is not filled with the desire and the love of God, it will seek elsewhere, and it will fill its vacuum by other things, by idols. We see that human beings are capable of uplifting themselves towards an ideal and of falling down towards an idol. We are created in the image and likeness of God, and this is why God is our unique ideal. All the rest are idols. God alone can fill the soul with the light of meaning, and give the strength for life in his footsteps. Through Mary, God is bending towards us, eager to attract us to himself, not by force but by love. However, love,

so to speak, cannot remain quiet as long as it does not see the happiness of the beloved creature. Love is the power, which attracted Mary to us, her children. Love is giving her strength during all these years. Love is the source on which she is drawing strength, and obtaining the victory in so many hearts. We can help her, and this is what Mary desires.

To be able to help Mary, we must approach her and her heart. We should obtain in ourselves the transformation, which we want to obtain and see in others. There is no other means or another way. We know, that it is impossible to change the others by our councils, our admonitions, our words of wisdom or our criticism. We can change them only by love, by transformation and conversion that they will see in us. Our Lady almost implores us to be her hands. She does not have other hands but ours. She wants that our hands, our feet, our words and our hearts belong to her and to her son Jesus.

Love tends towards resemblance. Day after day, we will become what is in front of us, what we have taken as the ideal of our life. In this way, our thoughts, our feelings, our words and our hearts will become similar to the thoughts, the feelings, the words and the heart of Mary and of Jesus. Then only will we be able to bring the others closer to the heart of Mary and of Jesus, or rather, through us, they will be able to attract them to their hearts.

Let us pray with blessed Mother Teresa: "Do you want my hands, my God, to assist all the day those who need assistance? My God, I give you my hands. Do you want my feet to go all the day, each day, towards those who need a friend? Today, my God, I give you my feet. Do you want my voice, my God, so that it speaks all the day to those who need your words of love? My God, I give you my voice today. Do you want my heart, my God, from dawn to the evening, to love without exception? My God, I give you my heart today."

Father Ljubo Kurtovic, Medjugorje 26.11.2004
<http://www.medjugorje.hr/ulazakenstipe.htm>

A REFLECTION from FATHER ED CHALMERS on OUR LADY'S MESSAGE of 11/25/2004

With the beginning of another Advent season, may we be focused on the incarnation, the coming of the Son of God into this world to be its savior. The significance of Jesus' birth, and his humble life should challenge us with much inspiration to do everything possible to be one with Jesus. Unfortunately, as one attempts to accept this spiritual endeavor each year during the month of December, he or she is "smacked right in the face" with the glitter, glamour and commercialism of the secular meaning of Christmas. In the 1920's, President Calvin Coolidge once remarked that, "the business of the United States is business." In the USA today the "business of Christmas" is greed. It is an abomination to the real meaning of Jesus birth. In a very sad sense, all of us have become part of this dilemma, and many folks are unwilling to celebrate Christmas with an emphasis on Jesus. To overcome this secularization of Christmas that has enveloped our lives, may we look to our dear Blessed Mother for guidance, inspiration, and strength.

"Dear children! At this time, I call you to pray for my intentions." This beautiful request from Our Lady in the first sentence of Her message of November 25, 2004 should touch our hearts influencing us in a positive way to overcome ourselves. Are we ready to take the time to pray during this Advent season while offering our prayers for Our Lady's intentions? She knows our real needs and when we pray for Her intentions, she is praying for us. Our Lady is most concerned about helping us to purify our own souls. Also, we have been asked by Our Blessed Mother to pray for and to offer sacrifices for relatives, friends, and all people in general. Are we willing to fast each Wednesday and Friday on bread and water for the spiritual well being of others? The second sentence of Our Lady's message of November 25, 2004 relates to these particular themes regarding our fellow men and women.

"Especially, little children, pray for those who have not yet come to know the love of God and do not seek God the Savior." During this month, will praying and worshipping God be a priority for us? By accepting Our Lady's requests, we can become more focused on Jesus while also helping others to do so. However, do we really care? It seems that we would rather be shopping, watching television, playing with our computer or eating and drinking at the parties we hold or the ones we are invited to. During this holy season of Advent, will we make the

choice for Jesus? Instead of constantly entertaining ourselves, let us entertain Jesus through prayer, worship and sacrifice. The time is now to embark upon this reality, a process that can bring us to the love and mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"You, little children, be my extended hands and by your example draw them closer to my Heart and the Heart of my Son." When Our Lady refers to us as Her, "***little children,***" Her motherly love seems to flow right into our hearts. Our Lady's love for us is so beautiful. It can nourish us in such a profound way as we open ourselves to Her. She wants to bring us to Jesus. She wants us to serve God with our total being as She does.

May we again reflect upon Our Lady's response to Gabriel at the Annunciation. "***I am the handmaid of the Lord be it done to me according to your word.***" (Luke 1:38) With a resounding and gracious yes to the angel Gabriel's request Mary became the Mother of Jesus, and the plan of the Eternal Father for the salvation of humanity had begun.

Let us be filled with the love of God the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and our dear Blessed Mother. May we be the "***extended hands***" of Our Lady by being Her devoted prayer warriors? In this process we must be positive. We need to see people's good qualities instead of always focusing on their imperfections and weaknesses. We must embrace the unconditional love of Our Lady and bring that love to all we encounter. It is in this way that we can draw other folks to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

"God will reward you with graces and every blessing." The fourth sentence of Our Lady's message of November 25, 2004 is so encouraging. We have to remember that it is only through the grace of God that we can acquire the strength to accept Christian discipleship. May we be grateful for the opportunity that we have to serve God through His beautiful gift of life. We are so blessed. Be humble, be holy and be forever grateful to God for the gift of himself to us. Reject the selfishness, pride, and indifference that can envelop our whole being. On this Christmas give Jesus a beautiful gift for His birthday. Take the time to attend Mass on both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Our dear Lord and Savior will be most pleased with that gift.

I hope you are well. Give my best to all of your families. May Jesus' love and peace fill your hearts during this holy Advent season as you prepare to celebrate His glorious birth in Bethlehem. Have a splendid Christmas and may we pray often to God the Father in thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Our Lady. Each day may we be those little

children of Our Lady embracing Her motherly love letting Her be our mom. May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit come upon you and remain with you forever and ever. Amen.

God's love and prayers always,

Father Ed

(HEdwardChalmers@aol.com Tuesday, November 30, 2004)

PRESS BULLETIN 204, 11/26/2004

THE WORLD of SODOM and GOMORRAH

Jesus told his disciples to watch those who kill the soul much more than those who kill the body. Nowadays, it seems that humanity takes especially care on the well being of the body; the soul seems to be left on standby. So many are led by a certain logic, according to which it is necessary to live well now, because - according to some - who knows if there is something afterwards? For them, eternity is abstract and inaccessible. People thus run after bodily pleasures, while denying the three-dimensional nature of their existence: spirit, soul and body. The body has put aside the spirit and the soul. However, it is not wise to neglect any of these three elements. The human being is an accord of these three elements, and only in harmony of the three, can it be whole.

Knowing this, we should not be surprised to see the blossoming of prostitution, infidelity in marriage, lust, perverse sexual tendencies, homosexuality, pedophilia... The humanity, which promulgates a life according to the flesh, cannot offer anything else. In fact, the world is only harvesting its own fruits. The affirmation of the flesh in the form of lust has arrived at the age of adulthood. And while the society, at least in statements, fights for the so-called equality and the respect of human dignity, we see that destruction of the individual advances with great steps. Protection of human dignity does not consist in a freedom without limits. Freedom and dignity of the person consist in the acceptance of true moral values and of principles of a healthy humanism. Deprived of these principles, the world advances on a one-way-road - towards its ruin.

We have seen that, in the structure of the new European Commission, there is no place for a certain Italian minister. His "fault" is to have said that the practice of homosexual relations as well as of homosexual marriages was a sin. For this, he was blamed, attacked, accused of denying the rights of persons and of individuals to think differently. In

consequence, how is it possible that this catholic minister, this friend of the Pope, was discarded of the composition of the new European Commission? What a paradox! The homosexuals are supposed to be discriminated, but he isn't?!

A world that lives more and more according to the principles of Sodom and Gomorrah, and less and less according to the moral law of God, will not have a beautiful future. A world without God goes towards death. The sad reality of the world in which we live will continue to consist of wars, conflicts, exploitation of the weak and the poor, selling of goods and of human beings. The world needs God. The message of Medjugorje shows that clearly. The call of Our Lady to conversion and to the return to Jesus comes at the right time. For those, which heard this voice and grasped the immensity of the love of God, eternity is not a vain promise but a reality. For them, priority is not the life of the body, but the life of the soul that is called to immortality.

.....
Father Mario Knezovic

COMMUNIONS and PRIESTS

During the month of October, 130,000 received Holy Communion and 2959 priests from this country and abroad signed the register for celebrating Holy Mass in Medjugorje.

ARCHBISHOP MORETTI VISIT

Monsignor Giovanni Moretti, a retired archbishop and apostolic nuncio from Meina (Italy), came on a private pilgrimage to Medjugorje in the beginning of October.

Monsignor Moretti participated in the evening prayer program and was available to the pilgrims for the sacrament of Holy confession. He said that he was enthusiastic about the devotion and spirit of prayer that reign at the Shrine. On Sunday, October 3, he presided at Holy Mass for Italian pilgrims.

15TH INTERNATIONAL MEETING of SPANISH SPEAKING CENTERS of PEACE

This meeting took place from *October 4 to 6, 2004*, in **Medjugorje**.

These centers have arisen in all of Latin America as the places for the gathering of all those who have felt the importance of the Our Lady's call in Medjugorje. Their activity is focused mainly on spreading the messages and organizing prayer groups and pilgrimages. As we have said, it was the 15th meeting, the seventh time it was held in Medjugorje. The 120 participants from Argentina, Bolivia, Costa

Rica, Mexico, Spain, Puerto Rico and the USA with 9 priests spent the 3 days in prayer and meditation, exchanging the experiences of their year's long work in the spreading of Our Lady's message of peace among the faithful of the Spanish-speaking world. This is an incentive and a good example for everyone of how it is possible to work together in the spreading of the message of peace.

At the end of their meeting, they said: "This yearly meeting in Medjugorje has been a very important opportunity for every country, because they all have the opportunity to enrich their groups with the experiences that other groups have, and learn from the problems that they share. The fact that they all speak the language of Our Mother is a powerful and encouraging realization of the universality of the message. Medjugorje is school for our daily life."

THE MALTESE ASSOCIATION FINISHED THIS YEAR'S SERVICE

Members of the First Aid Team of the Maltese Order from Germany and their volunteers finished this year's service at the Shrine of the Queen of Peace with the Holy Mass for German speaking pilgrims. Holy Mass was presided by Fr. Tomislav Pervan. In his homily, he spoke about the Christian understanding of the care for the needy, and he gave numerous historical examples of the involvement of the Church.

For seven years now, during summer, the Maltese are providing medical care to the pilgrims. During this year, they had 4045 patients, 58 interventions with the ambulance, and they received patients from 34 countries. 82 volunteers from Germany assisted them.

The Maltese are inviting the volunteers who desire to be involved in this service to contact them in time. (See: <http://www.malteser.de>)

THE 5TH INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR for MARRIED COUPLES TOOK PLACE

This meeting took place in **Medjugorje** from **November 3 to 6, 2004**. The theme of the seminar was, "**How to heal the marriage and the family?**"

There were 90 couples from 13 countries speaking Croatian, English, German, Spanish, Slovak and Italian. The married couples participated in the Evening Prayer Program in the church and climbed Apparition Hill and Cross Mountain together. They exchanged their experiences and they renewed their promises and confided their union to the Lord.

SEMINARS at DOMUS PACIS

There were 3 "Prayer and Fasting" seminars led by Fr. Ljubo Kurtovic for pilgrims from Italy, France and Austria.

The same house welcomed also a group of altar boys from Herzegovina led by Fr. Ignacije Aleric and Fr. Tomislav Sablje.

THE 12TH INTERNATIONAL MEETING for LEADERS of PEACE CENTERS and MEDJUGORJE PRAYER, PILGRIM and CHARITY GROUPS

This meeting will take place in the **New Hall** in **Medjugorje** from **March 6 to 10, 2005**. The theme is: "**THE GUIDE AND THE PILGRIM**"

[Note: The Program and a List of Speakers is available on the Internet or in print from the PFMC.]

The number of places is limited, and the number of participants is increasing from year to year. This is why we ask you kindly to make your registration as soon as possible, at the latest by the end of **December 2004**. You can send your registrations by Tel + 387 36 651 988, by fax + 387 36 651 999 (for Marija Dugandzic), or by e-mail: seminar.marija@medjugorje.hr or personally in the Information Office.

Simultaneous translation is available for all language groups. This is why we ask you kindly to take with you a small FM radio with headphones.

The price of the seminar is 60 € per person. This includes all the fees for the organization and running of the seminar (lecturers, translations of texts, simultaneous translation and lunch the last day). When you register and pay at the beginning of the seminar, you will receive a badge, which will allow you to participate in the seminar. We ask you kindly to organize personally your accommodation in Medjugorje. We believe that this is not a problem for you, because you have come to Medjugorje for many years now and have friends and acquaintances here.

We are looking forward to your reservations and to welcoming you at this meeting!

THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL MEETING for PRIESTS

This meeting will take place in **Medjugorje** from **July 4 to 9, 2005**. The theme is "**The Eucharist and Mary – Do whatever He tells you!**" (Jn 2:5)

[Note: The Program and Speaker Information is available on the Internet or in print from the PFMC.]

The full text of this notice was printed in *November 2004*.]

You may make reservations by e-mail: seminar.marija@medjugorje.hr, or by FAX: +387-36-651-999 (for **Marija Dugandzic**).

[NOTE: The **PFMC** can make air and land arrangements for attendance at **Medjugorje** events. It is best to travel in groups of at least 3 or 4 due to cost of transport from either **Split** or **Dubrovnik, Croatia**. Call (856) 768-9228.]

<http://www.medjugorje.hr/ulazakenstipe.htm>

VOCATIONS DEPARTMENT

If you need vocation information and you do not find it in your local parish or diocese, please call Elizabeth Wisniewski at (856) 768-9228. She has been collecting vocation information for years and now provides that information willingly to friends of the **PFMC**. She has been acquiring pamphlets for distribution from religious communities, particularly those who have Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

(Kathleen, Keith, Liz, and all the PFMC Volunteers)

NAZARETH HOUSE

A place of discernment and formation for men aspiring to priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, Nazareth House is located on the campus of Camden Catholic High School in Cherry Hill. It houses the Diocese of Camden formation program to help young men investigate whether God is calling them to a priestly vocation.

The mission of Nazareth House is to assist young men between the ages of 18-35 in the discernment and development of the seeds of a priestly vocation. The staff provides them with the foundation for seminary theologate formation, through a shared community life of prayer and worship; human, spiritual and intellectual development; and pastoral service.

It houses the Camden Diocese Office of Vocations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION or APPLICATION MATERIALS, CONTACT:

Director of Vocation Promotion, Father Chris Bakey, cbakey@camdendiocese.org, visit: www.beapriest.org, or Nazareth House, 300 Cuthbert Boulevard, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002 (856) 910-4930 or FAX: (856) 662-8917

POPE PROPOSES NATIONAL DAY of PRAYER for VOCATIONS in U.S.

VATICAN CITY, NOV 26, 2004 (VIS) - As they end their "ad limina" visit, bishops from the ecclesiastical provinces of Dubuque, Kansas City in Kansas, Omaha and Saint Louis, were received by the Pope this morning who continued his reflections on the exercise of episcopal governance, especially "the relationship which unites you to your closest co-workers in the apostolate, your brother priests."

He underscored that the fellowship uniting bishops and their priests comes from "the grace of Holy Orders and the one mission entrusted by the Risen Lord to the Apostles and their successors in the Church."

"Together with fostering mutual trust and confidence, dialogue, a spirit of unity and a common missionary spirit in his relationship with his priests," added the Holy Father, "the bishop is also responsible for cultivating within the presbyterate a sense of co-responsibility for the governance of the local Church" which "demands a sound ecclesiological vision. ... A fundamental goal of your governance should be that of encouraging and coordinating the pastoral work carried out in the great network of parishes and related institutions which make up the local Church. The parish, in fact, is 'pre-eminent among all the other communities in the diocese'."

John Paul II stated that renewal of ecclesial life "should rightly begin with the revitalization of the parish community, centered ... on preaching the Gospel and celebration of the Eucharist. The Bishop is to play an indispensable role in this revitalization by authoritatively promoting the Church's teaching and proposing a unified pastoral plan capable of inspiring and directing the apostolate of clergy and laity alike." He said that "the entire Christian community needs to be encouraged to move from 'Mass to mission', in the pursuit of holiness and the service of the new evangelization."

"An essential concern of responsible governance must also be to provide for the future," affirmed the Holy Father. "No one can deny that the decline in priestly vocations represents a stark challenge for the Church in the United States, and one that cannot be ignored or put off. The response to this challenge must be insistent prayer according to the Lord's command. ... I would propose for your consideration that the Catholic community in your country annually set aside a national day of prayer for priestly vocations."

Concern for the future, said the Pope in concluding remarks,, also involves "attention to seminary

training, ... a commitment to holiness and spiritual wisdom, formation in prudent leadership and selfless dedication to the flock” and “a sound continuing education for the clergy.”

(AL/GOVERNANCE:PRIESTS/USA VIS 041126
(430))

THE HOLY EUCHARIST and a HOLY PRIESTHOOD

The sacrifice of selfless love required of a priest is impossible without superhuman strength from God.

The principal source of this superhuman strength is the Holy Eucharist. Catholic priests are a living witness to Christ’s power to work moral miracles in the world today.

The single most important need for the priesthood is a renewed faith in the Holy Eucharist.

Catholic Christianity is unique in making demands on the morality of its believers that are beyond human nature, by itself, to live up to. The two virtues with celibacy and self-sacrifice, and we begin to see why the priesthood requires, indeed demands superhuman power from God to remain faithful for a lifetime.

Priests have no choice, the psychological pressure from the world, the flesh and the devil are too strong to cope with by themselves. The Holy Eucharist must remain if it already is or become, if not, the mainstay of their priestly lives. This is no option. It is law of spiritual survival in every age and with thunderous emphasis, for Catholic priests in our day.

Priests are as selfless and chaste, as sacrificing and humble, as their lives are centered on the Eucharist. The daily and devout offering of the Mass, the daily Holy Hour and frequent Benediction, the frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament-these are not superficial priestly devotions. They are expressions of a profound love for Jesus Christ, now living and offering Himself for our sanctification on earth on our way to eternity.

Purgatory - Masterpiece of God’s Mercy

All who die in God’s grace and friendship, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death some undergo purification, so as to be free from all sin., and achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

The church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect (*Catechism of the Catholic church # 1030*). This teaching is based on the practice of prayer for the dead mentioned in Sacred Scripture,

“Therefore (Judas Maccabeus) made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin” (2 Macc 12:45)

From the beginning Holy Mother Church has honored the memory of the dead by offering prayers in suffrage for them.

Above all, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the most efficacious to help the souls in Purgatory. The Holy Mass is the highest form of prayer.

Prayer is the key of Heaven

Prayer is an indispensable means of attaining salvation for our selves and our deceased loved ones. Fervent and submissive prayer penetrates the clouds and moves the heart of God to mercy.

The prayer of Saint Augustine (+ 430) for his mother, Saint Monica, is another important testimony from the early church about prayer for the dead. He wrote: “Forgive her too, O Lord, if she trespassed against you in the long years of her life after Baptism. Forgive her I beseech you; do not call her to account.

Let your mercy give your judgement an honorable welcome, for your words are true and you promised mercy to the merciful.” (*Confessions, Book 9: 13*)

(by Rev. John A. Hardon, S.J. from “Apostles of the Holy Spirit Bulletin” Fall 2004)

EUCHARIST and VOCATIONS

It is impossible to exaggerate the close relation between the Holy Eucharist and vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

This is only to be expected once we realize that every vocation is a special grace from God, and the greatest source of grace we have is the Eucharist as Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion.

Faith tells us that Christ is really present on our altars, that He really offers Himself in the Mass, and that we really receive Him in Holy Communion. In each case,

HOLY MASS TIMES

If you ever think you will miss Holy Mass because you don’t know the times of Holy Mass or the locations of churches in the area that you are currently located, please call **1-410-676-6000**.

If you have access to the Internet and don’t already have it book marked, type in the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) www.masstimes.org in the white box near the top of your browser.

You can find maps to the churches in addition to the times of Holy Mass celebrations.

the Living Christ is now inspiring men and women to give themselves to Him with all their hearts and follow Him in the extension of His Kingdom.

The Eucharist, therefore, is the best way to foster vocations. This means that persons who attend Mass, receive Communion and invoke Christ in the Blessed Sacrament obtain light and strength that no one else has a claim to.

The Eucharist is also the best way to recognize vocations. Show me a man or woman devoted to the Eucharist and I will show you a person who is an apt subject for the priesthood or the religious life.

The Eucharist is finally the infallible way of preserving one's vocation. This is especially true of devotion to the Real Presence. Is it any wonder that saintly priests and religious over the centuries have been uncommonly devoted to the Blessed Sacrament? They know where to obtain the help they need to remain faithful to their vocations. It is from the same Christ Who called them and Who continues to sustain them in His consecrated service.

Vocations begin with the Eucharist; they are developed through the Eucharist; and they are preserved by the Eucharist. All of this is true because the Eucharist is Jesus Christ, still on earth, working through men and women whom He calls to share His Plan for salvation.

(Rev. John A. Hardon, S.J.)

http://www.religiouslife.com/a_eucharistvoc.phtml

HANDMAIDS of the PRECIOUS BLOOD (Contemplative)

The Community of the Handmaids of the Precious Blood was founded on May 25, 1947 (Pentecost Sunday) by Father Gerald Fitzgerald, s.P.

MOTHERHOUSE: Villa Cor Jesu, Jemez Springs, New Mexico

LIFE: A contemplative community (though not strictly cloistered) dedicated to the sanctification of priests and committed to living an intensive life of prayer, charity and unity, centered around the Person of Jesus Christ, our Eucharistic King. The Sisters strive in all they do to be deeply loyal to Christ and to His Church. In the tradition of their Founder, they express this particularly by their fidelity to the Vicar of Christ on earth, our Holy Father the Pope.

Mindful that spiritual afflictions are much more regrettable than physical or even mental distress, the Handmaids see in priestly souls a challenge to their generosity. They recognize that the fruition of their life of prayer and self-immolation is to be realized in

a hidden life of deep personal sacrifice and constant prayerful intercession before Our Eucharistic King in the interest of the entire Catholic Priesthood.

SPIRIT: The spirit of the congregation is that of the unbounded love of Jesus Christ for His Priests. The life of the members of the community, living together in the spirit of the beatitudes and animated with a fervent spirit of sacrificial love, is a blend of the contemplative Mary-life and the active Martha-life, keeping ever in mind Christ's words that, "*It is Mary who has chosen the better part.*" (Luke 10:42)

LIFE OF PRAYER: *Eucharistic Sacrifice* begins our day with the Sisters chalice in spirit the Precious Blood for His needy Priests. All participate each morning in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, by uniting at the Altar with Christ as Victim, and with the Priest and the entire community.

PERPETUAL ADORATION: After receiving Our Lord with all His love and strength in Holy Communion, the Handmaids keep Him company, each privileged with an hour of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament Exposed on our Altars.

DIVINE OFFICE: When chanting the Divine Office in union with Christ, we serve the whole Church in this most efficacious prayer for the salvation of the world.

THE ROSARY: As a truly mystical extension of the life of our Blessed Mother, how fitting that the Rosary should have a special, permanent place in our prayer-life.

PERSONAL PRAYER: We must never cease advancing into the Heart of Christ by interior prayer and meditation.

SPIRITUAL READING: As a wellspring of prayer, reflective reading, especially of Sacred Scripture, is an integral part of our daily life.

SILENCE: An atmosphere of quiet expresses to others the Presence of God. Exterior as well as interior silence is necessary to a life of prayer and recollection.

THE APOSTOLATE

In the spirit of the Constitutions, the apostolate of the Handmaids of the Precious Blood is twofold: it is contemplative and active.

On the contemplative side we lead a distinctive life of prayer and sacrifice aiming to give spiritual assistance to Priests and to all the world.

On the active side our apostolate seeks to be of service for priests, especially for those in spiritual need, by the use of such channels of grace as will bring them the greatest benefit.

Two national organizations, the **LAY ASSOCIATES OF THE PRIESTHOOD** and **THE CONFRATERNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF PRIESTS** (for Religious) are filial associates of the Handmaids of the Precious Blood. Members pray and sacrifice for individual Bishops and Priests.

The Handmaids distribute authentic spiritual conferences on cassette tapes, given by leading retreat masters, and publish a quarterly periodical, "The Sponsor."

The active Apostolate does not take precedence over the life of prayerful contemplation and sacrifice. Nevertheless, it is an essential part of their special dedication to Jesus Christ in His Priests.

THE RELIGIOUS HABIT: The Habit is of wine-red color (symbolizing the Precious Blood), ankle-length, with a white head-covering. The Habit includes a scapular with emblem of a chalice attached, the veil and the Rosary. A ring is worn by the perpetually professed Sisters. The Habit is worn inside and outside of the convent. It is uniform for all professed Sisters.

FORMATION PERIOD: The religious training of candidates extends ordinarily over a period of three years.

Postulancy: one year Novitiate: two years At the end of the novitiate, first vows are made for a period of five years, renewed annually.

CONTACT one of the following:

Vocation Director Handmaids of the Precious Blood
Priory of the Heart of Mary 724 W. Petite Lake Road
Lake Villa, IL 60046 (847) 356-7729

Vocation Director Handmaids of the Precious Blood
Cor Jesu Monastery P.O. Box 90 Jemez Springs, New
Mexico 87025 (505) 829-3906

(Handmaids of the Precious Blood, Priory of the Heart of Mary,
http://www.religiouslife.com/w_hpbjemezsprings.phtml

VOCATIONS via MEDJUGORJE

I began to wonder how many priestly vocations have come through Our Lady of Medjugorje. We have written about Father Donald Calloway, and Father James Wiley (who came back to priesthood after an absence of 17 years, thanks to our Lady of Medjugorje). Last month we wrote that there were numerous priestly vocations that have come from the Medjugorje prayer group in Ambridge, PA. As I was thinking about this, I remembered the testimonies I

heard from 2 holy Franciscan priests on my last two pilgrimages to Medjugorje.

In 2001, I heard Father Ljubo Kurtovic speak. Father Ljubo is a tall, youthful looking Franciscan priest who had been appointed to take over some over of Father Slavko's duties since his untimely death. Father Ljubo told us that his responsibilities include leading the evening Adoration, organizing seminars at the Domus Pacis house, saying Mass for the young people at the Community Cennacolo drug rehabilitation center, and writing the commentary on the monthly messages given to Marija each 25th of the month.

Father began his talk by saying, "I have to thank the Blessed Mother for my becoming a priest." During the question and answer period, someone asked Father when he felt the call to priesthood. Father gave a quick of "1988", and paused before he went into detail. Father said he actually felt the seed was planted when he came to Medjugorje at the age of seventeen.

It was during the pilgrimage that he began to pray the Rosary every day. Although he had no inclination at that time to become a priest, praying the Rosary was instrumental to his vocation. After high school, he went to study engineering. Then he went to work at a factory in another town. He was repairing trains, and it was difficult for him because he was too tall and it hurt his back. On his days off he would go to his uncle's and help him work in the vineyards.

While in the vineyards, it gave him time to reflect and he realized that his job did not fulfill him, that it did not bring him any joy. He used to go to the church every day and pray the Rosary. Then one day, God talked to him as he was working in the vineyards. Father acknowledged that it was not an apparition or even a human voice that he heard, but "a special inner spiritual call that is almost impossible to describe." For a while, he said he put it aside and would beg, "God, please leave me alone". Never in peace though, it was always in his mind. Finally one day he went to his pastor about it. When he told his parents, he said they were "more than surprised." He laughed, "They probably thought I got mentally sick!" Then at his pastor's invitation, he wrote a letter to the provincial, and went back to work while awaiting an answer. His fellow workers chided him, "You decided to become a priest because it is it's much easier to be a priest than to repair the train!" "The temptations were back as he prayed, "God, please help my letter to get a negative response." When the positive response came 15 days later, he charged, "God You cheated me!" He quickly added, "But today I give Him thanks because

He knows what is best for us.” Father is very happy to be a priest.

In 2002, Father Joseph Galic took the group I was traveling with to Saint Peter and Paul Church in the neighboring town of Kocerin. Father Miro Sego is assigned there. He was a friend of the visionaries growing up and followed the apparitions, he had a prophetic dream. In his dream, he saw himself on a boat which was tipping over and he became frightened that he might drown. Then a mysterious hand came out of the sky to save him. This dream hounded him for years. Although he did not share it with anyone, he always wondered what it meant. Years later he discerned that Our Lady of Medjugorje was the one who saved him, and that She was calling him to priesthood!

(by June Klins *The Spirit of Medjugorje* September 2004 Issue)

FATHER PATRICK WINSLOW

A vocation story is like a finger print: one-of-a-kind, as personal as can be, yet common to every human being—past, present, and future. It is something that identifies you for life and leaves an imprint on everything you ever touch. In its beautiful complexity, only God could have designed it.

Father Patrick Winslow’s vocation story was clearly designed by God, but has been carried out with much assistance from Our Lady of Fatima.

His story started in upstate New York. He describes himself as the third of five children in an “average, practicing Catholic family.”

“We went to our catechism class, we received all the sacraments, and so forth,” Father Winslow explained.

“When I was about 13 years old, I first learned about Our Lady of Fatima. It was an Easter Sunday and I was in the kitchen with my mother doing dishes, he recalled. “We had a little television and this movie was on about Our Lady of Fatima. I was fascinated by it and turned to my Mom and said, “Wouldn’t it be amazing if this were true? And my Mom said, “It isn’t just a movie, it did happen.” I said, “you mean to tell me that the Blessed Virgin Mary came down with a message for the whole world and nobody told me?!”

“I was in shock and overwhelmed. I was affected at a level that I didn’t quite understand. I recall that I went upstairs and locked myself in the bathroom and tried to pray the Rosary for each member of my family even though I really didn’t know how to pray the Rosary at that time,” Father Winslow said with a

laugh. “But soon my fervor died out and I resumed the normal life of a teenager.

“Three or four years later around the time of my Confirmation, I had to bring some books to the Salvation Army for my mother, “Father Winslow recalled. “As I was unloading them from my car, a small book fell at my feet. It was the dialogue of Our Lady of Fatima. I took that as a very providential sign. I picked it up and read it- it was not donated that day. I remember very, very clearly the great impact it had on me. I had this understanding that I was being spoken to at a deep level.”

About a year later, Father Winslow went off to attend the New York State University at Courtland, where he said he “stopped practicing his faith.” After a pretty disastrous first semester that merited him a 1.6 grade point average, Father Winslow said he set a new course for himself.”

“It became evident that it was a waste of my time and my parents’ money to go on like this. I told myself that if I didn’t get a least a 3.0 the next semester, I would leave college and join the Navy or something.”

But obviously God had other plans for him. His grades improved so dramatically that by sophomore year, Father Winslow declared a major in chemistry with an eye toward medical school.

“That second year, I was taking my science in earnest, pledging a fraternity, but still not practicing my faith,” Father Winslow stated.

That was until he took a course called “Science in the Social World.”

The point of the class was to break down the barriers between the arts and the sciences,” he said. “We were offered the option of taking a final exam or writing a paper. About three days before this paper was due, a classmate came to my door in the dorm and convinced me that by writing the paper, I would be more in control of the grade, which was very important to me at the time.

“I remember asking her, “What can I do in three days? She said, ‘Why don’t you write about Our Lady of Fatima?’ People had known from conversations in the dorm about my interest in Our Lady of Fatima. When kids would stay up telling ghost stories at night, I would tell the best ghost story of all, the story of Our Lady of Fatima, and it always went over well with my friends because of course, 70,000 witnesses saw it happen in 1917.”

“So I called home to ask my Mom to give me some of the titles of her books on Our Lady of Fatima to see if I could find them in the library. She said, You should talk to your father.’ My father has a doctorate in

analytical physical chemistry. He got on the phone and said, 'Patrick, are you crazy? Why don't you write on superconductors?'

"I wrote the paper and handed it in," Father Winslow said. "The following week in class, we were told to pick up our graded papers in the professor's office in the physics department. I was really nervous. I had a lot riding on this paper. I wanted my 4.0."

"I had never been to the physics wing before this. I found [the professor's] office, very nervous that I had blown it," Father Winslow continued. "When I walked in, there, on his desk, was a statue of Our Lady of Fatima with rosaries hanging from it. I thought to myself, 'I just hit the lotto.'"

Father Winslow said that he spent some time that day talking to the professor, who turned out to be a very devout man, about Our Lady of Fatima. The professor told him he had earned an A for his paper and an A+ for the course.

"I went back to my room after this whole experience of being taken care of and prayed the Rosary for the first time since I was 13," Father Winslow explained. "I kept thinking about the passage, 'if God takes care of the birds of the air and the flowers in the field, how much more will he take care of you' (cv. Mt. 6:25-26)."

"The whole experience with the paper led me back to Church. I started out going to daily Mass because it was a very personal encounter with God. Then I forced myself to go back to Sunday Mass as well," he said. "I kept making quantum leaps of faith and discovery. I had thought that the Church's position on many issues was antiquated and shallow. By the time I graduated, I had rethought them all."

After graduation in 1991, Father Winslow took a job at a chemical company in New York for a short while, and then entered a doctoral program in chemistry at Georgia Tech.

"I kept wondering if I could find a way for my faith to lead the way instead of following the other aspects of my life. For that whole first year, I was in solitary discernment. Nobody else was involved, no vocation director, nobody. It was Our Lady of Fatima and me, and of course, the Holy Spirit. I soon left Georgia Tech and went to Catholic University Theological Seminary in Washington."

Father Winslow was ordained for the Diocese of Albany, New York in 1999. His first assignment was two years at Blessed Sacrament parish in Albany and then another year at Saint Mary/Saint Paul in Hudson Falls, New York. During this time, Father Winslow took on the responsibility of being the part-time

chaplain at a maximum-security prison in upstate New York.

"I saw it all there-faith, mercy, sin, reality, destiny. These men have sharp minds and a lot of time to read. It is one of the most academically challenging ministries I've ever had. It's emotionally challenging, too. They struggle with the same issues everyone struggles with, but you see them all the more in the environment of a prison." Father Winslow said. "I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Even before his ordination, Father Winslow questioned whether Albany was the right place for him.

"I was like a fish out of water. I had very little contact with the priests. I didn't fit the same way that I fit with so many of my seminary friends."

"After two years in Albany, the bishop and I began discussing the topic. With his blessing, his invitation to return, and with a certain genuine, paternal care for me, he said he thought it would be the best thing for me to transfer to the Diocese of Charlotte {North Carolina}."

Father Winslow arrived at Saint Vincent DePaul Parish in Charlotte in August 2002. In addition to his many priestly duties there, He has been involved in expanding the Spanish language ministries in the parish and has joined forces with parishioner and CUF board member Gail Buckley to develop and present a Catholic Scripture study. (To learn more, visit www.cathokicscripturestudy.com.)

And it is no surprise that Father Winslow's devotion to Our Lady of Fatima is still a big part of his life, often turning up in unexpected ways.

"Right before I was ordained a deacon, something came up and my friends from North Carolina were unable to go on a planned pilgrimage to Fatima. They asked me if I wanted to take their spot. So, this free trip to Fatima came my way a couple weeks after I was ordained. It was marvelous, just marvelous."

I think this is a story with God's fingerprints all over it.

(by Molly Mulqueen "Lay Witness"
November/December 2003 Issue.)

OUR LADY of GUADALUPE CALLS US

Let not your heart be disturbed. Am I not here, who is your Mother? Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything.

These words of comfort were spoken by Our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego almost 500 years ago in Mexico. With her image, they continue to comfort many devoted to her today.

At the Wichita, Kansas Center of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ (ASC), where I work, there is a large picture of her by an elevator where people gather. I see her image and feel her very close to me, and I sense that she's right there among us, to reassure us of her love and guidance.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patroness of the Americas, appeared to an Indian, Juan Diego, in December 1531 at Tepeyac, the site of the Aztec mother-goddess Tonantzin, speaking to him in his own language, Nahuatl. She asked that the bishop build a church on the site of her appearance. The bishop scoffed at Juan's story and demanded a sign. Three days later, Juan Diego, on his way to see a sick friend, took a different path to avoid the beautiful lady. She appeared again and asked him to pick some of the roses growing on the hill, despite the winter season, and take them to the bishop as her sign. As



Juan was giving them to the bishop, the roses fell out of his cloak. The bishop gasped and went down on his knees. On the cloak was the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The cloak with the image hangs today in the Basilica of Mexico where pilgrims visit it, preserved without scientific explanation despite 500 years of aging.

Mary's appearance in Mexico has always held a very special place in the hearts of Mexicans, Mexican-Americans and other Latin Americans. She appeared as a "mestiza," taking on the coloring of the mixed Spanish and Indian heritage, during a time when the Indians were suffering political domination and exploitation by Spanish conquistadors. Her visit and appearance to Juan Diego is filled with symbols of meaning for us today. He was a poor Indian, someone that people did not value because of his economic, ethnic and educational status. Yet, it was his faith and devotion to his religious duties that earned Juan Diego her personal favor and request to carry out her wishes. Her compelling message is that God loves the poor, humble and oppressed and desires their freedom from the powerful. She appeared wearing a rose-colored gown with a maternity band, a "cinta," indicating she was pregnant with life. She calls us today, as she called Juan Diego, to receive her personal favor and heed her request to give life to others. Her message is especially personal to me in my commitment as a member of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ (ASC),

an international community with 1,850 sisters in 26 countries, called to ministries in health care, education, long-term care and social justice here and abroad.

The anticipation and excitement of her feast, December 12, begins on December 9, the Feast of Saint Juan Diego, celebrating the first of Mary's appearances. In predominantly Hispanic communities, her name begins to be mentioned in the media as area churches prepare for her feast day. As her feast day falls on a Sunday this year, many churches will celebrate it on the morning of December 13. In Mexico City celebrations are held at the Basilica, where Mexico's leading entertainers and spiritual leaders begin the hours before midnight in honoring her with song, folk dance, and praise. Many in the United States, including myself, look forward to staying up late to watch the televised celebrations.

Churches are decorated with roses and banners in the colors of Mexico-red, white and green. In some Catholic churches "Guadalupeans," societies of women who promote devotion to her, may organize the preparations. These can include novenas prayed for nine days in advance, and on December 12, her feast day begins with early morning serenades of mariachi music and processions of pilgrims carrying roses led by her image on a banner. Mass is celebrated followed by a delicious breakfast of tamales, menudo, pan dulce, and hot chocolate. Every celebration is unique to the size and resources of the parish, but no expense is spared in opening hearts to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In heeding Our Lady's call we may feel like Juan Diego did, unworthy and wishing to take a different path. Her words to Juan reassure us that faith and trust will help us choose the right path. What are your gifts? How and where can they be used in Christian service? What are your lifestyle requirements? How will you make a difference? My Congregation, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, may be able to help you answer these questions. We offer as one of our ministries, LifeChoices®, a spiritual and vocational guidance program to help both young women and men thoughtfully explore big picture questions about career, lifestyle and spirituality and how they all fit together in service to God's people.

We all have a vocation. God calls us in different ways. Some of us are invited to serve others through ordained ministry or a religious community. For others, our vocation is as a single or married person. Joy can be found in knowing God's will for us. I invite you to try LifeChoices® to help choose the right path.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is with us and can help us in our discernment. Her “yes” to being the mother of Jesus, the Mother of God, gives us life. “Let not your heart be disturbed. Am I not here, who is your Mother? Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything.”

(By Sister Jose Mendoza (877) 280-7732 or mendozaj@adorers.org)

THE INTERCESSORY POWER of the EUCHARIST

Webster’s dictionary defines the word, to “intercede” (inter + cedere) as to “go between.” So an intercessor is one who “goes” or “intervenes” between two parties with a view to reconciling differences. A synonym is “to mediate,” allowing the intercessor also to be referred to as a “mediator.”

Jesus as Prime Intercessor between God and Humanity

When we identify the “two parties” as being God and ourselves, we see that the prime reference of Intercessor can only be given to Jesus Christ. as the Catechism states, in being “true God and true man, in the unity of his divine person... he is the one and only mediator between God and men” (CCC 481). Therefore, he alone can act as the true “Go Between” or “Intercessor” between God and ourselves.

And as Intercessor he establishes that unity between ourselves and God through the offering of his own self on the Cross for us in perfect, loving obedience to the Father’s will.

Consequently, it is only by uniting our offerings to his offerings, our humanity with his humanity, that the sacrifice of our own selves to the Father and all that is part of us in this world can also find its merit and perfection (cf. CCC 1350). In other words, in and through Christ, we now also can be real intercessors with God on behalf of ourselves and others.

Intercession and the Eucharist

This ministry of intercession is most fully reflected in and through the Eucharist precisely because “the Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice...” (CCC 1362). In and through the liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ continues to perpetuate that offering he made of himself to the Father at Calvary. But now in a bloodless manner through the sacrifice of the bread and wine it becomes the Body and Blood of Christ at the hands of a validly ordained priest.

And through that same offering, the faithful can now also continue to make the sacrifice of “their own body and blood,” that is, of all that is human and created which touches their lives on behalf of themselves and others.

Consequently, it is also at the Eucharistic sacrifice that the priesthood of the ordained and the ministerial priesthood of the baptized find their deepest unity, identity and expression. This unity of sacrifice is reflected in the very liturgical movement present at the Offertory and Consecration of the Mass. The offerings of bread and wine are brought to the altar by the faithful, to then be offered by the priest, to become the sacrifice of Christ’s Body and Blood on behalf of all.

The Testimony of Saints

This makes the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist the chief source of intercessory grace for the Church. As the angelic doctor of the faith, Saint Thomas Aquinas, says, “No other sacrament accomplishes more for our souls. It takes away sin, strengthens virtue and enriches the soul with the abundance of all spiritual gifts....There is no language adequate to describe the joy one experiences through this sacrament which draws sweetness from its very source and keeps alive in us the memory of the love, of which Christ gave proof during his passion.”

Saint John Vianney, the Curé of Ars, is of the same opinion in offering the following response to the question, What does Jesus Christ do in the Eucharist? “It is God who, as our Savior, offers himself each day for us....If you are in difficulties and sorrows, he will comfort and relieve you. If you are sick, he will either cure you or give you strength to suffer so as to merit Heaven. If the devil, the world, and the flesh are making war upon you, he will give you the weapons with which to fight, to resist, and to win victory.”

But because Christ is the sole Mediator for all, not only is this grace given to the faithful who take part in the sacrifice of the Mass, but through that sacrifice being repeated in all parts of the world, where the Church is established. The whole world is in some mysterious way preserved in grace. This is the conviction, which led Saint Padre Pio to proclaim, “It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do so without the Holy Mass.”

How We Serve as Intercessors

But how is that done? How is the world sustained in grace and being through the Eucharist? We must remember that the Eucharist is not only the sacrifice of Christ but “also the sacrifice of the Church” (CCC 1367).

It is the Church as a whole and each of its members uniting their prayers, their offerings and their good works with the self-sacrifice of Christ commemorated in the Eucharist that permits that grace to flow even upon those who may otherwise not deserve or be open to it. It is here where our power as intercessors of Christ on behalf of others obtains its fullest degree of significance and strength.

Intercession and Eucharistic Adoration

This is true not only with the sacrifice of the Mass but with prayers offered for the needs of others before the Eucharistic presence of our Lord in adoration as well. Why? Because as our faith teaches us, the “Eucharistic presence of Christ [which] begins at the moment of the consecration... endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist”(CCC 1377).

Our time of adoration before the Eucharistic presence of Our Lord outside of Mass then complements our full participation at Mass. That is why, as Pope John Paul exclaims, “The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease” (Dominicae cenae, no. 3).

It is necessary for all who have made a commitment to spending at least one Holy Hour a week in prayer before the Eucharistic presence of Our Lord to realize this profound truth and to know that united with all the faithful by their common Baptism, each represents the whole Church at prayer for the salvation of all-for the sick, those in need of healing, for family and world peace, and especially for those who have fallen away from the practice of their Faith and those who do not yet know Christ.

Consequently, when adorers excuse themselves from fulfilling their commitment, they deprive not only themselves but the Church and world as well of that added intercessory power that Christ has made available to us in and through the Eucharist.

(by Father John Grigus, OFM Conv. , MI National Center 1600 West Park Avenue Libertyville, IL 60048
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EUCCHARIST IS the HEART of a PARISH, SAYS POPE

John Paul II told participants in the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity that the Eucharist is “the heart of the parish.”

The parish is the “most immediate and visible expression of the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters,” said the Pope, when meeting the participants in audience today.

Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, accompanied the participants, who included the five members of the Executive Committee of the dicastery (all cardinals) and 37 council members.

“The parish,” the Holy Father explained, “is the vital cell in which the participation of the laity finds its natural place in the building and mission of the Church in the world.”

“It is a presence that constantly invites every man to confront the ultimate meaning of life; it is a door open to all, so that each one can access the path of salvation,” he said.

“In a word, the parish is the place par excellence for the proclamation of Christ and education in the faith. Precisely because of this, it is in need of renewal to become an authentic community, capable of a truly incisive missionary action,” the Pope insisted.

In this Year of the Eucharist, the Pope reminded the assembly’s participants that the “Eucharist is the heart of the parish, source of its mission and presence that renews it continually. In fact, the parish is a community of baptized persons who express their identity above all through the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice.”

The Pontifical Council for the Laity assists the Pope in all matters concerning the contribution that the lay faithful make to the life and mission of the Church. The council’s plenary assembly ends Sunday.

(John Paul 11 - Audience the Assembly of Council for the Laity VATICAN CITY, NOV. 25, 2004 (Zenit.org).-ZE04112505)

ALEXANDRINA LIVED on the EUCCHARIST for 13 YEARS

Some of the pilgrimages, which go to Fatima, visit the town of Balasar many miles north of Fatima. It became famous in 1832 when the earth changed to form the appearance of a large cross, which you can still see today inside a chapel, which has been built over it. That was preparing for events one century later, Alexandrina Maria da Costa suffering the passion of Jesus and living on the Eucharist alone for thirteen years. Alexandrina was born in April 1904. A dreadful thing happened to her in 1918 which left her life shattered ever afterwards. When she and her sister Deolinda and another girl were in the house three men

knocked at the door, one of whom had previously tried to molest Alexandrina. They broke into the house. Alexandrina wanting to preserve her chastity jumped from an upstairs window. The men fled but Alexandrina's spine had been irreparably injured. Six years later she had to remain in bed for the rest of her life. The slightest movement caused her intense pain. She began to grow closer and closer to the Lord and realized that she was suffering in a special way for the salvation of souls. She received Holy Communion every day and her thoughts frequently turned to Jesus in the tabernacle. She went into her first ecstasy in 1931 when she heard Jesus say to her, "Love, suffer and make reparation." She saw her vocation to be that of a victim soul, to make reparation for all of us. Under the order of her spiritual director she was dictating her life's story to her sister but many times the devil threatened her not to write any more. In 1936 Our Lord asked her to spread the message of Fatima and to urge the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart and she offered herself as a victim soul for this.

In one of her ecstasies Jesus said to her,

"Keep me company in the Blessed Sacrament. I remain in the tabernacle night and day, waiting to give my love and grace to all who would visit me. But so few come. I am so abandoned, so lonely, so offended.... Many...do not believe in my existence; they do not believe that I live in the tabernacle. They curse me. Others believe, but do not love me and do not visit me; they live as if I were not there... You have chosen to love me in the tabernacles where you can contemplate me, not with the eyes of the body, but those of the soul. I am truly present there as in Heaven, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity."

From October 1938 Alexandrina began to suffer the passion of Jesus every Friday. She suffered the passion of Jesus 180 times. Until 1942 she was suffering in silence without fame but after a report appeared in a newspaper from then on she was besieged by pilgrims asking for prayer. During the Holy Week the same year Jesus said to her,

"You will not take food again on earth. Your food will be my Flesh; your drink will be my Divine Blood ..."

So on Good Friday 1942 she began an absolute fast which lasted for the more than thirteen years until her death. The only nourishment which her body filled with pain received was Jesus in Holy Communion every morning. News of her fast spread and the crowds became even bigger. Some people had doubts and suspicions about her fast and accused her, her sister and mother of fraud. Therefore she agreed to medical observation. The doctor asked her, "Why do

you not eat?" She replied, "I do not eat because I cannot. I feel full. I do not need it. However, I have a longing for food." It was decided that she should be admitted to a nearby hospital for a thirty day observation of her fast. While she was in the hospital some tried to persuade her to take food. The doctor in charge of the examination was nasty to her and at the end of the thirty days said the nurses watching her must have been deceived and decided she was to remain there for a further ten days. They even showed her tasty food to entice her to eat. When the test was finally over the doctor said to her he would visit her at home not as a doctor-spy but as a friend who esteems her. Part of the medical report reads as follows:

"Her abstinence from solids and liquids was absolute during all that time. We testify that she retained her weight, and her temperature, breathing, blood pressure, pulse and blood were normal. Her mental faculties were constant and lucid and she had not, during these forty days, any natural necessities. The laws of physiology and biochemistry cannot account for the survival of this sick woman..."

While medical science could not explain, the explanation was simple. Jesus had said to Alexandrina,

"You are living by the Eucharist alone because I want to prove to the world the power of the Eucharist and the power of my life in souls."

She died on 13th October 1955, having received nourishment only from Holy Communion for more than thirteen years. Some of the pilgrimages to Fatima visit her town Balasar and you can visit her house, see her room and visit the local Church where she is buried to the left of the altar.

I was reminded of miraculous life of Alexandrina, who is now Venerable, i.e. on the way to being declared a saint, by the words of Jesus in our Gospel today,

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; He who believes in me will never thirst."

To the world it is irrational and stupid to think that bread changes to become the body of Jesus. It is equally irrational and stupid to think that a human can survive for thirteen years only being nourished by Holy Communion. But one is not more irrational than the other. Alexandrina is a sign given to the world by Jesus to remind us of his presence in the Eucharist. I recommend that you read the life of Alexandrina because I think you would benefit a lot from it. In 1996 Pope John Paul II declared Alexandrina Venerable and on 25th April 2005 declared her Blessed. (The entire book *Alexandrina: The Agony*

and the Glory by Francis Johnston is available in full free of charge on the Internet. You may not be aware that in our time there is another sign similar to Alexandrina given to our world, Olive Dawson, who is also nourished only by the Eucharist and I was privileged to attend a talk she gave in 2003.)

I conclude now with some of the words of Jesus to Alexandrina,

“You are living by the Eucharist alone because I want to prove to the world the power of the Eucharist and the power of my life in souls.”

And Jesus said to her,

“Keep me company in the Blessed Sacrament. I remain in the tabernacle night and day, waiting to give my love and grace to all who would visit me. But so few come. I am so abandoned, so lonely, so offended.... Many...do not believe in my existence; they do not believe that I live in the tabernacle. They curse me. Others believe, but do not love me and do not visit me; they live as if I were not there... You have chosen to love me in the tabernacles where you can contemplate me, not with the eyes of the body, but those of the soul. I am truly present there as in Heaven, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.”

(Quotations are taken from [Alexandrina: The Agony and the Glory](#) by Francis Johnston and published by [Tan Books](#). Alexandrina’s action to preserve her chastity reminds us [St Maria Goretti](#) who died instead of consenting to her molester. Homily for Eighteenth Sunday Year B by Fr Tommy Lane, Ireland http://www.frtommylane.com/homilies/year_b/18.htm)

THE LITANY of HUMILITY

O Jesus meek and humble of heart,

Have mercy on me.

From the wish to be esteemed,

Deliver me, O Jesus.

From the wish to be loved, Deliver me, etc.,

From the wish to be honored,

From the wish to be praised,

From the wish to be preferred to others,

From the wish to be asked for advice,

From the wish to be approved,

From the fear to be humiliated,

From the fear to be despised,

From the fear to be rebuked,

From the fear to be maligned,

From the fear to be forgotten,

From the fear to be ridiculed,

From the fear to be treated unfairly,

From the fear to be suspected,

That others be more loved than I,

O Jesus, give me the grace of this holy desire.

That others grow in the esteem of the world,

And I decrease, O Jesus, etc.

That others be entrusted with work and

I be put aside,

That others be preferred to me in all things,

O Jesus, give me the grace of this holy desire.

(by Cardinal Merry del Val,
Imprimatur: Samuel A. Stritch, D. D.)

PILGRIMS of FAITH MARIAN CENTER (PFMC)

The **PFMC** is not a church, store or travel agency but has aspects of all three. The **PFMC** operates as a non-profit, with 501(c)(3) tax exempt status, religious association and ministry whose volunteers are lay persons professing a belief in Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, as the Only Begotten Son of God the Father, Creator of the Universe.

Most **PFMC** volunteers profess that faith through the apostolic and universal teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Those volunteers who are practicing Roman Catholics profess allegiance to the Magisterium of the Church founded upon the Rock (Kephas / Cephas or Petros depending on original or translation) of Simon bar Jonah and led by his apostolic successor **Pope John Paul II**.

The **PFMC** was established in the home of **Keith and Kathleen Werner** based on pilgrimages to **Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina**, and other holy places or shrines worthy of pilgrimage.

Books, pamphlets, and religious articles brought back from pilgrimages were placed on display for others to view and acquire for themselves based on donations. Our inventory is quite extensive. The inventory management volunteers, currently **Vince and Livia Nocella**, are always happy to find something for you.

The **PFMC** is NOT a store and does not sell anything. We strongly support the use of Catholic stores wherever they are convenient to our readers.

For books, pamphlets, and religious articles, the **PFMC** operates like a church pamphlet or book rack where selections are made and donations offered based on value posted or received. Most of the other

outlets are operating on a for profit basis. Your gifts from the **PFMC** may be a tax break for you.

The **PFMC** has items from inventory on display at **Epiphany House**. Order forms have been produced in the past and enclosed in previous issues of "**The PILGRIM**" as well as loaded on the **Internet** as printable pages such as the one for **December 2003** <http://www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith/12OF03.pdf>.

Copies are available if you did not get yours or if you need extras. We need volunteers to help us get the entire inventory available for production of order forms. We eventually want to take pictures and load up a shopping cart program. If you have inventory or computer skills we would love to have your help.

If you wish to order, please determine your order request, make out a check or complete the information for use of a credit card, i.e. card type, number, expiration date, and name on card, sign, and mail to **PFMC**. If you do not have an order form, call us at (856) 768-9228 with a FAX number or mailing address and we will send you an order form. If you know what you want and we carry it, you can order over the telephone using your credit card.

The **PFMC** is directed and operated by volunteers who monitor the donations made for all activities. These activities include coordination of pilgrimages to holy places and shrines, retreats in local retreat centers or hotels, and days of recollection at the **PFMC** as well as the display and inventory management mentioned above.

Operating for many years on a cash only basis, the **PFMC** now accepts **DISCOVER/PRIVATE ISSUE (NOVUS)**, **MASTER CARD (CIRRUS)** and **VISA (PLUS)** for all transactions requiring donations to the **PFMC**. This includes for books and religious articles, pilgrimages, retreats, conferences, seminars, "**The PILGRIM**," or any of the various funds. We ask that those who use credit cards assist us with the costs associated with their use, about 3%.

Please come and see the **PFMC**. We know you will enjoy what you see and find a way of helping out.

Thank you and God bless you,

(Kathleen, Keith, and the PFMC Volunteer Staff

CONFERENCE CORNER

We need conference or meeting notices no later than the **25th of the month** before the event. The earlier the better so we can make space for it.

Please FAX any printed notices to (856) 768-9428 or mail them to the address on page 24.

BULLETIN NOTICES for **PFMC** AREA EVENTS

Would you be so kind as to copy or cut out the following BULLETIN NOTICE and take it to your Pastor or Parish Bulletin Coordinator? Ask them to publish any portion of the notices to support **PFMC** events for which you have an interest.

We send "**The PILGRIM**" to many parishes and ask them to post our Bulletin Notices. We are told that they get so many requests from outside the parish that they simply cannot respond to them all. They respond better to requests from parishioners.

Please help get the word out on **PFMC** activities, events, and pilgrimages. Ask your pastor to allow information materials to be put out in church. Please do not put material in your church without obtaining permission from the pastor or his representative. We are trying to network with other ministries in support of bringing people to Jesus either directly, through Mary, or through her spouse, the Holy Spirit.

Thanks for your assistance, we really need and appreciate it.

2005 RETREAT CONFERENCE (RC), 3-DAY EXTENSION (3DX), and YOUTH TRACK (YT)

The Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC) will host its annual Marian RETREAT CONFERENCE (RC) for 2005 at the Hilton Hotel in Cherry Hill, NJ. The RC and it Youth Track (YT) will run from Friday, 4 February 2005 through Sunday, 6 February 2005. The 3-Day Extension (3DX) will run from Monday, 7 February 2005 through Ash Wednesday, 9 February 2005. This will be an excellent opportunity to prepare for Lent 2005.

The speakers include: Father Bill Halbing, Father John McFadden, Father Michael Semana, Father Glenn Hartman, Father John Tino, Vinny Flynn, Keith and Kathleen Werner, and Linda Schubert, author of "Miracle Hour."

More information is available on the Internet at: <http://www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith/retreat05.htm>.

Information packets with reservation forms are available on the Internet at: www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith/2005/05RET2.pdf.

For more information call (856) 768-9228.

Thanks again for anything you can do to post notices in parish bulletins or even with local prayer groups.

(Kathleen as well as all the PFMC Volunteer Staff)

CALENDARS:

In *December*, the Church celebrates the Solemnities of *IMMACULATE CONCEPTION* (8) and *CHRISTMAS* (25), Feasts of *Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph* (26), *Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist* (27), and *Holy Innocents* (28), Memorials of *Saints Francis Xavier* (3), *Ambrose* (7), *Lucy* (13), *John of the Cross* (14) and Optional Memorials of *Saints John of Damascus* (4), *Nicholas* (6), *Juan Diego* (9), *Pope Damasus I* (11), *Jane Frances de Chantal* (12), , *Peter Canisius* (21), *John of Kanty* (23), *Thomas Becket* (29) and *Pope Sylvester I* (31).

In *January*, the Church celebrates the Solemnities of *Mary, Mother of God* (1), *Epiphany of the Lord* (2), Feasts of *Baptism of the Lord* (9) and *Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle* (25), Memorials of *Saints Elizabeth Ann Seton* (4), *John Neumann* (5), *Anthony, Abbot* (17), *Agnes* (21), *Francis de Sales* (24), *Timothy* (26), *Titus* (26), *Thomas Aquinas* (28) and *John Bosco* (31) and Optional Memorials of *Saints Genevieve* (3), *Raymond of Penyafort* (7), *Hilary* (13), *Pope Fabian* (20), *Sebastian* (20), *Vincent* (22), *Angela Merici* (27), and *The Most Holy Name of Jesus* (3) as well as *Blessed Andre Bessette* (6). Most Church calendars recognize *Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr.* (15) (observed) (17).

AROUND the *PFMC* AREA

Please review the announcements on pages 3 through 6, and the orchid four page information sheet with reservation forms for the **2005 RC, 3DX, YT** from *Friday, 4 February 2005* through *Ash*
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Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC), A Religious Association, Inc.

NON-PROFIT and IRS Code 501(c)(3) TAX EXEMPT

<http://www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith>

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The PILGRIM, Volume 15, Number 12 – December 2004

**PRIORITY DATED
RELIGIOUS MATERIAL**

**Mailed early AM,
Friday, 12/10/2004**

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PLEASE DON'T THROW THIS AWAY!!

If you do not desire to read "*The PILGRIM*," please give it to a Marian prayer group or return it to sender. If address has changed, please send a change of address.

If there is no time to read it all now, please put it with other reading material in a place where you can read at least an article per day until the next issue arrives. We operate on divine providence and the kind donations of those who can afford to support us. **PRIESTS!** Please note that **HOMILY** ideas have come from priests reading articles in "*The PILGRIM!*"



Wednesday, 9 February 2005. We need reservations at the *PFMC* and the **HILTON HOTEL** before *1/7/2005*. If we are unable to meet our room block commitment (496 room-nights over the six days), this may be our last **RC/3DX/YT** in a hotel setting. The costs to arrange for events in a hotel or convention center environment thus allowing more people than fit in a local Catholic retreat house setting to come together for prayer and good teaching for a 3 to 6 day retreat conference are staggering and mind boggling. We need lots of help and prayers.

Please help get the word out on *PFMC* activities, events, and pilgrimages. Ask your pastor to post bulletin notices and allow information sheets to be put out in church. Please do not put material in your church without obtaining permission from the pastor or his official and authorized representative.

POPE JOHN PAUL II PRAYER INTENTIONS for DECEMBER

VATICAN CITY, DEC 1, 2004 (VIS) - The Holy Father's general prayer intention for the month of *December* is: "That children may be considered as precious gifts of God and may be given due respect, understanding and love."

His missionary intention is: "That Jesus Christ's Incarnation may be the model of genuine inculturation of the Gospel."

(JPIL-PRAYER INTENTIONS/DECEMBER/... VIS
041201 (70) e-mail: *Wednesday, December 01, 2004 8:26 AM*)