

Winter 2025-26

Marian Helper

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Your offering helps support the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception.

The Marian Fathers are blessed with an abundance of vocations, thanks to the grace of God and the continued prayers and support of all our Marian Helpers. It's been a banner year of celebrations and new horizons, including the ordination of Fr. Alexander Pumphrey, MIC (assembled on our cover with fellow Marians, clerics, and the ordaining Bishop on the National Shrine steps) and a new seminary destination in California.

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MISSION STATEMENT

MARIAN HELPER is intended to serve members of the Association of Marian Helpers (AMH), a spiritual benefit society of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The magazine seeks to provide spiritual nourishment, education about the Catholic faith, and information about the mission and good works of the Marians. It also provides information about Association services and presents opportunities to support the mission and good works of the Congregation. *MARIAN HELPER* is published quarterly by the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception. It is sent free of charge to active members of the Association. Printed in the USA with ecclesiastical approval. Copyright © 2025 Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. All rights reserved. Send all correspondence to: Association of Marian Helpers, Editorial Dept., Eden Hill, Stockbridge, MA 01263. Email: editorial@Marian.org Website: Marian.org

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Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception

The Marian Fathers are a Congregation of nearly 500 priests and brothers in 20 countries around the world.

We support the Holy Father and embrace the official teachings of the Catholic Church in our special calling to:

- Spread devotion to Mary as the Immaculate Conception.
- Offer our lives for the Holy Souls in Purgatory, especially the victims of war and disease.
- Operate publishing apostolates and assist where the need is greatest in parishes, shrines, and missions.
- Promote the Divine Mercy message and devotion.
- Organize people of good will to work with and through us to bring Christ everywhere.

Association of Marian Helpers — Join us!

Established in 1925, the Association of Marian Helpers is a spiritual benefit society that prayerfully and financially supports the priests and brothers of the Congregation of Marian Fathers.

Your enrollment means that, by a decree of the Holy See, you share in these graces:

- A daily Mass offered for all Marian Helpers.
- A share in the prayers, good works, and merits of the Marian priests and brothers around the world.
- A special Mass offered on feast days of our Savior and His Blessed Mother.
- A monthly Mass on each First Friday and each First Saturday.
- A Mass offered for deceased members on All Souls' Day.
- The perpetual Novena to the Divine Mercy.



Sign-up is easy: Visit MICPrayers.org



You Tube



Visit marian.org/social

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT GOD'S MISSION

- **Deepen your commitment of prayer** and support by joining one of our three spiritually nourishing prayer clubs: Marian.org/clubs
- **Support a particular ministry:** Marian.org/give
- **Arrange a special gift** of stock, a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA, a grant from your donor-advised fund, a gift through your will or trust, or annuity: Giving.Marian.org

Call 1-800-671-2020 to make a gift by phone or for assistance.

Free online help for your will, visit Marian.org/will.

A sample form of bequest to the Marians is: *I give and bequeath to the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. (Tax ID #20-8599030), Stockbridge, MA 01262, ___% of my adjusted gross estate (or \$_____, or a specific asset) to be used for its religious and educational purposes.*

CHAPLET CHALLENGE

I joined the Marians in the summer of 1998. As my first year — known in religious life as postulancy — was coming to an end, I got the news that my grandmother had been diagnosed with terminal cancer.

I was upset by this, not only because I loved my grandmother and didn't want to see her die, but also because, for various reasons, I was worried about her salvation. Knowing, however, about the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and the great promise that the Lord gave to St. Faustina (He promises in *Diary*, 1541 to “stand between the dying person and His Father, not as the just judge, but as the merciful Savior” if the Divine Mercy Chaplet is prayed at their bedside), I had hope.

Long story short, I was able to literally be present at the bedside of my grandmother praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy when she passed from time into eternity. It was an incredibly sacred moment, and was a hopeful sign to me that my grandmother departed this world filled with the Lord's saving grace.

Moved by this experience, I carried this practice with me into my ministry as a priest. When I was first ordained, I remember visiting this one woman in the hospital who was dying from liver failure. I asked her if she wanted Confession and she said no. I invited her to pray the Chaplet, and when we finished, she was open to receiving that Sacrament. During my recent 5 ½ years of service at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Parish in Darien, Illinois, I would incorporate the praying of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy when I would go and anoint someone in hospice care.

Now, during my work as “Fr. Joseph, MIC,” I have maintained this practice of praying the Chaplet for the dying by leading a livestreamed Divine Mercy Chaplet for the dying at 3 p.m. EST each Friday. (You can participate in this on our Facebook or Instagram pages [Divine Mercy (official)], DivineMercyPlus.org, or by going to our Divine Mercy app).

What I like about praying the Chaplet for the dying is the hope

that it can bring to a dying soul. Saint Faustina recounts many stories of souls in great torment, even surrounded by demons, on their deathbed. But when she prays the Chaplet for them, the torment vanishes, and peace is given to the souls. This peace is a hopeful sign that the soul has — in their last moments — repented of their sins and turned back to the Lord and His offer of mercy. Filled with His grace, they can then die a happy death in the hope of attaining eternal life.

But the Divine Mercy Chaplet isn't just meant to bring hope to dying souls; it is also meant to bring hope to any situation where human misery needs to encounter God's merciful help.

My dear Marian Helpers, as we come to the end of another year and begin a new one, I would like to challenge you to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet every day. I know many of you do. But if you do not, I would like to encourage you to make this a part of your prayer routine. It only takes about 7 minutes of your time. But in that short time, it will be one of the most powerful ways that you can maybe help to bring salvation to a dying soul, conversion to a hardened sinner, and peace to a world that is so longing for it.

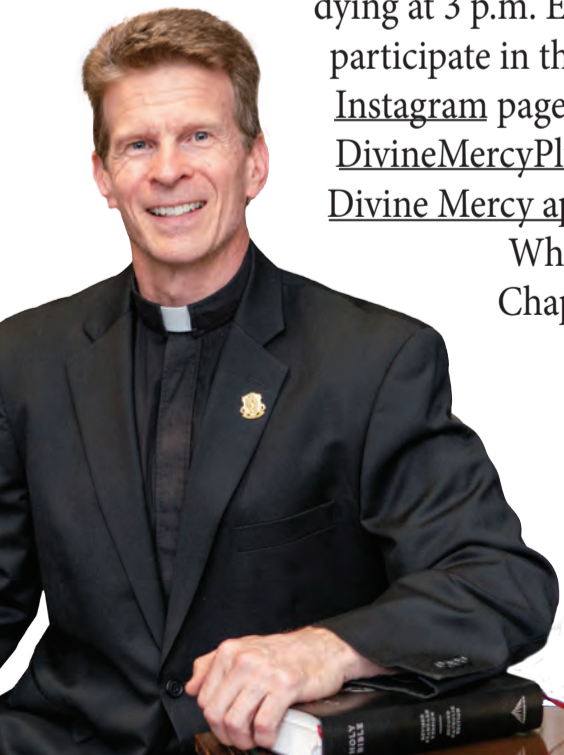
And, lastly, I would love it if you could share with us the stories of the graces you receive or even have already received as a result of praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet! You can email them to editorial@Marian.org, including your name, the best way to contact you, and your testimony of God's merciful grace.

Praying the Chaplet is a fruitful way to counteract the evil of our times.

Let's pray it together “in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.”

God bless you.

Fr. Joseph, MIC



“Father Joseph, MIC,” is the honorary title of the director of the Association of Marian Helpers, currently Fr. Mark Baron, MIC. Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet live with Fr. Mark every Friday at 3 p.m. ET on Instagram, Facebook, and DivineMercyPlus.org.



Ortrud and Germain Bianchi on their wedding day, Aug. 15, 1968, and visiting the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy this year on their 57th anniversary.

PADRE PIO: OUR SPIRITUAL FATHER

By Marian Friedrichs

An unexpected death. A thwarted wedding. A brother's mental illness. The prospect of a hungry night on the street. And a kindly priest named Padre Pio. Marian Helpers Ortrud and Germain Bianchi from Somers, Connecticut, have an amazing family saga to tell. "Our lives revolve around how God can bring good out of suffering," says Ortrud.

And not many couples can claim to have had their engagement ring and wedding rings blessed by the future saint, when they were wed at the church of Our Lady of Grace in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, on the Solemnity of the Assumption, Aug. 15, 1968. Padre Pio's wedding gift to the couple was a picture of Mary and the Christ Child, which he signed on the back with a prayer that "the Virgin Mary hold you tightly in her love."

Just over a month later, the future saint was called home.

A mother's example

The story begins in 1945. Ortrud Schumann was born in Germany and grew up in a poor, non-religious household

with five older siblings and a divorced mother. When Ortrud was a teenager, her maternal grandmother died suddenly.

"My mother realized that life can end abruptly," Ortrud recalls. "She began to practice her Catholic faith with great fervor."

For a long time, Ortrud resisted her mother's attempts to bring her to the practice of faith. Then, one day, Ortrud's mother handed her a pamphlet containing passages from the *Diary of Sister Maria Faustina Kowalska*. The *Divine Mercy* devotion had not yet been approved by the Church, and Ortrud never knew where her mother got the pamphlet.

"It must have touched her," she says. But the writings of a Polish nun did not interest Ortrud. Yet, in order to have

something to say when her mother asked her opinion, she decided to read one page. Ortrud opened the pamphlet to Jesus' invitation for every soul, no matter how sinful, to draw close to His merciful heart. Unexpectedly, the doors of Ortrud's soul flung open.

"I was instantly converted," she said. "I never looked back."

A father's example

Meanwhile, halfway across the world in Yonkers, New York, Germain Bianchi and his family faced their own challenges. Germain's oldest brother suffered from schizophrenia, and the doctor told his parents that they had caused the illness by forcing their children to pray the Rosary. Germain's father told him, "If I had my life to live over again, I would become a Catholic psychiatrist!"

"Well," thought Germain, "I do have my life to live, and I *will* become a Catholic psychiatrist."

Germain completed the required pre-medicine courses, but his grades were not high enough for acceptance into any American medical school. Because of his family's Italian heritage, Germain decided to apply to medical school in Italy. He was accepted and began his studies in Rome.

Meeting Padre Pio

When Ortrud and her mother made their own journey to Rome from their home in Austria, it was to attend the wedding of Ortrud's brother. But the necessary paperwork had been lost. "Everyone was devastated," she recalls.

Ortrud's mother suggested they redeem the trip by driving to San Giovanni Rotondo to see a priest she had heard about. His name was Padre Pio; he bore the stigmata and could read souls. The others agreed.

Ortrud came away from Padre Pio's Mass in the church of Our Lady of Grace thinking it was a shame that people crowded the feeble old priest instead of focusing on Jesus in the Eucharist. She doubted she would ever make a return visit to San Giovanni Rotondo.

Two years later, however, Ortrud reluctantly agreed to accompany her mother on a second pilgrimage. This time, Padre Pio placed his hand on Ortrud's head in blessing. Ortrud instantly felt a powerful bond form between herself and the man she would henceforth consider her spiritual father. She finally understood. The people jostling endlessly around Padre Pio were not pestering an old man while

disregarding Jesus; rather, they were following a holy priest as he led them to Jesus.

On a later trip to San Giovanni Rotondo, Ortrud insisted on staying behind, despite having no money for food, lodging, or travel home. After the church doors were locked, Ortrud stood alone in the darkening street, wondering where she could go.

Soon she was approached by a young American man. It was Germain Bianchi. He had learned about Padre Pio from a neighbor back in Yonkers and had come to see the priest during a vacation from medical school. Upon hearing Ortrud's plight, Germain found a place for her to stay and brought her food.

When Ortrud found a ride back to Austria, she arranged for Germain to come along as far as Rome. Ortrud asked Germain to pray a Rosary with her in the car, and when it was time to part ways, Germain gave her his card and placed his hand on her shoulder. "I experienced the exact same powerful feeling as when Padre Pio put his hand on my head," she says.

Germain decided on that drive that he had found his wife — the first woman who had ever invited him to pray a Rosary with her. Later he asked Padre Pio's advice, and the saintly priest said, "Marry her."

Pios and Pias

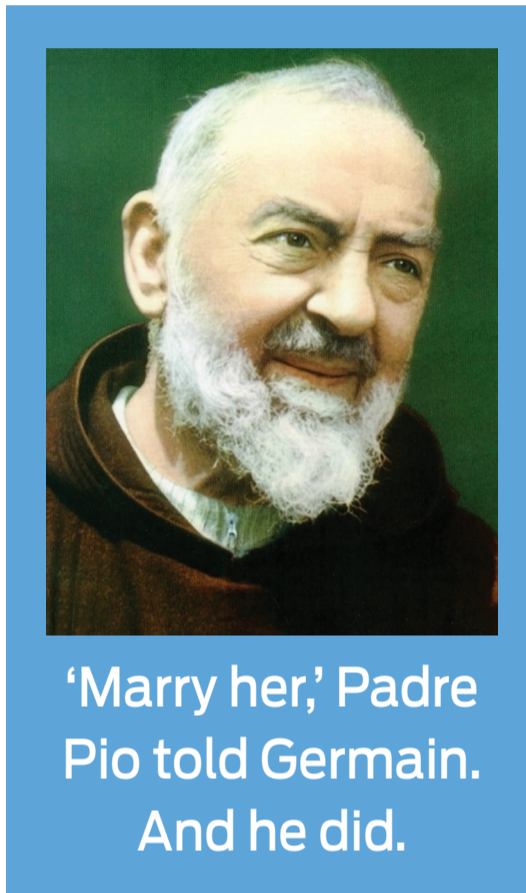
Now married 57 years, Germain and Ortrud taught their eight children to

regard Padre Pio as a spiritual father. Each has the middle name of Pio or Pia, and the couple's very parenting was influenced by their acquaintance with the saint. Padre Pio wanted only that his spiritual children get to Heaven; he "never tried to take away crosses," but told everyone what he or she most needed to hear, even sending pilgrims out of the confessional if they were immodestly dressed.

Likewise, Ortrud and Germain prioritized their children's souls above all.

"I didn't hope that they would be great musicians or great athletes or make a lot of money," Ortrud says. "I just wanted them to love Jesus and His Blessed Mother." And when struggles came, Ortrud told her children, "You can do this. Just keep going. Trust God. He's a father seeing us through all difficulties."

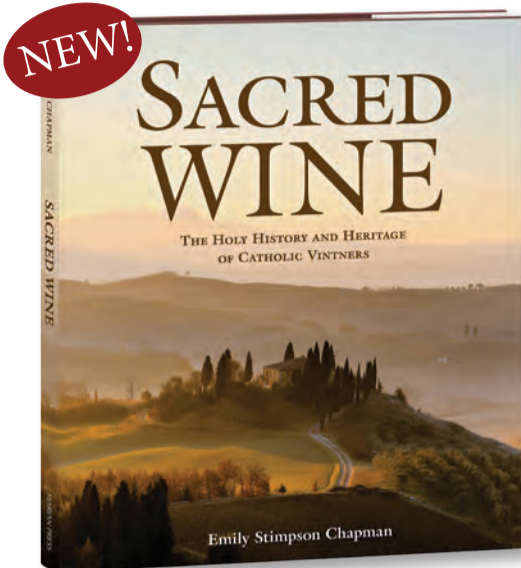
Indeed, Germain and Ortrud know from experience that God's greatest blessings often come through those very difficulties. And sometimes, through the help and friendship of a saint.



FATHER JOSEPH'S PICKS

Visit ShopMercy.org/b68 or call 1-800-462-7426.

As we enter into Advent and prepare for Christmas, equip your family and friends with resources to help them grow in their faith and come to a better relationship with the Holy Family, and through them, with the whole world. And these books make great Christmas presents!



SACRED WINE: THE HOLY HISTORY AND HERITAGE OF CATHOLIC VINTNERS

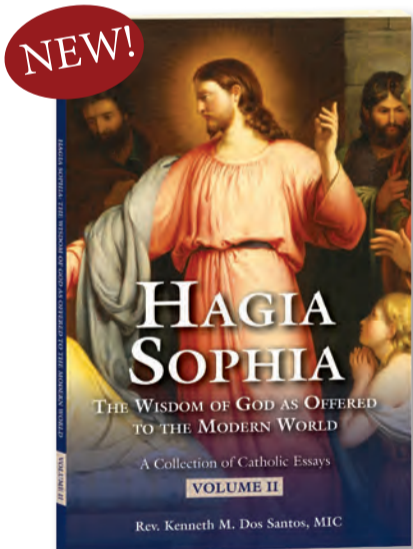
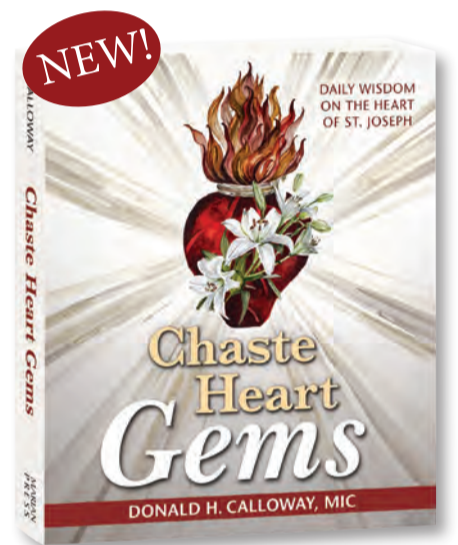
BY EMILY STIMPSON CHAPMAN

In this beautifully illustrated hardcover book, savor the fascinating stories of 12 wineries in Italy, France, and Spain, many former or current monasteries, whose existence have been shaped by the Catholic faith. Visit the cellars where the bottles age and pray as the men and women who first grew the grapes once prayed, or still do! In each, the history first written by the Benedictines, Cistercians, Carthusians, Franciscans, and more lives on. Cheers! \$34.95. **B68-SWBK**

CHASTE HEART GEMS: DAILY WISDOM ON THE HEART OF ST. JOSEPH

BY FR. DONALD CALLOWAY, MIC

Over the centuries, Catholic spirituality has always given priority and special emphasis to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and rightly so. Yet, it cannot be denied that the Heart of St. Joseph is intimately linked with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. These three Hearts are inseparable. In this latest entry of his popular *Gems* series, Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC, urges us to reflect more deeply on the Heart of St. Joseph and ask for the intercession of St. Joseph in your daily life. \$16.95. **B68-CHGEM**




HAGIA SOPHIA: THE WISDOM OF GOD AS OFFERED TO THE MODERN WORLD, VOLUME II

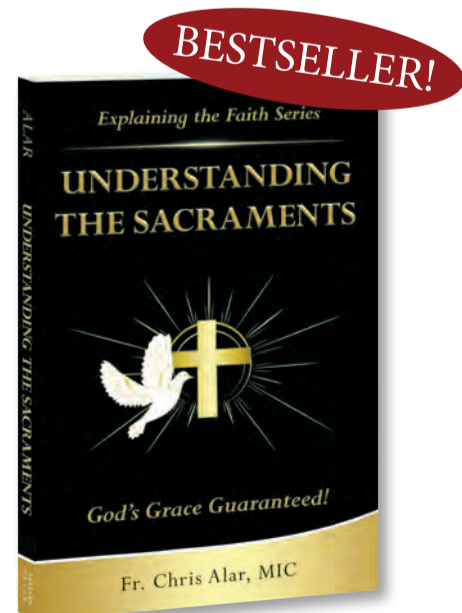
BY FR. KENNETH M. DOS SANTOS, MIC

Father Dos Santos' new collection of essays is, according to Bishop Robert McManus, "a timely and helpful contribution to the on-going work of the New Evangelization, to re-introduce to the People of God and to the entire world the person and message of Jesus Christ who is the Truth of God made flesh." \$10.95. **B68-HAGIA**

UNDERSTANDING THE SACRAMENTS: GOD'S GRACE GUARANTEED!

BY FR. CHRIS ALAR, MIC

Why is the Catholic Church different from any other church? It has the seven Sacraments in their fullness — not just symbols, but God's guaranteed grace! They are biblical, instituted by Christ and entrusted to His Church. In the Sacraments, it is Christ Who acts and communicates His grace! In this latest entry in his *Explaining the Faith* series, Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, answers such questions as: Why do we baptize infants? Where is Confession in the Bible? Is my marriage valid? And many more! \$16.95. **B68-UNDB** 





GO WEST, YOUNG MEN

After my retreat and vacation this year, I had the opportunity to visit our Marian houses in the United States, which is something that we do every three years during a General Visitation.

Father Jovanete Vieira, MIC, my Vicar General, flew from Rome to join me for the visitation.

You'll read about a new development this year in the American Province on [page 12](#). The decision was recently made to send our seminarians to a new seminary for their theological training: St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California, the seminary of the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

So after we finished our visitation of our Marian Formation House in Steubenville, Ohio, Fr. Jovanete and I headed west. It's easy to forget how large the United States is. Our flight took about five hours and there is a three-hour time difference between the East Coast and the West Coast. It took some time for our body clocks to adjust after we arrived.

We received a warm welcome from our Marians, from seminary staff, and from other seminarians. Our men are blending in well.

Father Jim McCormack, MIC, is the rector of the Marian Residence there where he lives with 10 of our seminarians. They are staying in a wing of St. Patrick's, a beautiful building that's over 100 years old and situated on 40 acres of grounds. Along with our men, St. Patrick's is attended by diocesan seminarians from the U.S. and from other parts of the world, along with some other seminarians from religious communities.

The seminary helps each man to develop and to mature as a person. An individual plan of growth is worked out that is followed through the years of their formation. Formation work is more of an art than a science. There is no one cookie-cutter formula to prepare people for priestly ministry and for perpetual vows.

Saint Patrick's has a fine reputation among Catholic seminaries in the United States. They provide a wonderful, well-rounded formation for the priesthood for the men there on many levels — spiritual, intellectual, apostolic, and human.

Father Andy Davy, MIC, is the superior of the Steubenville House and our Provincial Prefect of Formation. He stays in close contact with the formation staff at St. Patrick's. He and other Marians will come periodically to visit our men there.



Along with all that they are learning there, our seminarians are also gaining valuable pastoral experience: teaching those who want to become Catholic, ministering in a

jail, helping the poor, ministering in a hospital, working in parishes, and offering catechesis to children. Father Jim is also helping out in a nearby parish.

And the setting in itself is a blessing. While there, we visited nearby Stanford University. In the Bay area, there are redwood forests and plenty of places to enjoy the beauty of nature and activities such as hiking and mountain biking.

Although we have Marians who come from California and some Marians have visited there and studied there through the years, we have never had a residence of Marians living in the Golden State. Therefore, this is a new experience for us as a province. Many Marian Helpers from California have been hoping through the years that the Marians would someday do some sort of pastoral ministry in California. Perhaps, if it is the will of God, a door will open for us.

Please keep all of our men in formation in your prayers!

The Most Rev. Joe Roesch, MIC, is the Superior General of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception. He lives in Rome. Listen to his podcasts, including "Saint Faustina's *Diary* in a Year," on TheDivineMercy.org/podcasts and DivineMercyPlus.org/podcasts.



OUR LADY ON HIGH: Father Chris Alar, MIC, gazes up at the miraculous *tilma* of St. Juan Diego in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. He led a pilgrimage in September that took in all of the sacred sites associated with the Patroness of the Americas and the Unborn. (PHOTO BY ANNA NUZZO)



PAPAL SELFIE: Christopher Maffuccio, a spina bifida survivor, had an unforgettable experience while on pilgrimage in Rome and visiting St. Peter's Basilica. "After Mass, I approached a bishop and asked humbly if I might greet Pope Leo," he recalls. "To my amazement, I was led forward. Standing before His Holiness, I felt the weight of years of prayer and hope. That meeting was more than a dream fulfilled — it was a living sign of hope and proof that with God, all things are possible."



FAUSTINA'S FEAST: Nicholas from Everett, Massachusetts, joins "St. Faustina" on the celebration of her feast day, observed this year on Oct. 6. Sunny weather brought hundreds of pilgrims to Eden Hill for the day, which included a special talk by Fr. Chris Alar, MIC.



PILGRIM POOCHES: On Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Fr. Anthony Gramlich, MIC, presided over the annual Blessing of the Animals, including these dogs brought by their proud owners.



MERCY FOR SOULS: The 15th annual Mercy for Souls Conference was held on Sept. 13 at the National Shrine. Father Dan Cambra, MIC, spiritual director of the Holy Souls Sodality, spoke on “Exalting the Cross of Christ by Our Lives and Loves.”

“The Cross is our strength! The Cross is our banner! The Cross is our passport and our proof of God’s love for us all,” Fr. Dan proclaimed.

FATHER & SON: Brother Mark Fanders, MIC, traveled to the Basilica of Mary, Help of Christians, at Holy Hill in Hubertus, Wisconsin, on Sept. 13 for the perpetual vows and diaconate ordination of his son, Scott (now Deacon John Magdalene, OCD), for the Discalced Carmelite Friars, Washington Province. Deacon John Magdalene is a former seminarian for the Marian Fathers. Also making the trip from Stockbridge were Fr. Chris Alar, MIC; Fr. Matthew Tomeny, MIC; Fr. Tyler Mentzer, MIC; Fr. Mark Baron, MIC; and Fr. Michael Baker, MIC.



ON EDEN HILL & BEYOND



ROOF IS ON: Construction continues on the new Monastery and Chapel on Eden Hill, made possible by generous donors to the “Together for Christ and His Church” capital campaign. With the roofs complete, work now heads inside. Follow the progress on [TogetherforChrist.org](https://www.togetherforchrist.org).



POLISH DAY: Under sunny skies, pilgrims gathered on Sept. 20 for the annual Polish Day celebration. Father Kazimierz Chwalek, MIC, joyfully greeted everyone during Mass at the Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine, and then conducted the Way of the Cross in Polish.

#GIVING
TUESDAY

December 2, 2025

Your opportunity to support the
Marian Fathers and their mission!

Visit [Marian.org/GivingTuesday](https://www.marian.org/GivingTuesday) or call 800-462-7426.

Divine Mercy Plus: Ad-free and lots to see!

By Julia Rose

You're one of 500,000 subscribers and as many as 2 million viewers of the Marian Fathers' YouTube channel, Divine Mercy Official. You love the "Explaining the Faith" talks by Fr. Chris Alar, MIC; the daily Mass, Divine Mercy Chaplet, and Rosary; our weekly EWTN program, "Living Divine Mercy"; and a wide array of premium content from the Marian Fathers.

But you loathe — and often find offensive — those advertisements that start at the beginning or pop up in the middle of a video, forcing you to wait patiently until you can hit "skip."

You're not alone. But did you know you can watch the same content, at the same time, completely ad-free?

You can — it's all on the Marian Fathers' streaming website, DivineMercyPlus.org.

About those ads

First, about those YouTube ads. Did you know the Marian Fathers have no control over those ads? It's part and parcel of being on the world's largest video platform, and now second-largest search engine after Google.

"A few years ago, YouTube instituted a policy which puts ads on videos as they see fit, which is unfortunate because now everybody gets ads," explains Zeke Chichester, financial and marketing analyst. "And, the ad choices are based on Google and other browsing histories, so people will get randomly weird ads based on their own browsing choices. Unfortunately, we have no control over that."

But you do! By switching over from YouTube to DivineMercyPlus.org, you can have uninterrupted viewing. There's also a [DivineMercyPlus](http://DivineMercyPlus.org) app for your cellphone or smart TV.

Unlike other streaming platforms, there is no subscription fee. By creating a free account, you can view all of the content from our YouTube channel and create your own watch list and playlist.

"Our goal is to have the videos freely available for anyone to watch," Zeke says.

There's also exclusive programming which only appears on DivineMercyPlus.org, a bonus to viewers. "Gospel Picnic," for example, hosted by Fr. Andy Davy, MIC, introduces children to the Sunday Gospel reading, with a mix of storytelling and humor.



DivineMercyPlus.org allows you to watch, ad-free, "Gospel Picnic" every Wednesday and a new Advent series, premiering Dec. 4.

"The main reason 'Gospel Picnic' is exclusively on DivineMercyPlus.org is to shield young viewers from those YouTube ads," notes Stacey Box, executive producer. "Parents appreciate this, and the program is growing its audience every week."

"Mercy Moments Bible Study" with Fr. Anthony Gramlich, MIC, is another exclusive program. With more than 100 episodes to date, these five-minute videos, arranged by themes like trust, mercy, and Mary, are ideal for Catholics looking for short-form reflections on biblical passages.

"Whether you want a deep dive into theology, a documentary, or something the whole family can watch, it's all right there, easy to find, and centered on the message of God's mercy," adds Stacey.

As the heading on DivineMercyPlus.org states, "Discover free Catholic content, expand and enrich your faith, share with others." Amen! Enjoy streaming!

Download the [DivineMercyPlus](http://DivineMercyPlus.org) app for your phone or TV on Apple, Google, and Amazon, or visit DivineMercyPlus.org/app.

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Please pray for our Marian seminarians as they begin their studies at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California: Br. Jeff Kenney, MIC; Br. Michael Thomas, MIC; Br. Paul Capps, MIC; Br. Alex Luna, MIC; Br. David Bugajski, MIC; Br. Joseph McMahon, MIC; Br. Joshua Massatt, MIC; Br. Jacob Childs, MIC; and Br. Austin Rose, MIC. Not pictured: Br. Hank Bischoff, MIC.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

By Chris Sparks

For years, the Marian Fathers have been invited to open a house in California. For years, it was not the opportune moment. Now, the dream is a reality, and they've arrived in the Golden State.

The first class of 10 Marian men in formation have begun their studies at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California, in the San Francisco Bay Area. The local bishop is Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, long-time friend of the Marian Fathers and advocate of the Divine Mercy message and devotion. The area is home to some of the biggest names in communication, including Meta, parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

And now, it's home to the future Marian priests pursuing their seminary studies.

Why St. Patrick's?

“Various Marians involved with formation and the Provincial Council were tasked with visiting different seminaries in order to choose a school that would provide the best overall formation for our men preparing for the

priesthood,” explains Fr. Jim McCormack, MIC, rector of the Menlo Park Marian Residence. “They visited several different seminaries and, after reporting to our Provincial Superior, Fr. Chris Alar, and the Provincial Council, St. Patrick’s Seminary was chosen.”

The area, Fr. Jim continues, has a thriving population and offers great promise for evangelization in the spirit of the Marian Renovator, Bl. George Matulaitis, to “go where the need is greatest.”

“There are also very many ‘un-churched’ people living in the area,” he says. “It will be a good opportunity for our men to learn to speak and witness to people who may have had no exposure to Christianity in their upbringing, who do not know even the most basic stories from the Bible, and who may even be hostile to the Catholic faith.”

The Marian men in formation at St. Patrick’s join more than 70 seminarians from archdioceses and dioceses in California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, Guam, South Korea, and Tanzania, as well as a small community of Vietnamese religious called Domus Dei and the Contemplatives of St. Joseph (COSJ).

Ministry work

The seminarians have regular meetings with spiritual directors, liturgical formators, psychological and counseling support staff, as well as academic advisers and music instructors.

“We attend different talks and conferences designed to help us love and serve by giving ourselves more fully to the Church’s universal mission of salvation,” notes Br. David Bugajski, MIC. “And we are actively involved in various ministries that include hospice, hospital, jail, catechesis, parish, and other religious and charitable organizations.

“I have met many outstanding men from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures, which has helped me to better appreciate the universal character of the Church and God’s plan of salvation that does not exclude anyone,” he adds. “We are growing our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and being prepared in spirit to share the truth everywhere.”

What is Marian formation?

“Formation” involves training priests and religious on how to live well the specific vocation God is calling them to. Formation for the Marian Fathers typically takes 7-9 years before ordination.

“Formation begins with postulancy, which normally lasts

for one year, although it can be shortened to six weeks if the men have prior experience in another formation environment, such as a previous seminary or a priestly discernment program like the one at Franciscan University,” explains Fr. Jim, who works with Fr. Andy Davy, MIC, head of house in Steubenville, Ohio, and the Provincial Prefect of Formation.

After postulancy, the men enter the one-year novitiate, in which they study and deepen their appreciation of the charism and mission of the Marian Fathers, the history of consecrated life, the life of prayer and discernment, and the evangelical councils, all in preparation for making first vows at the end of that year.

After first vows, those who are studying for the priesthood take classes in philosophy at Franciscan University of Steubenville and can earn a bachelor’s degree if they don’t already have one. Then they go on to St. Patrick’s Seminary and earn a Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree before being ordained, God willing, to the transitional diaconate and ultimately to the priesthood.

Some men do not become priests but are instead called to serve as permanent brothers. Their formation may not be as academically rigorous and can be tailored to the individual gifts and interests of the brothers.

Formation for the permanent brotherhood is a minimum of three years before final vows.

Thank you!

“I see this as an amazing opportunity for our seminarians,” says Fr. Jim. “Never before have we had

such an integrated formation program for our seminarians, covering with such depth all of the necessary dimensions of priestly formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. It is our hope and expectation that this new formation opportunity will help shape our men to become the greatest possible instruments for bringing Mary and Mercy to the whole world.”

All this is made possible by the ongoing generosity of Marian Helpers through the support of the annual Campaign for Holy Priests.

“Thank you, dear Marian Helpers, for being a part of our Marian family and for your prayers and support,” Fr. Jim concludes, “which have helped make this important step in the improvement of our formation program a reality.”

Please visit Marian.org/vocation-support or call 1-800-462-7426 to help grow the next generation of Marian priests and brothers.

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‘We have been wanting to provide a more thorough formation for seminarians that included solid human and pastoral formation.’

VOCATIONS



WELCOME, FR. ALEX: The newest priest for the American Province of the Marian Congregation is Fr. Alexander D. Pumphrey, MIC, ordained to the priesthood on Aug. 16 at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy. The Most Rev. Edward B. Scharfenberger, DD, Bishop of Albany, New York, was the celebrant and conferred the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

In his homily, Bishop Scharfenberger noted how happy Fr. Alex has been to serve as a deacon. “You have nothing to be afraid of. You are not about to lose your diaconate,” he reassured him, for the diaconate, which means “service,” is the foundation of the priesthood.

“A priest who is not a good deacon will not be a very happy priest. The same goes for bishops,” he said. “Every one of us must remember that we are called to serve our Master. And we are called to be His disciples. And the mark of discipleship is service.”

Father Alex is now serving at the Marian Fathers’ Divine Mercy Apostolate in London, England. “I am excited to see where the Lord will lead me, and I hope and pray that He will keep me humble enough to always recognize that He is the one at work, not I,” he says.



TAKES THE CAKE: Upon his return to the Marian Fathers’ Divine Mercy Apostolate in London, Fr. Alex celebrated his first Mass in the chapel, offering blessings at the end. A festive celebration was held in the garden, featuring a cake topped by a likeness of Father in marzipan!





WELCOME, DEACON PATRICK: On Sept. 6, Br. Patrick Lynch, MIC, was ordained to the transitional diaconate, the last step, God willing, on his vocational journey to the priesthood.

The Most Rev. William D. Byrne, Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, celebrated the Mass at the National Shrine and conferred the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

In his homily, Bishop Byrne stressed the ministry of service associated with the diaconate. “Deacon Patrick will carry out a ministry of charity in the name of the whole Church,” he said. “Like Jesus, who appeared in the midst of the disciples, your job is to do the will of God in charity from the heart.”

Deacon Patrick will join Fr. Alex Pumphrey, MIC, in service at the Marian Fathers’ Divine Mercy Apostolate in London, England.

“I am so grateful for all of those who have shown me by their example what it means to serve others with love.” Deacon Patrick says. “In a particular way, I want to thank our Marian Helpers, whose prayers and generosity were a constant support during my formation. May God reward you for all you do for us.”



RENEWAL OF VOWS: On Aug. 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Marian Fathers gathered at the National Shrine to joyfully celebrate the first vows and renewal of vows of Marian seminarians. It was a day filled with grace as our members deepened their commitment to a life of prayer, service, and trust in the Lord’s Divine Mercy. Please continue to pray for our men in formation!

PERPETUAL VOWS: Congratulations to Br. Jeffrey Kenney, MIC, on professing his perpetual vows on Aug. 14 at the National Shrine. Now a full member of the Marian Congregation, Br. Jeff pledged to perpetually live “in conformity to the life of Christ, who was poor, chaste, and obedient,” taking vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience.





Father Mark Baron, MIC, leads the First Saturday devotions at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy.

CENTENNIAL OF FIVE FIRSTS

By Chris Sparks

One hundred years ago, a monthly Marian devotion was born, one that has brought countless graces with a renewed focus on the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Our Lady herself explained the Five First Saturdays to Ven. Sr. Lucia dos Santos, one of the Fatima visionaries, on Dec. 10, 1925.

“See, my daughter, my Heart encircled by thorns with which ungrateful men pierce it at every moment by their blasphemies and ingratitude,” Our Lady said. “Tell them that

I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, in order to make reparation to me, on the First Saturday of five successive months, go to

Confession, receive Holy Communion, say five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for a quarter of an hour, meditating on the ... mysteries of the Rosary.”

Why five?

Why five First Saturdays in particular? Jesus Himself explained this later to Sr. Lucia on May 29-30, 1930:

Daughter, the motive is simple: There are five kinds of offenses and blasphemies spoken against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

First: blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception

Second: against her Virginity.

Third: against the Divine Maternity, refusing, at the same

time, to receive her as the Mother of mankind.

Fourth: those who seek publicly to implant, in the hearts of children, indifference, disrespect, and even hate for this Immaculate Mother.

Fifth: those who revile her directly in her sacred images.

Here, dear daughter, is the motive that led the Immaculate Heart of Mary to petition Me to ask for this small act of reparation.

Still relevant

Why are we still talking about the First Saturday devotion 100 years later? Our Lady set it as one of two crucial conditions for the Triumph of her Immaculate Heart, the conversion of Russia, the end of the reign of the errors of Russia, and the start of an era of peace — in other words, for the end of the present times of difficulty, and the launch of a remarkably blessed time. Let's listen to Our Lady's own words:

You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war [WWI] is going to end: but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the Pontificate of Pius XI [WWII].

When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.

To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays. If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated.

In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world.

Holy Mother Church therefore bears witness to the fulfillment of Our Lady's prophecy — the destruction of many nations. World War II, followed by the Cold War, followed by terrorism, the clergy abuse scandal, Putin's wars, and more. We have not seen a conversion of Russia.

It depends on us

Fatima's completion depends on Catholics responding to Our Lady's

calls. This requires us to make the five First Saturdays, as the Marian Fathers faithfully do at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy, every month at 11 a.m. ET. The devotions are livestreamed on DivineMercyPlus.org and Facebook.

Years ago, Fr Donald Calloway, MIC, shared a powerful story told by the late Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, MIC. While in Japan attending an international Christian conference, Fr. Seraphim met a priest who was approached by an ambassador, who said, “War is your fault. You Catholics, all of you — we do not have peace in the world. It is your fault.”

The priest said, “Ambassador, why do you blame us?”

The ambassador said, “I've read about this. The Lady came to you at Fatima, right? She told you what to do to secure peace in the world. Well, there's no peace in the world, so obviously you Catholics haven't done it.”

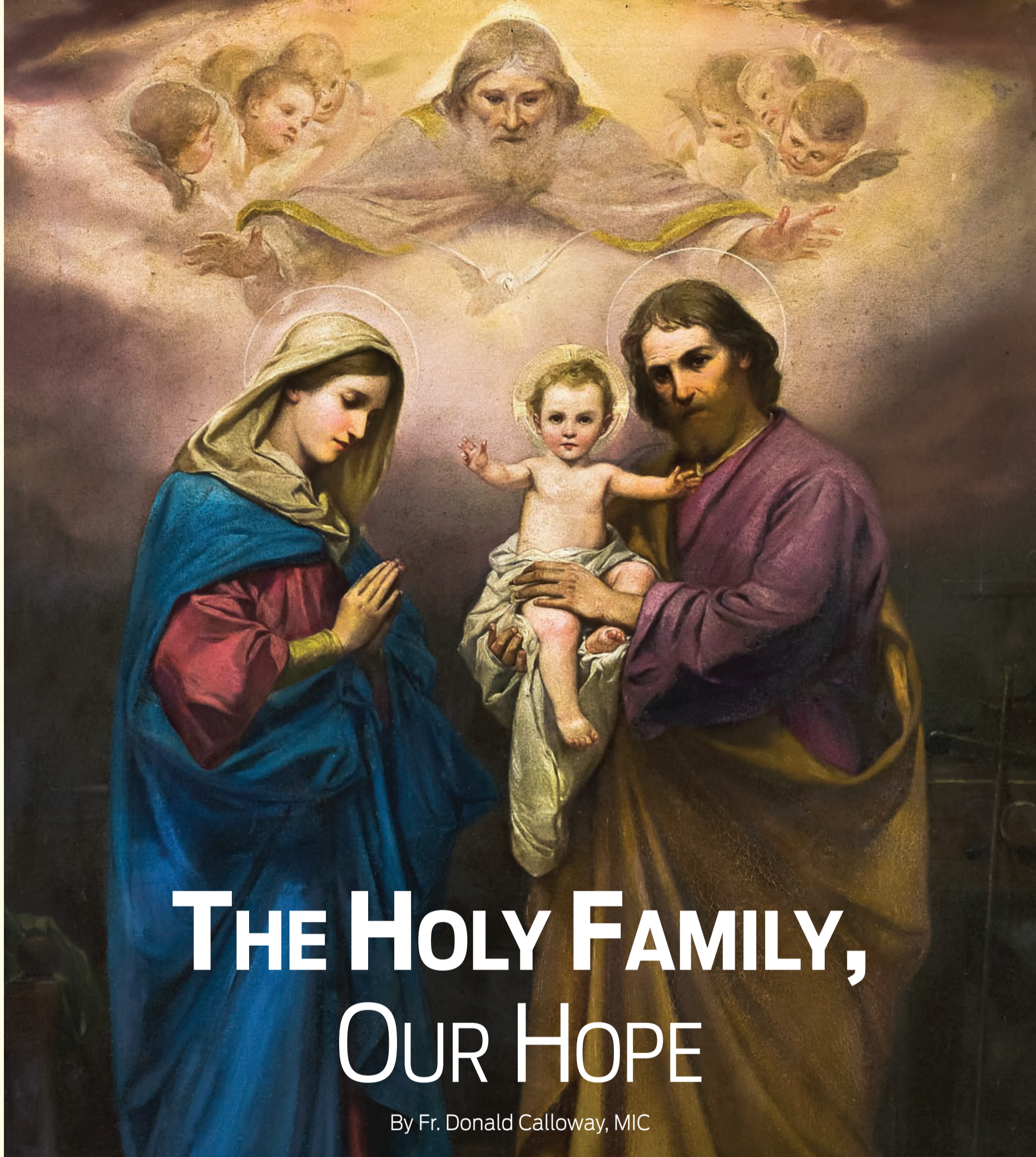
The priest had to acknowledge that the ambassador was correct, but still tried to protest, saying, “Isn't peace everyone's responsibility?”

The ambassador was vehement. “No, she came to you Catholics. Not to Buddhists. Not to Hindus. She came to you, and it is your responsibility.”

Food for thought!

In this 100th anniversary, let us respond to the calls of Fatima. Let us make the First Saturdays of reparation. Let us work to make them regular practice in our homes, our parishes, and our shrines. Our Lady of Fatima, pray for us! MH

‘You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go. To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.’



THE HOLY FAMILY, OUR HOPE

By Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC

Why is it that the family comes together at Christmas? It's the call of moms and dads everywhere, especially our parents in Christ, to gather at Christmas. Saint Alphonsus Liguori said, "Arise, all ye nobles and peasants; Mary invites all, rich and poor, just and sinners, to enter the cave of Bethlehem, to adore and to kiss the feet of her new-born Son ... Let us enter; let us not be afraid."

Gather together

It's through the Holy Family that all families are gathered together at Christmas. Mary and Joseph gather their family together at Christmas, just as once they gathered all their guests into the stable. Even though the cave and stable may seem like the last place you would want to entertain your Christmas guests, St. Alphonsus adds, "now that [Jesus] is born and is lying on the straw, the cave is no longer horrible, but [has] become a paradise." The Holy Family makes the inhospitable place into a beacon of hospitality for shepherds and kings alike and for us. They do this, however, not through rich adornments and decorations, but the warmth of their love.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta offered this prayer for families at Christmas: "My prayer for you is that when Christ comes to you in Christmas, he may find in you a warm home, warm love like that of a heartful of love, like that of a simple shepherd who was the first one chosen to see Christ."

Family time

Christmas spent with family may often seem like a time of contention and strife. Families can be so divided and broken. Nevertheless, despite all the odds against it, Christmas with family is often a place of healing, not hardship. This is true for individual families because it's true for the whole human family.

This is true because of the first Christmas in Bethlehem, writes Pope St. John Paul II: "A helpless Newborn Child in a lowly cave restores dignity to every life being born, and brings hope to those overcome by doubt and discouragement. He has come to heal life's wounds and to restore meaning to death itself."

It's to be hoped that we are reminded that the Nativity scene is not just a quaint, sentimental ornament that decorates our homes during Advent and Christmas. The Holy Family is the foundation of all homes, the new beginning of the entire human story.

Time to consecrate!

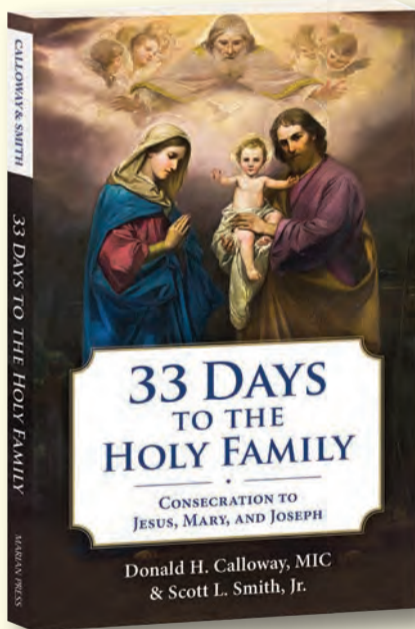
That's why my new book, *33 Days to the Holy Family: Consecration to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph*, written with Scott L.



We invite you to send us your intentions for the Three Christmas Masses on Dec. 25 at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy. Visit Marian.org/b68 to offer your intentions.

babies and children.

Now is the time to promote and defend the family and the Holy Family! Now is the time to be consecrated to the Holy Family! This is why we need another 33-day consecration book.



To order *33 Days to the Holy Family: Consecration to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph* (Product code: B68-HF33D), visit ShopMercy.org or call 1-800-462-7426.

suggestions for when to start and finish so that your consecration day occurs on a liturgical feast associated with the Holy Family. It's that simple.

As you embark on this 33-day journey, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and inspire you to always live under the watchful care of the Holy Family.

Let the journey begin!

Smith, Jr., is so important.

You most likely would agree that there is a lot of confusion today regarding the family. No matter where you look, governments, organizations, and institutions are promoting new definitions of family and marriage, women and men. They can't all be right! Shouldn't there be a God-given blueprint for this stuff, models that we can look to in order to know what these things actually are?

The answer is yes. Catholicism has the blueprints! It's Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the Holy Family. The Holy Family serves as the pattern and model for marriage and family, demonstrating what these are, as well as the correct understanding of masculinity and fatherhood, femininity and motherhood,

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are our way out of the mess we're in. They're the answer! With their guidance, and by consecrating ourselves to them, we can help restore order and common sense to a straying civilization.

33 Days

33 Days to the Holy Family follows a pattern similar to all the other 33-day consecration books. It's a book for everyone — individuals, families, parishes, prayer groups, etc. It's not an academic book but presents an easy formula for you to follow daily.

Once you pick a start date, simply follow the instructions for each day until you reach Day 33 and consecrate yourself to the Holy Family. A consecration chart offers

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A CAROL AT CHRISTMAS

By Fr. Alex Pumphrey, MIC

I have a confession to make, dear reader: I have never read *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. I have, however, watched The Muppets' version of *A Christmas Carol* several times and, although one may find fault with my basing this article on a movie instead of a timeless piece of classical literature, I think the addition of singing puppets and corny jokes more or less balances things out.

We may not live in Victorian England, but it seems to me that there are plenty of Scrooges around these days. People may not be as curmudgeonly or rude as Scrooge, but society

seems determined to place money and the accumulation of it as the goal and purpose of our lives. We even see this in our interactions with one another.

What's usually the first thing you ask someone when you meet them? We ask them what they do; what their job is; how they make their money. And if someone has a job that is more prestigious (which also usually means it pays more), we are more impressed than if they had a job that paid less.

Money is an important tool, don't get me wrong, and we can do many good things with money. It's required to feed, clothe, house, educate, and care for ourselves and our loved ones.

What matters most

But after reading (or watching) *A Christmas Carol*, we see that what really matters is not money. It's our friends and loved ones, the community of faith and prayer that surrounds us.

We see this in the closing chapters of *A Christmas Carol*, during Christmas dinner with Scrooge, his nephew Fred, and the Cratchits, and other guests, and we see this in the quiet peace and joy that the Holy Family shared, tucked away in the stable in Bethlehem.

We rejoice in the gifts that God has given us and take time to appreciate all of the loved ones in our lives. We also recognize that so many others in this world do not have the gifts that we have. Like Scrooge, we realize that money itself is a gift to be used ... and to be given away.

Christmas is about a lot of things, one of which is the realization that, as St. Paul says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Additionally, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews exhorts us: "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God" (Heb 13:16).

As part of your Christmas preparations, I encourage you to give from what you have, whether that be a financial donation, giving of your time to assist a charity, or visiting those who are ill, homebound, or lonely, and, of course, giving the gift of prayer, which is the cheapest and yet most valuable gift of all!

The three ghosts of Christmases Past, Present, and Future showed Scrooge how his love of money had twisted his view on life and caused him and others pain. He sought to ease that pain by collecting and amassing more and more money . . . only to make things worse. He learned that heal-

ing and joy were found in giving, in helping, and in loving. He felt blessed when he gave, just as St. Paul said.

A London Christmas

Christmas is a time of joy and a time of coming together to celebrate the things that really matter: friends, family, and faith (and food, too!). Scrooge was given the chance to start over; to realize the mistakes he had made in his life, and to move forward a changed man. We have that same opportunity, too, given to us by Jesus, Whose birth we celebrate during this holy and blessed time.

As Providence would have it, I live in London . . . not Victorian London, mind you, but the modern-day version. Obviously, being far from home, especially during the holidays, is difficult, but thankfully, there is a wonderful Catholic community here in London, and I've even met up with a few Americans, too.

I will spend my first Christmas here in the UK like the characters from *A Christmas Carol*: united with friends and loved ones, visiting [Marian Helpers](#) and others, and doing what I can to bring some Christmas cheer and joy to everyone I meet. I'm sure I'll be invited to a party or two, and hopefully there will be some

mince pies there!

I suppose I might find myself giving and receiving presents on "Boxing Day" (Dec. 26) instead of on Christmas Day (although in my family, we do it on Christmas Eve, but we're a bunch of wacky Germans). Thankfully, the extra day might give me time to do some last-minute preparations!

And so, in closing, I echo the words of Tiny Tim: "A Merry Christmas to us all; God bless us, every one!"



'At Christmastime we rejoice in the gifts that God has given us and take time to appreciate all of the loved ones in our lives. We also recognize that so many others in this world do not have the gifts that we have. Like Scrooge, we realize that money itself is a gift to be used . . . and to be given away.'



CELEBRATE AMERICA 250 WITH MARY!

By Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle

Next year is a big year for the United States: the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence! As the celebrations begin in 2026 for “America 250,” we’re reminded of Our Lady’s special role in the founding of our country and her ongoing protection and intercession. “Our Lady, the Immaculate Conception” is patroness of the United States, and “Our Lady of Guadalupe” is patroness of all the Americas as well as the unborn.

Let’s celebrate our country with Our Lady under two titles!

Immaculate Conception

It goes without saying that the Marian Fathers are deeply devoted to Our Lady under the title of the Immaculate Conception — and therefore so are all our Marian Helpers. In fact, when the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded by St. Stanislaus Papczyński in 1670, it was the first male religious order named for Our Lady under this title. This was two centuries before the dogma was declared by the Holy See.

“I believe everything that the holy Roman Church believes,” wrote St. Stanislaus, “but first of all I profess that

the Most Holy Mother of God, Mary, was spotless from original sin, from the moment of her conception.”

Since the mid-19th century, the Blessed Mother has been the patroness of the United States. The first Catholic bishop in the United States, John Carroll, was devoted to Mary and placed the first 13 colonies (the Diocese of Baltimore) under her protection in 1792. As more dioceses were created, the American bishops desired a protectress for their new republic.

In 1846, during the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore, they unanimously adopted the Blessed Mother under her title of the Immaculate Conception to be their Patroness.



In 1847, Pope Blessed Pius IX made it official. This was still seven years before Pius IX proclaimed the dogma in 1854 in the encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus*: “the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first instant of her conception ... was preserved immaculate from all stain of original sin.”

And of course, Our Lady of Lourdes, appearing to St. Bernadette, sealed the deal. On March 25, 1858, she told Bernadette, “I am the Immaculate Conception.”

We celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8, a Holy Day of Obligation.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

I tell the story of Our Lady of Lourdes, along with Our Lady of Guadalupe, in my book from Marian Press, *Our Life, Our Sweetness, and Our Hope! Jubilee Pilgrims of Hope with Mary* (Product code: B68-POHB).

Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to St. Juan Diego in 1531 on the exact spot in Mexico where the evil one had earlier inspired the worship of pagan gods. All in all, there were five apparitions.

The fourth apparition occurred in the early morning of Dec. 12, when Our Lady gave Juan these heartfelt and powerful words:

Am I not here, I, who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? Let nothing else worry you, disturb you.

Within the first 10 years after Our Lady of Guadalupe’s apparitions, in which Our Lady manifested herself to the native peoples of Mexico as a sign of her motherly care, it is said that 10 million people were converted from paganism

and accepted the Catholic faith. Conversions continue. This is the largest mass conversion in history.

Pope Venerable Pius XII declared the Virgin of Guadalupe the Empress of all the Americas. In a prayer he composed in 1945, he said, “For we are certain that as long as you are recognized as Queen and Mother, Mexico and America will be safe.”

In 1990, Pope St. John Paul II visited Mexico and beatified Juan Diego. In 2002, this same pontiff canonized him. In 1999, the Holy Father declared Our Lady of Guadalupe the patroness of the Americas. The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is Dec. 12.

Cardinal Raymond Burke fittingly tells us, “Through St. Juan Diego’s humble and courageous cooperation with grace, Our Lady’s intercession transformed the world and brought millions of souls to Christ. It is this same maternal care and protection that we seek today — a care and protection that she will grant us, should we earnestly ask for it.”

Fruits of Hope

To some people, God can seem scary. But a loving Mother is much less scary — and exceedingly welcoming. Remember, Mary knows our needs better than we know ourselves. We should spend more time with loving Mary and ask her to help us build upon the fruits of the Jubilee Year of Hope, fast drawing to a close.

Mary is our hope! Let us never hesitate in turning to our loving Mother and Patroness who always has our salvation on her mind, continually interceding for us. She wants us to be happy in Heaven with her one day, after all.

Let us earnestly beg Mary’s maternal care and protection for our country, praying together in solidarity as we look towards celebrating our country’s 250th anniversary in 2026. MH

**Let us earnestly beg
Mary’s maternal
care and protection
for our country.**



The monks tend the grapevines at the majestic Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore in Italy (below), named by *National Geographic* as one of the “25 Best Places to Travel to in 2025.”

WINE IS SACRED

By Emily Stimpson Chapman

Long before European religious orders turned grapes into wine, and even before Jesus transformed wine into His Blood, the fruit of the vine was almost always more than a drink. It was a witness to the God Who created it, affirming both God’s existence and God’s goodness.



Saint Paul, speaking to the people of Lystra, tells us this in the Book of Acts, saying, “In past generations [God] allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness” (Acts 14:16-17).

There, Saint Paul is echoing the Psalmist, who proclaimed that wine is a gift from God, whose purpose is to “gladden the heart of man” (Ps 104:15).

Monasteries' role

In my new illustrated hardcover book from Marian Press, *Sacred Wine: The Holy History and Heritage of Catholic Vintners*, I tell the story of 12 wineries in Italy, France, and Spain whose existences have been shaped by the Catholic faith.

Most of the wineries began as monasteries. A few still are monasteries. But in each, the history first written by the Benedictines, Cistercians, Carthusians, Franciscans, and more, lives on.

When Rome was still an empire, men and women dedicated to God grew grapes to make their own wine. After Rome collapsed and barbarian tribes destroyed cities and devastated land, more men and women dedicated to God built new monasteries and planted new vineyards. In those monasteries, they offered shelter and safety to local peasants and, with those peasants, monks, brothers, and nuns, replanted ancient vineyards that had gone fallow due to earlier invasions.

Those monks and nuns did more than that, though. They made notes. They shared tips and tricks with other houses from their order. As they grew old, they passed down what they had learned to the younger religious who took their place working the land and pressing the wine. They experimented, trying different grapes in different plots of land and different soils. They took advantage of one of the greatest gifts religious life gave them: time, using it to carefully study and perfect every step of the winemaking process, from cultivating seedlings to bottling the work of their hands.

The result was a revolution in winemaking. *Clos Vougeot*, Chablis, Champagne, *Chenin Blanc* — some of the greatest wines ever made and some of the most significant advances in winemaking, from corks to oaken barrels, owe their origins to Catholic monks and nuns of centuries past.

Even here, in the Americas, this holds true. The first

vineyards established in the New World were often planted by priests and brothers who sailed from Spain to evangelize the Americas. This is especially true in California, where St. Junipero Serra laid the groundwork for the future state's magnificent wine industry, planting the first vineyards and building its first wineries up and down the coast.

Wherever the saint established a mission — Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Clara, San Francisco, Sonoma, and more — he also established a vineyard. He, in turn, relied upon

methods developed by the missionaries he worked with in Mexico and planted a varietal that the Franciscan friars there had cultivated. America's wine industry began with a varietal still called “The Mission Grape.”

Church and wine

In the end, try as we might, there is no untangling the history of the Church and the history of wine. The two have been bound up together since the first grapes burst forth on the first vines, which was perhaps in Eden under the watchful eyes of Adam and Eve.

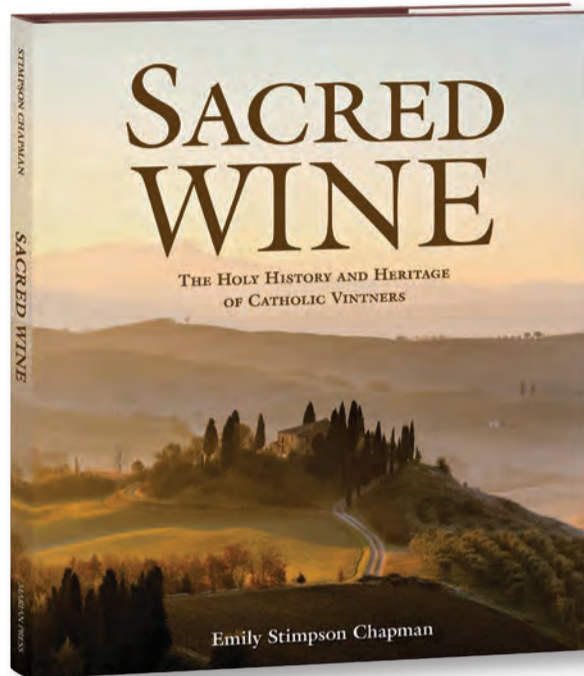
The Church and wine also will continue to be bound up together, right up to the Last Day, when all who have called upon Christ's name and become

adopted sons and daughters of God in Baptism, will sit down at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, where, as Isaiah prophesied:

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken (Is 25:6-8).

Whether you ever manage to taste the bottles written about in my book or only sip close approximations purchased in your local wine store, *Sacred Wine* will help you taste it all with joy and prayer, appreciating more deeply the men and women whose faith helped put that glass in your hand and recognizing that each sip of wine is a gift, “like life to man,” meant to bring “rejoicing of heart and gladness of soul” (Sir 31:27-28).

MH



The ideal Christmas gift! To order *Sacred Wine: The Holy History and Heritage of Catholic Vintners* (Product code: B68-SWBK), visit ShopMercy.org or call 800-462-7426.



By Robert Stackpole, STD

On July 31, Pope Leo XIV accepted the recommendation of members of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints that St. John Henry Newman, the 19th-century English theologian and scholar of early Church history, should be declared the next “Doctor of the Church.” He is the 38th saint to be given that title by the See of St. Peter. Newman will also be co-patron of education with St. Thomas Aquinas.

Newman is renowned for his autobiography *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) that tells the story of his long and deeply considered conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism, but above all for his famous book *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (1845), which has had a profound influence on Catholic theology, and especially on the case for the truth of the Catholic faith.

Holy mysteries

Catholics at the time were troubled by the fact that many historians had clearly shown that a number of important

Catholic doctrines (such as some Catholic beliefs about Mary and the Eucharist) did not seem to be *explicitly* taught either in Holy Scripture or by the early Church Fathers and saints. But Newman reminded his readers that it would be impossible for any individual, or for any community of faith — even the inspired Apostles themselves! — to have a completely *clear and explicit* understanding of all the mysteries of the faith, simply because these are holy mysteries.

No community of finite minds and recovering sinners can *fully* comprehend and *fully* express the truth about the infinite nature of God, or the unfathomable depths of Christ’s

redeeming work and saving love. That's why the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner, SJ once defined a "holy mystery" like this (in paraphrase): *A holy mystery is not something we know nothing about; it's something about which there always remains more to be said.*

The process of unfolding more and more all the implications of the apostolic faith, in every age of the Church, is what Newman called the authentic process of "the development of doctrine." The Second Vatican Council endorsed this in the council document *Dei Verbum* (n.8) that was directly influenced by Newman's writings: "For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her."

What this means is that Catholics do not have to find explicit teaching on (for example) Mary's Immaculate Conception, or the "transubstantiation" of the bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist in order to justify our belief in such doctrines. For we can see the seeds of such revealed truths *implicit* in Holy Scripture and early Tradition, and trace how the Fathers and saints unfolded them with the assistance of the Holy Spirit over many centuries, until those seeds came to full flower in the *explicit* and *definitive* teachings of the bishops and the popes.

Newman and Mary

What fewer people know, however, is that Newman was also deeply devoted to the doctrine of Mary's Immaculate Conception. Indeed, Newman is arguably the most effective defender of Our Lady's graced origin ever to have written on the subject in the English language.

Newman's case for this doctrine comes down to two main points.

First, Newman did not think that the doctrine could be proven from Scripture *alone*. Nevertheless, the New Testament, by implication, is not silent on the matter. Newman claimed that the most proper translation of the angel Gabriel's salutation to Mary in Luke 1:28 should be not "Greetings, O favored one" (ESV), or similar words (as most Protestant translations render that verse), but "Hail, full of grace" (RSVCE).

The Greek word the angel uses here, *kecharitomene*, actually comes from the Greek root-word *charis*, almost always translated as "grace" in English versions of the New Testament. It usually refers to an inner, spiritual gift from God, Newman said, not just to an external blessing or favor of some kind. Thus, at some point in the past, before the angel Gabriel appeared to her, Mary was completely filled with divine grace.

That's great as far as it goes, but it does not tell us *when* that complete transformation by grace happened. To trace it right back to Mary's conception, Newman said in his second point, that we need to see what the earliest Fathers of the Church taught about the Blessed Virgin, and its roots (by implication) in Scripture.

The New Eve

By unanimous consent, the early Fathers of the Church taught that Mary is the New Eve: What Eve had lost for humanity by believing the bad angel (Satan) in disguise (the serpent in the Garden of Eden), Mary recovered for

the human race by believing, and consenting to the call of the good angel (Gabriel): "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

Newman then reasons: If Eve was graced from the first moment of her existence to prepare her for

her special role as "Mother of all the Living" (Gen 3:20), then how can we deny that the Blessed Virgin Mary must have been *at least* as specially graced as Eve was to prepare her for her greater role as Mother of the Son of God, the Savior of the world? He wrote:

I ask, was not Mary as fully endowed [with grace] as Eve? Is it any violent inference that she, who was to cooperate in the redemption of the world, at least was not less endowed with power from on high than she who ... did in the event but cooperate with him for its ruin? If Eve was raised above human nature by that indwelling moral gift we call grace, is it rash to say that Mary had a greater grace?... And if Eve had this supernatural inward gift given her from the first moment of her personal existence, is it possible to deny too that Mary had this gift from the very first moment of her personal existence? I do not know how to resist this inference — well, this is simply and literally the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception ... and it really does seem to me to be bound up in that doctrine of the Fathers, that Mary is the Second Eve.

It certainly does!

Saint John Henry Newman, Proponent of Authentic Developments of Doctrine, and Champion of the Immaculate Conception, pray for us!

Dr. Robert Stackpole is the emeritus director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy and the author of Mary, Who She Is and Why She Matters (Product code: B68-MBK), available on ShopMercy.org.

**Saint John Henry Newman
was deeply devoted to
the doctrine of Mary's
Immaculate Conception.**

Life and Light for Little Ones

By Sara Beth Meyer

The four-book series of *The Gospels for Little Ones* is now complete, with the publication by Marian Press of *The Gospel of John for Little Ones*. Alleluia!

Allison Hsu and I have been heartened by the wonderful response to the series, including from Bishop David Toups of Beaumont, Texas. “I highly recommend *The Gospel for Little Ones* series for any parent or catechist desiring to hand on the faith to our children,” he said. “Beautifully animated and written with great care, your child will learn and grow in their relationship with the Lord Jesus, who loves His little ones!”

John’s challenge

For supporters and eager readers of our earlier volumes on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the anticipation became palpable. Wherever I presented on any of the first three books in *The Gospels for Little Ones* series, a curious listener would inquire, “Are you going to do John?”

After all, of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all share many similarities, and we hear largely from each one during our different lectionary years: Matthew in Cycle A (the cycle for 2026), Mark in Cycle B, and Luke in Cycle C. They are known as the synoptic Gospels, from the Greek for *syn* (with) and *optic* (view), as they focus on many of the same stories and miracles.

The Gospel of John was written much later — and begins much earlier! Whereas the Gospel of Mark (now widely considered the first written of the four) starts with Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan, John begins before the beginning of time.

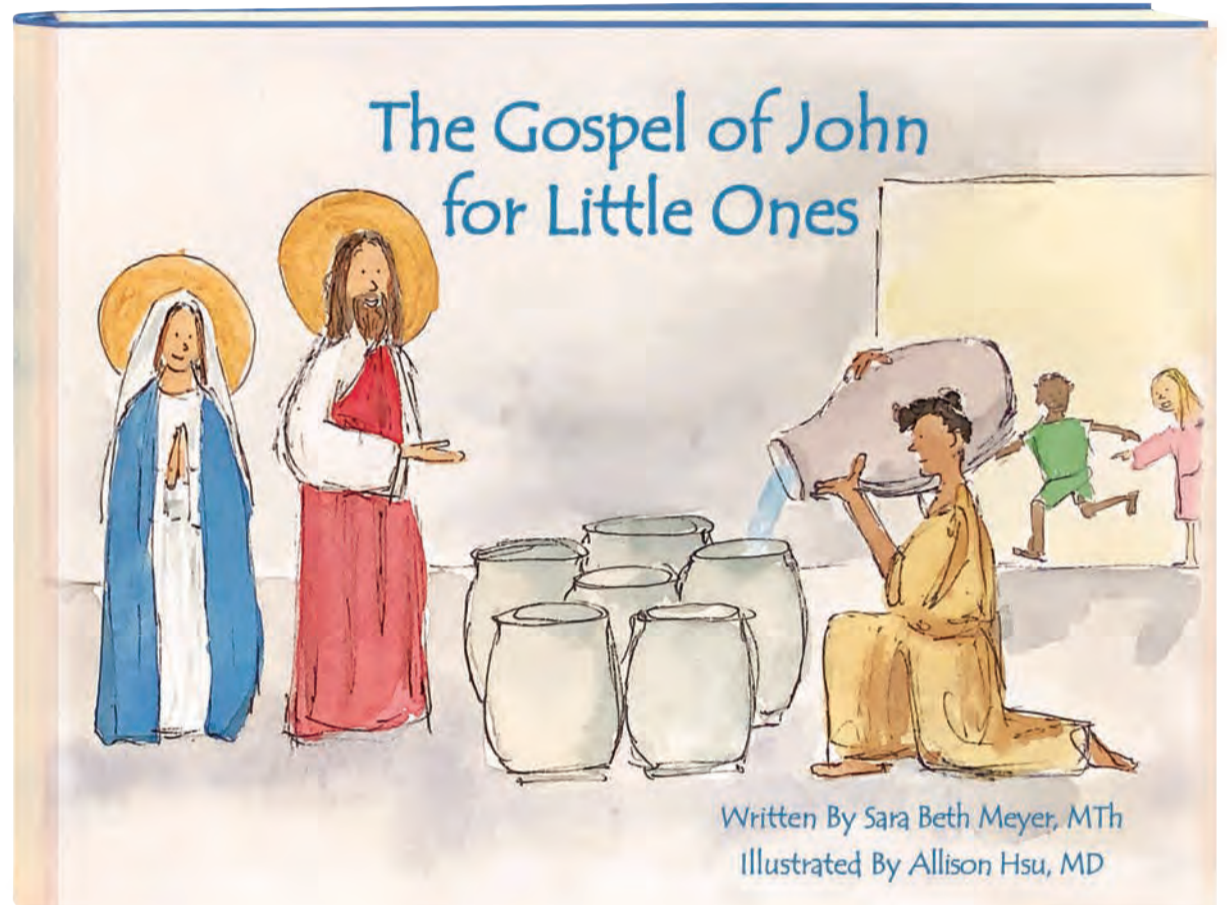
Full of beautiful imagery and deep truths, the Gospel of John uses the philosophical terms and concepts of both the ancient Greeks and Jews, showing their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus: the Word Incarnate.

When approaching this beautiful book, known for its “high Christology,” my illustrating friend, Allison, and I tread lightly, and with a great deal of prayer. After striving to tell familiar and similar stories in three unique ways, we faced the new challenge of sharing profound theological

development and particularly adult themes in simple, rhyming verse appropriate for little ones.

Life and light

Now, we are blessed to share *The Gospel of John for Little Ones*. Readers will immediately recognize the *Little Ones*’ art style and rhythmic telling, now recounting the Gospel of the



To order *The Gospel of John for Little Ones* (Product code: B68-JHNG) and the other three books in the series, visit ShopMercy.org.

Beloved Disciple, chapter by chapter, from the Prologue all the way to the Epilogue.

Here’s a sneak peek at our telling of the first half of John, chapter 1:

Back in the beginning, with nothing seen or heard
There was the Eternal God, and His holy Word.
He was the source of life and light; then to show God’s
grace,
He took flesh and came to dwell among the human race.

In preparing our evergreen Advent wreaths and lighting the candles (symbols of everlasting life and light respectively), let us contemplate the “source of life and light” and consider sharing copies of *The Gospel of John for Little Ones* with loved ones of all ages.

MH

WACOM 6 on deck

The sixth World Apostolic Congress on Mercy (WACOM 6) will take place in Vilnius, Lithuania, from June 7-12, 2026. Registration is now open on the official website, Vilnensis.lt/wacom.

The Archbishop of Vilnius, the Most Rev. Gintaras Grušas, a Lithuanian-American, extended his personal invitation to attend.

“Let’s meet at the Congress in Vilnius — the city chosen by God so that through St. Faustina and Bl. Michael Sopoćko the world would be reminded of His Mercy,” he says.

Vilnius’ role

Vilnius holds a special place in the history of Divine Mercy. With the arrival of Sr. Faustina Kowalska in Vilnius in 1933, devotion to Divine Mercy began to develop. At that time, she experienced visions during which Jesus asked her to remind mankind of God’s mercy and to point out concrete ways to achieve it.

With the help of Fr. Sopoćko, her confessor and spiritual advisor, the first Divine Mercy painting was created in Vilnius (1934), a new order was founded, and the famous Diary was kept.

The prayer of the Divine Mercy Chaplet was also dictated in Vilnius, and in 1935, on the first Sunday after Easter, the painted Image of Divine Mercy was exposed for the faithful for the first time in the chapel of the Gate of Dawn.

The World Congress of Mercy, which takes place every three years in a different country, is an initiative of the Catholic



Church and implemented by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of New Evangelization, in partnership with the diocese of the host country. WACOMs have been held in Rome, Italy (2008); Kraków, Poland (2011); Bogotá, Colombia (2014); Manila, Philippines (2017); and Apia, Samoa (2023).

Participants assemble from all over the world to proclaim and witness to Divine Mercy, the message of infinite love and hope. Attendees listen to testimonials and lectures, participate in cultural events and Mass, and have time for prayer, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and missions.

Merciful lens

Father Chris Alar, MIC, will be one of the speakers at WACOM 6, offering a testimonial on the message and devotion of Divine Mercy. He is leading a pilgrimage to shrines in Lithuania and Poland June 7-17, 2026 that will include two days in Vilnius during

WACOM 6. Registration is now open, and details are posted on Marian.org/events.

“One of the key goals of WACOM 6 is to address contemporary challenges through a merciful lens,” Archbishop Grušas concludes. “This means finding ways to apply the message of Divine Mercy to issues such as poverty, inequality, and environmental stewardship. Our Congress hopes to create a world where Mercy is a guiding principle for individuals and communities alike.”

Visit the official website, Vilnensis.lt/wacom, to register and for more information.

MH



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TAKING CARE OF WHAT MATTERS

Frank has been praying for the souls in Purgatory for most of his life. He recalls, “My fifth-grade teacher, a Dominican sister, told us that the best thing we could do is pray for the soul in Purgatory who is the closest to achieving Heaven and only needs a prayer or two. That stuck to me like glue.”

“I offer prayers for the Poor Souls every day, and each month I schedule a Mass for them in my parish,” Frank adds. “Some people have asked me about it, and I’m grateful for the opportunity to encourage them to remember the Poor Souls also. As Sister taught us, every soul in Purgatory is destined for ‘life everlasting,’ and we can and must pray for them since they can no longer pray for themselves.”

It was a natural step for Frank to join the Marian Fathers’ Holy Souls Sodality. He appreciates this ministry, which not only arranges daily Masses for the souls in Purgatory but also provides valuable education and encouragement through its *For Heaven’s Sake* monthly newsletter and the PrayForSouls.org website.

Frank is happy that helping souls find their way to Heaven is always on his mind. However, for a long time, there was something else on his mind that weighed on him — he needed to update his last will and testament.

He admits, “I made my will more than 25 years ago, and I knew it was outdated. Times change, and making a new will was always on my to-do list — but I just kept putting it off.”

Free and easy will

Then Frank saw an offer to create a will for free. “All the excuses disappeared,” he said. “I thought to myself, ‘I need to do this. Let me check it out.’” He visited Marian.org/Will and found the FreeWill tool.

“The questions were clear, and the process was simple,” he told me. “I actually did the whole thing on my phone!”

“There is another feature that I found very helpful. At the end of the will-making process, FreeWill asked me if my spouse also needed a will. I said yes, and since all the

information for her will would be the same, it allowed me to create a ‘mirror will’ instantly.

“Then, just five minutes after I hit ‘submit,’ I received an email with our wills attached. I printed them, and the next day, my wife and I went to the bank to have our wills witnessed and notarized.

“I was so pleased with the process — and so relieved — that when I saw my son a few days later, I asked him if he had a will. When he said ‘no,’ I told him, ‘You need to get one today, and I know a way for you to get it — for free.’”

Frank called to thank us for offering this reliable, easy tool. “It was so easy to take care of this important task,” he said. “I’m sure there are many people like me who know they need to make a will and could benefit from FreeWill, too.”

Go for it

Knowing that his enthusiasm would inspire others, I asked if I could share his experience with fellow Marian Helpers. Without hesitation, he said, “Go for it. It

can help others.”

Take it from Frank — you don’t have to figure everything out on your own. With FreeWill, you can prepare your will or a revocable living trust, and a durable financial power of attorney — all at no cost. Or, you can create drafts to review with your attorney.

Our goal is to help you complete this important task and give you peace of mind. There’s no obligation to include a gift to the Marians, but that’s easy to do as well if you’d like.

Visit Marian.org/Will to get started. And as always, feel free to reach out to me if you have questions.



Frank’s fifth-grade photo

Ellen Miller is a planned giving manager. Contact her at helpers@Marian.org; (413) 298-1380; or Association of Marian Helpers, Stockbridge, MA 01263. Visit Giving.Marian.org to learn more.



SMART GIVING Year-End Tips

- ✓ Do you have appreciated assets ripe for giving?
 - Stock, mutual funds, crypto, etc.
- ✓ Check your IRA – it's a great way to give, especially if you don't itemize.
- ✓ Tap your Donor-Advised Fund.
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Gifts@Marian.org or 1-800-671-2020
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GRACES RECEIVED

A Double Blessing

While reading *Marian Helper*, I came across a section sharing the graces received through the intercession of Ven. Servant of God Casimir Wyszynski. I was especially moved by the testimonies related to finding employment, as my husband had been searching for a job for two years, and I had also begun seeking a full-time position to better support my home.

Together, we began praying the novena to Ven. Casimir every night. On the fifth day of the novena, I was called for a job interview. I completed two interviews that same week, and during those same days, my husband was also interviewed.

After finishing the novena, the following week, I was informed that I had been selected for the position. Just one week later, my husband received the same wonderful news — he had been chosen for the job he was interviewed for, and now has started in a much better job.

I believe this double grace was granted to us through the powerful intercession of Ven. Casimir, to whom we will never cease giving thanks. We continue to pray for his beatification and are deeply grateful for his presence in our lives.

— AA, email

Both offered new jobs

I saw an article in *Marian Helper* about the powerful intercession of Ven. Casimir Wyszynski for new jobs. My son struggled for months to find a job after college, and I suddenly lost a long-term job, so I prayed a novena for positions for both of us after reading the article. I am so thankful for his intercession because both of us were offered positions.

If anyone is in need of a job, please say a novena to the

Ven. Servant of God Casimir Wyszynski. I believe in his powerful intercession!

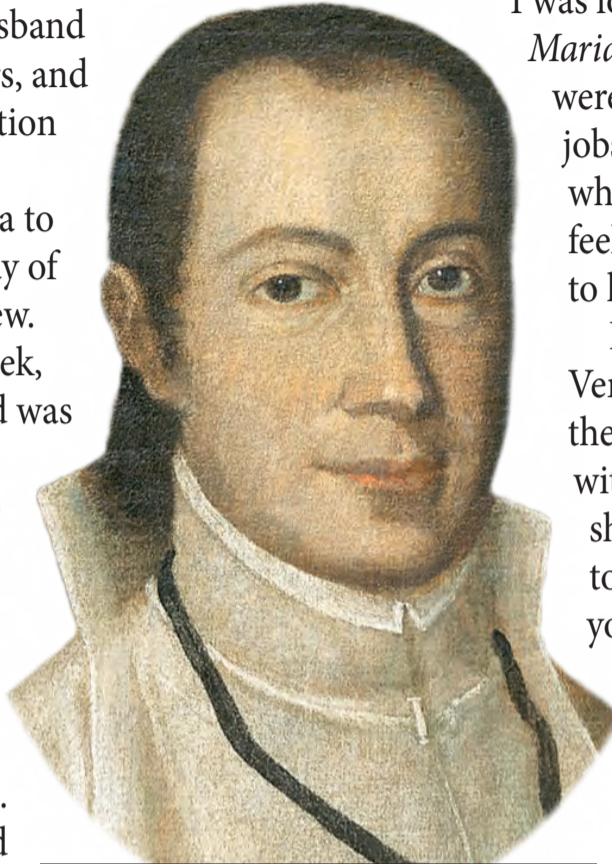
— LL, email

Daughter gets wonderful job

I was looking at the Summer 2025 issue of *Marian Helper* and I noticed that four stories were specifically about daughters finding jobs. I had also been praying for my daughter who was looking for a job. I had the distinct feeling that Ven. Casimir Wyszynski wanted to help my daughter, too.

I immediately started the novena asking Ven. Casimir's intercession. Before I finished the novena, she had a wonderful job offer with almost twice as much pay as other jobs she had looked at and living much nearer to us than she originally planned. Thank you, Ven. Casimir, for interceding for our daughter.

— CV, email



Acknowledgments of graces received through the intercession of Venerable Servant of God Casimir Wyszynski (1700-1755).

Accepted to University

Just wanted to thank Ven. Servant of God Casimir Wyszynski for his intercession. I asked him to pray for my grandson to get accepted to the university come September, and if possible, to the university that is his first preference.

Praise God for not only did he get accepted to his first choice, but also to three other universities he applied to as backup!

Thank God for Venerable Casimir!

— LW, email

For a Venerable Casimir prayer card (B68-BCWP), call toll free 1-800-462-7426. If you have received graces through his intercession, please write: Br. Andrew Maczyński, MIC, Vice Postulator of the Marian Causes of Canonization, 2 Prospect Hill Road, Stockbridge, MA, 01263. Email: graces@Marian.org

Prayer for a special grace through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Casimir Wyszynski

O God, Merciful Father, in the heart of Your Servant Casimir, You aroused a great zeal for accomplishing corporal and spiritual deeds of mercy; deign to grant to me (to us) through his intercession the grace ... for which I (we) implore You. Amen.

Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be to the Father ...

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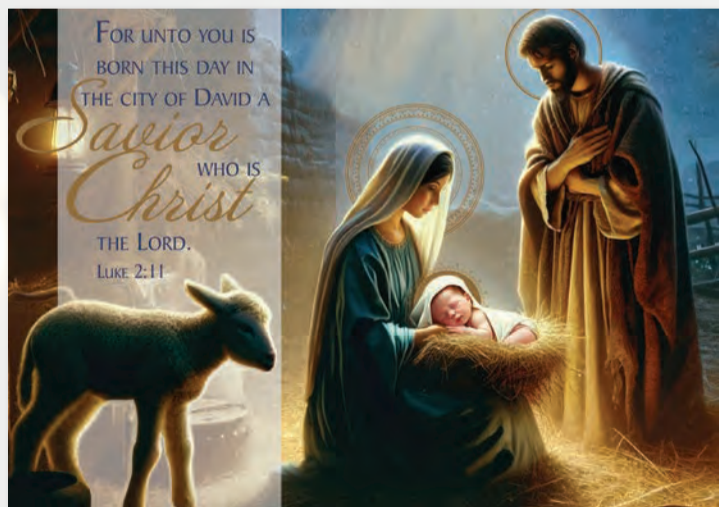


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The Marians of the Immaculate Conception 2026 Wall Calendar

The Marians of the Immaculate Conception bring you this exclusive 2026 calendar, featuring beautiful artwork and inspirational quotes for each month of the year. Calendar includes "How to Pray the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy." Measures 8 1/2" x 11". **B68-CAL26** ~~\$12.95~~ **\$12.95**



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An elegant display of the Christmas story, this 9-piece Nativity triptych features lavish gold and ivory figures including: Mary holding the Christ Child, Joseph with staff, three kings with gifts, and shepherd with sheep. Measures 11 1/2" tall. **B68-TTNY** ~~\$99.95~~ **\$59.95**

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Holy Family Gold Ombre Figure

This beautiful figure of the Holy Family depicts Mary and Joseph clothed in ivory and silver garments with a gradually fading golden hem and intricate detailing. Above the Holy Family is the golden Star of Bethlehem. Made of hand-painted resin. Measures 9 3/4" tall. **B68-GFGF** ~~\$53.95~~ **\$29.95**

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Postage costs may vary for online orders.

From the
VAULTS



As we close out the 65th anniversary year of the dedication of the Shrine Chapel in 1960, here's a look back at a nifty Christmas gift from the 1950s.

“Build a Shrine” was a colorful one-sided flat card, in English and Polish. The instructions were clear: “Cut and fold as indicated along dotted lines.” The result, as shown above, was a mini stand-up “shrine” to display at home, offering the Hyla Image of Jesus, the Divine Mercy, or a traditional Nativity scene — and unlimited devotional opportunities.

Don't forget to order your Christmas cards from the Marian Fathers, as displayed in this edition of *Marian Helper* and on ShopMercy.org.

Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas!

MH





Pray for us!

Please pray for our Marian men in formation
as they in turn remember you in prayer!

Br. Alex, MIC; Br. Austin, MIC; Br. Christopher, MIC; Br. David, MIC;
Br. Giuseppe, MIC; Br. Hank, MIC; Br. Jacob, MIC; Br. Jeff, MIC; Br. Joseph, MIC;
Br. Joseph, MIC; Br. Joshua, MIC; Br. Matthew, MIC; Br. Michael, MIC;
Br. Mike, MIC; Br. Paul, MIC; Br. Phillip, MIC; Br. Ruben, MIC;
Br. Ryan, MIC; Br. Stephen, MIC; and Dcn. Patrick, MIC.

Novices: Benjamin, Joseph, Marciano, Fr. Scott, and Wolfgang.

Postulants: Eric, John, and Michael.

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Feb. 27 - March 1

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Learn more

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Write: **Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC**
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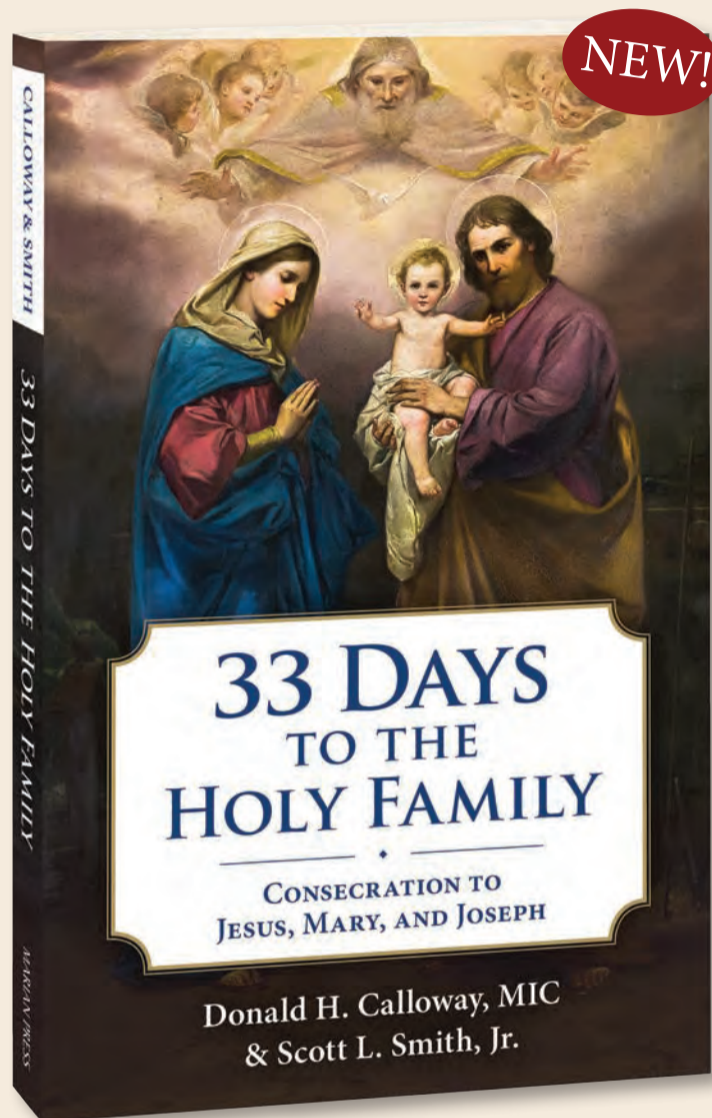
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