

Fall 2025

Marian Helper

Inspiration and news from the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception

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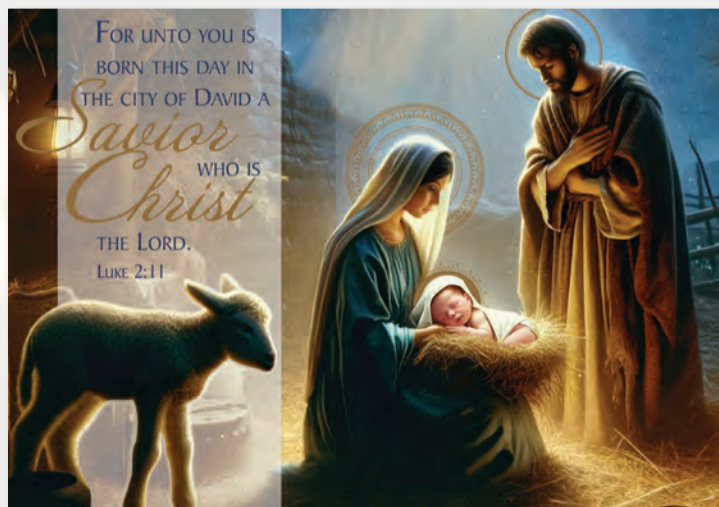


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Father Chris Alar is on a barnstorming tour promoting his next book in the “Explaining the Faith” series, *Understanding the Sacraments: God’s Grace Guaranteed!* Readers from Australia and New Zealand, England and all across the United States are responding to this engaging refresher course — already a bestseller! — on the uniqueness of the Catholic Church and the tools offered by God to help us get to Heaven.

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Saint Stanislaus Kostka Parish, not far from Eden Hill, is an important part of our Marian history.

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AMH DIRECTOR/PUBLISHER:

Fr. Mark Baron, MIC — “Father Joseph, MIC”

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Dr. Joe McAleer

DESIGNER: Andrew Leeco

WRITER, ASSISTANT EDITOR: Chris Sparks

AMH GENERAL PROMOTER:

Br. Andrew R. Mączyński, MIC

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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WHO WE ARE



Marian Helpers Center

Stockbridge, Massachusetts
Headquarters and publishing
center for the Association of
Marian Helpers.
1-800-462-7426

National Shrine of The Divine Mercy

(413) 298-3931
For pilgrimages:
(413) 298-1119
ShrineOfDivineMercy.org



Mercy Apostolates

Learn about our lay ministries:

Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy

Dr. Bryan Thatcher
TheDivineMercy.org/eadm
1-877-380-0727

Healthcare Professionals for Divine Mercy

Marie Romagnano,
MSN, RN, CCM
TheDivineMercy.org/hpdm
1-866-895-3236

John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy

Dr. Robert Stackpole
TheDivineMercy.org/JPII
1-866-895-3236

Mother of Mercy Messengers

Joan and Dave Maroney
TheDivineMercy.org/momm
1-830-634-7765

Evangelization Team

Invite the Marians
to speak at your parish.
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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

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- **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.

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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.*

OUR CENTENNIAL!

It's no coincidence that the Jubilee Year of Hope should also be the centennial of the Association of Marian Helpers, founded 100 years ago by the Marian Fathers in Chicago, Illinois, in 1925 (see page 15). It's Divine Providence.

It's also no coincidence that the Association, a powerful tool of evangelization and catechesis leaving a historic mark on the Church and the world since the time of its founding, should be celebrating a 100th anniversary during the historic first year of the pontificate of the first American pope, a missionary from Chicago.

You see, the first Marian Fathers to arrive in the United States came to Chicago from Lithuania! On July 9, 1913, Blessed George Matulaitis, the Marian Renovator, arrived in America with two other Marians, Frs. Felix Kudirka and Julian Kazakas, to establish the first Marian house of the renovated Congregation.

Once in Chicago, Blessed George presented himself to the archbishop there, the Most Rev. Edward Quigley, who warmly welcomed the Marians to his archdiocese and even offered them a parish. Twelve years later, Bl. George sent a letter, urging the creation of an Association of lay faithful to assist the Marian Fathers in evangelization. The first Marian Helpers!

None of this is coincidence. If you are part of the Marian Family for any length of time, you learn pretty quick that God takes a very direct hand in our life and work. All those things Jesus said to St. Faustina in the Diary about the Divine Mercy message and devotion being a preparation for His final coming? It's all true. The Divine Mercy message and devotion are the greatest grassroots movement in the history of the Church.

The role Our Lady, the Immaculate Conception, plays in the Church and the world in this and every age, defending us, helping us grow in faith and holiness, drawing us all closer to her Son? We don't make that up.

We don't need to. Marian devotion

changes lives just as powerfully today as it ever has, especially devotion to her Immaculate Heart alongside devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Holy Souls both need our prayers and, when they reach heavenly glory, offer powerful intercession to those who assisted them.

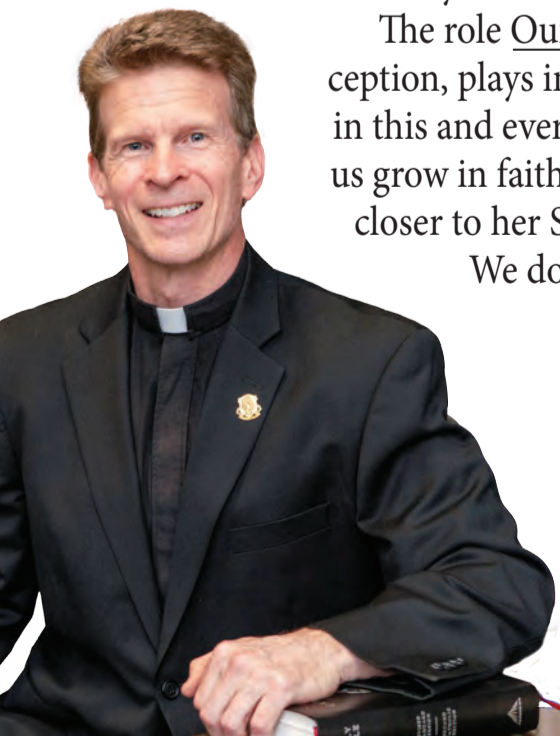
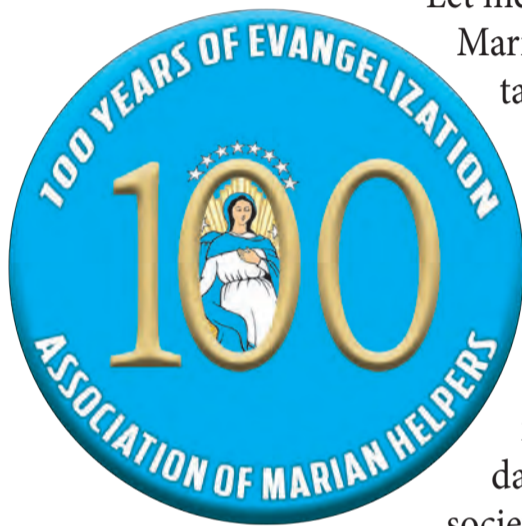
Let me say that again, a little more colorfully: We Marians and Marian Helpers have a "tiger by the tail" in the work we do, because God is good, Jesus is Lord, and Our Lady is truly our mother now and forever. The charisms, or gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Marian Family, are powerful and active today in the world. They are the answer to the darkness of the present age, of our often difficult modern era. They are bright lights in deep darkness, powerful remedies for what ails our society today, and strong medicine to drive out the devil.

So after more than 100 years of the Congregation in the USA, and now 100 years of the Association, we now stand better prepared, equipped, and manned than ever before. We are in a wonderful place to answer Heaven's call because of you. Your persistent prayers and support have allowed us to take on new and challenging ministries and apostolates; begin building a new monastery on Eden Hill; send aid to Ukraine, Rwanda, the Philippines, and many other places in deep need; and do so much more.

Once again, thank you. Once again, let us live out the remaining months of this Jubilee Year of Hope in great thanksgiving: for the holy members of our Marian Family past; for prayer and work for our present labors; and for tremendous and growing hope for the future.

May Christ our Hope 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.

ANSWERING MARY'S CALL

By Br. Ryan Asensio, MIC

“I’m a Marian Helper, but I don’t feel like I’m helping anything!” This was Geetangeli’s lighthearted complaint back in 2020. Little did she know that just a few years later, she would be in Kibeho, Rwanda, on a mission to spread devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows and working closely with the Marian Fathers.

It all began back in 2017 with a prayer: “God, what do You want me to do?”

At the end of her rope in the face of personal difficulties, Geetangeli (Geeta, for short), from Clarksville, Maryland, cried out to the God she did not know — she was not baptized and hadn’t been exposed to the Catholic faith.

But the Lord heard her prayer.

As the Psalm says, “The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth” (Ps 145:18).

Conversion and Baptism

Experiencing God’s grace washing over her, Geeta knew that something had to change. She began to read the Bible and attended the Rite of Christian Initiation (now OCIA) classes with her husband. Although she was set to be baptized during the 2019 Easter vigil, she hesitated — the spiritual warfare was on.

It was at this time and during the COVID lockdowns that Geeta discovered the Marian Fathers’ daily livestreamed

Chaplet of the Divine Mercy and their “Divine Mercy” YouTube channel. And after hearing Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, mention the Marian Helpers, she decided to become a member.

By the grace of God, Geeta was baptized on July 10, 2020. Soon after, she consecrated herself to Our Lady of Sorrows (feast day: Sept. 15). Her first experience of Eucharistic Adoration was with Fr. Chris, during an online First Friday



devotion. Later, she would become a self-proclaimed “Adoration junkie,” taking every opportunity she could to adore our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Thanking Mary

One day, about a year after her Baptism, Geeta found herself alone in her parish church, St. Louis in Clarksville. Something moved her to approach a statue of the *Pietà*.

Kneeling, she thanked the Blessed Mother for answering all her prayers through the traditional [Rosary](#) and the [Seven Sorrows Rosary](#),

and for guiding her on her journey of conversion. It was Mary, under the title of “Our Lady of Sorrows,” who had been her biggest support.

Before the *Pietà*, Geeta stretched out her hands and said, “I’m your handmaid, Mother. It’s my turn to do for you whatever you want. And by the way ... I’m a Marian Helper, but I don’t feel like I’m helping anything!”

A week later, she got a call from Fr. John McHale, a diocesan priest who helps in her parish. “Geeta, can you help prepare the parish for Fr. Leszek’s visit from Rwanda?” he asked.

Kibeho mission

It was in the apparitions in Kibeho, Rwanda (fully approved by the Church), that Mary sought to spread devotion to herself under the title “Mother of the Word” and to her traditional Seven Sorrows. It was in this same village that [Fr. Leszek Czelusniak, MIC](#), started mission work back in 1991.

Although his work was interrupted during the 1994 genocide that ravaged the country, Fr. Leszek came back in the early 2000s and founded the “Marian Formation (CANA) Center,” a place for retreats, conferences, and prayer. Now, the CANA campus includes a bakery that feeds blind school children, a convent for the Annunciade sisters, a preschool, and the Stations of the Cross. It also is home to a massive interactive catechetical center, centered on the Bible and the Catechism. The combination of exhibits and images is particularly important in a country where

many people can’t afford Bibles, books, or a reliable internet connection.

Geeta met Fr. Leszek for the first time when he came to her parish, garnering support for the Kibeho mission. Since then, Geeta has helped spread the message of Kibeho at her parish by leading book studies, organizing events, and gathering donations for the mission at the CANA center. All of this she has done in close cooperation with Fr. McHale, a longtime supporter of the Marian mission in Kibeho. Geeta’s first trip to Rwanda was in 2023, and she has come every year since then.



Geeta’s selfie with Fr. Leszek Czelusniak, MIC, and Fr. John McHale.

“It has been a gift working with the Marian Fathers. I’ve been able to step outside of the U.S. and see evangelization on a big scale.”

“It has been a gift working with the Marian Fathers,” says Geeta. “The mission has exposed me to so much. I’ve been able to step outside of the U.S. and see the missions that are going on, the needs of the Church, and evangelization on a big scale.”

Kibeho is where Geeta and I met this summer, while working together on a documentary project initiated by Fr.

John about the CANA Bible Center. It was truly a blessed experience, all under the guidance of Mary.

Thank you

To the Marians, Geeta would like to say, “Thank you, brothers, for your life, for your sacrifice — your daily sacrifice, for the change that you’re making throughout the world. You’re impacting so many people that you won’t even see or meet. You might never meet them, but they’re out there.”

To her fellow Marian Helpers, Geeta says, “Being a Marian helper means more than you might think! Dedicate yourself to Our Lady and our Lord, and those graces will come! Meditate on Our Lady’s Sorrows, particularly with the Seven Sorrows Rosary.”

To learn more about the Marian Fathers’ mission in Rwanda, visit kibeho-cana.org.

To Weep Like Mary: The Extraordinary Gift of the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows by Wincenty Łaszewski, a new book from Marian Press (B67-WLMB), explains the devotion and the Marian apparitions in Kibeho. Available now at ShopMercy.org.

MH


FATHER JOSEPH'S PICKS

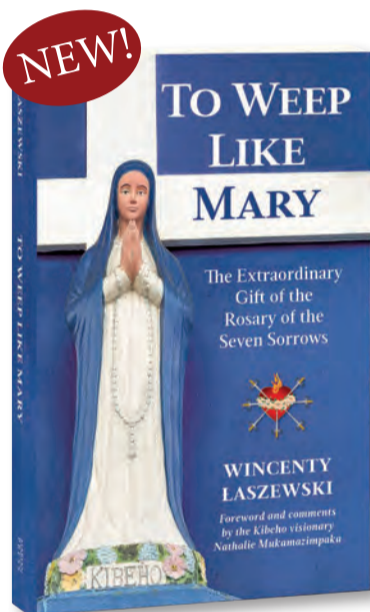
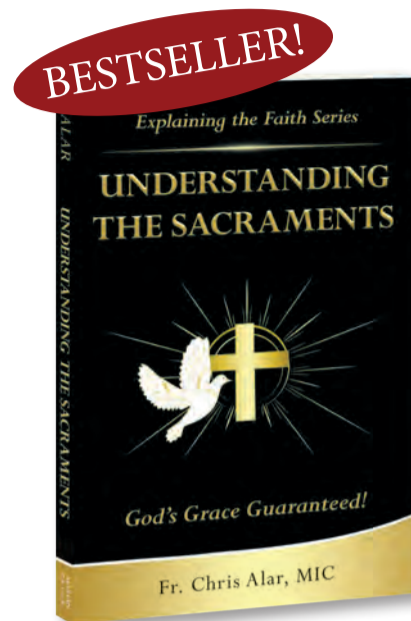
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UNDERSTANDING THE SACRAMENTS: GOD'S GRACE GUARANTEED!

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. [B67-UNDB](#) 



TO WEEP LIKE MARY: THE EXTRAORDINARY GIFT OF THE ROSARY OF THE SEVEN SORROWS

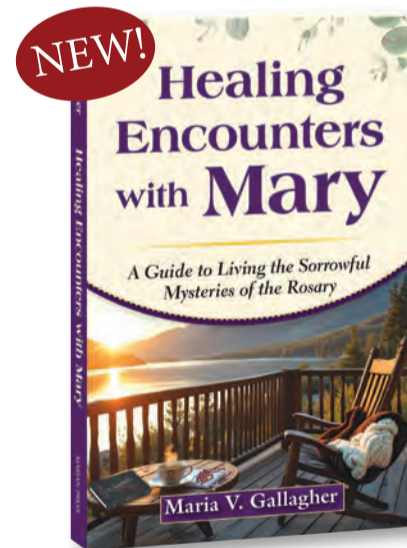
BY WINCENTY ŁASZEWSKI; FOREWORD AND COMMENTS BY THE VISIONARY NATHALIE MUKAMAZIMPAKA

Our Lady points us to a different kind of Rosary in the apparitions in Kibeho, Rwanda (1981-1989): the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows. Why is the Blessed Mother speaking about it just now and pointing out the necessity of reciting it in our times? Delve deeply into the wisdom of Our Lady of Kibeho in this heartfelt book, including commentary by Kibeho visionary Nathalie Mukamazimpaka. \$16.95. [B67-WLMB](#)

HEALING ENCOUNTERS WITH MARY: A GUIDE TO LIVING THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY

BY MARIA V. GALLAGHER

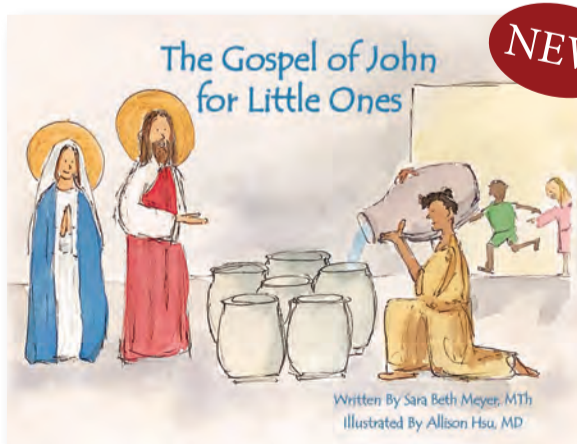
In this third volume of her popular series on the Mysteries of the Rosary, Maria V. Gallagher offers personal reflections and Scriptural meditations to enhance your appreciation of the Sorrowful Mysteries. It also provides some strategies for growing in the various virtues associated with each Mystery. You will learn about various saints who experienced a special connection with the Blessed Mother, and discover the science of the Cross in the school of Our Lady through her Rosary. \$16.95. [B67-HEWM](#)



THE GOSPEL OF JOHN FOR LITTLE ONES

WRITTEN BY SARA BETH MEYER, MTH; ILLUSTRATED BY ALLISON HSU, MD

Our talented Texans have reached the fourth and final volume in their acclaimed *Gospel for Little Ones* series. In John's Gospel, relationships are so important that we know others in relation to Jesus rather than by name: His Father, His Beloved Disciple, and the ever faithful Mother of Jesus. Bishop David Toups of Beaumont, Texas, says, "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!" \$19.95. [B67-JHNG](#)





MASS APPEAL

On the road again! I recently had the opportunity to visit our Marian vicariate in Rwanda during my general visitation there. One of the highlights of the visit was attending the priestly ordination of two of our young confrères, Fr. Celestin and Fr. Noel, and the Mass of Thanksgiving of one of them.

Father Celestin prepared for the priesthood in Rwanda, Cameroon, and Poland. After his first vows and his philosophical studies, he went to Poland where he spent one year learning the language. He then completed his theological studies in Polish, living with our Marians at our seminary in Lublin. He learned the language so well, they wanted him to stay in Poland and work as a priest there! However, he is needed in Rwanda.

Father Noel completed his priestly preparations in Rwanda and Cameroon in French.

He and Fr. Celestin were ordained along with seven diocesan deacons to the priesthood by the bishop of Ruhengeri. Three other diocesan seminarians were ordained to the diaconate that day. There were also three priests celebrating their 25th Anniversary of their priesthood that day.

The Mass was held outdoors next to the cathedral. It lasted 5 hours and 40 minutes (!) including songs, processions, speeches, etc. There were two bishops, 120 priests, and around 5,000 faithful!

One moment that moved me came after Communion. They announced that it was now time to give thanks to God for all of the graces that He had poured out that day. The newly-ordained and the jubilarians came to the center of the field before the altar and sang a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God. No one was in a rush to finish. They were there to praise and thank God for His goodness.

The next day, we attended a Mass of Thanksgiving in Mwange, the parish of Fr. Celestin and the place where our Marian Congregation had begun its work in Rwanda 40 years ago. It is rather remote and, after the terrible genocide

in the 1990s, the bishop decided that he couldn't guarantee the safety of our missionaries there. He asked us to begin again with our work in our present location of Nyakinama, which is closer to the city. It was a blessing for some of our missionaries to return to the place where they had worked and to thank God for the gift of a priestly vocation to our community from that parish.

The Mass of Thanksgiving lasted three hours. Afterwards, there were dances, poems, and speeches along with a festive lunch. Then many people went to the family home of the newly-ordained priest for a house blessing and to thank the parents for the gift of their son.

One of the newly-ordained priests will work in our parish in Ruyenzi, near the capital of Kigali. The other will work in our Marian Formation Center near the Shrine of Our Lady of Kibeho.

I asked our priests what they felt after the ordination. They were both filled with joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for His goodness. They both come from large families. When I witnessed the faith of the people there, I was not surprised that priestly vocations had come from such an environment.

In Mwange, the superior of the vicariate asked if there were any among the young who wanted to become priests or religious sisters or brothers. Many young children raised their hands.

Please pray for our Congregation around the world. We need good vocations wherever we live and work. And please pray for peace in Rwanda, for the healing of all families, and for mutual forgiveness for all who are still affected by what happened there. Amen!





ENCUENTRO LATINO: Thousands of faithful pilgrims and families journeyed to Eden Hill on Aug. 2 for the annual celebration dedicated to Latinos. Following Mass at the Mother of Mary Outdoor Shrine on a glorious sunny morning, a Rosary procession set forth, followed by the Hour of Great Mercy and the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy.

BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND: The Marian Fathers' Divine Mercy Apostolate made a strong impression at the WeBelieve Festival in July, a gathering of 2,000 Catholics eager to promote evangelization throughout the United Kingdom. Among the speakers was Fr. Mark Baron, MIC, who praised the return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, especially among young Catholics. Father Alexander Pumphrey, MIC, and Deacon Patrick Lynch, MIC, visited with attendees young and old, and met the Archbishop of Southwark, the Most. Rev. John Wilson, who invited them to come and speak at his cathedral. Watch for more exciting news from the Divine Mercy Apostolate, based in London, as it becomes a branch of our U.S. province (divinemercuryapostolate.co.uk).



HEALTHCARE CONFERENCE: Nearly 90 participants, in person and via livestream, attended the 20th Annual Divine Mercy Medicine, Bioethics, and Spirituality Conference, held June 4-6 at the National Shrine. A diverse group of speakers addressed “Current Challenges for Healthcare Professionals.” Hats off to organizer Marie Romagnano, MSN, RN, CCM-R (center), founder of Healthcare Professionals for Divine Mercy, pictured with Fr. Kaz Chwalek, MIC, spiritual director, and faculty from the Elms College of Nursing.



One speaker, Sr. Catarina Esselin, OLM, a member of St. Faustina’s order, encouraged her listeners to take time out in the midst of their busy days to turn to God so as to better live their faith and serve their patients. “We need to bathe in God’s mercy and absorb God’s mercy, and that takes a little bit of time, being with the Lord, uniting oneself with His Heart. Your being united with Jesus makes a difference to your patients.”

MOTORCYCLE BLESSINGS: Father Daniel Klimek blessed motorcycles on June 21, an annual event at the National Shrine which brings out enthusiastic riders and their impressive bikes.



‘THE CHOSEN’: On June 23, our Superior General, the Most Rev. Joseph Roesch, MIC, and Fr. Lukasz Mazurek, MIC of the Divine Mercy Apostolate in London, England, were the guests of Carmel Communications for a special screening of Season 5 of “The Chosen” in Rome, Italy. A highlight was meeting Jonathan Roumie, who plays the role of Jesus.



FILIPINO DAY: Happy pilgrims join Fr. Anthony Gramlich, MIC, during the annual Filipino Day celebration on June 21.



WORLD PREMIERE

FR. CHRIS' *UNDERSTANDING THE SACRAMENTS*

By Dr. Joe McAleer

“**T**he Sacraments — they are everything,” the Very Rev. Chris Alar, MIC, told the overflow group of faithful gathered in the cavernous St. Mary’s Cathedral in Sydney, Australia (above). “A Sacrament is an efficacious sign, meaning it does something. It’s a sign instituted by Christ and entrusted to His Church by which divine life is instilled in you. It is the way to Heaven. You want the only guaranteed way of grace? The Sacraments!”



Father Chris is mobbed by well-wishers outside St. Dominic's Priory-The Rosary Shrine in London, England, all eager to have their copy of *Understanding the Sacraments* signed.

That message was broadcast around the world — literally — during the international debut of Fr. Chris' third book (and already a bestseller), *Understanding the Sacraments: God's Grace Guaranteed!*

God and Mary at work

"I knew all along that I wanted to launch this book in places where God and Mary are working, where the Catholic faith is growing and especially devotion to the message of *Divine Mercy*," Fr. Chris recalls. "That meant going around the world to Australia and New Zealand, and England, which is Mary's dowry."

Soon after an appearance on *EWTN Bookmark* with Doug Keck, which started the book launch in the United States, Fr. Chris boarded a plane Down Under for the 18-hour journey to New Zealand. There he participated in the Divine Mercy Conference in Auckland, and visited St. Bede's College in Christchurch. Then it was on to Australia with stops in Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne.

From there, he embarked on a 24-hour journey to London, England, for a week of talks, hosted by the Divine Mercy Apostolate. Among the highlights: the Flame of Love Conference in Birmingham, and two pilgrimages: to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, and to Ipswich, home to the greatest Marian devotion, Our Lady of Grace.

Well-wishers

Wherever he went, Fr. Chris signed books and posed for photos with throngs of well-wishers. Rosalynn and Kieran Robinson traveled 400 miles from their home in Glasgow,

Scotland, to hear Fr. Chris speak at St. Joseph's Parish in Chalfont St. Peter, west of London.

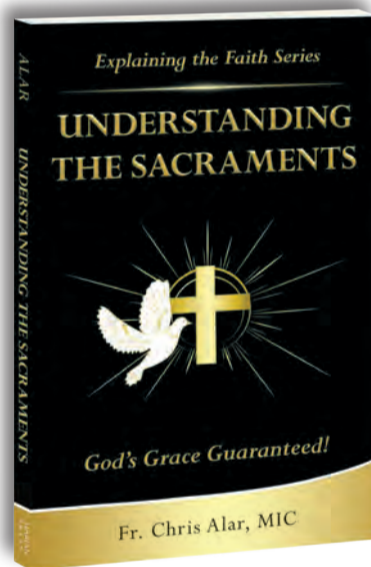
"We started watching his '*Explaining the Faith*' videos on *YouTube*," Keiran said. "We have a spiritual connection. Father Chris is a great preacher and explains things really well."

The strong response to *Understanding the Sacraments* is reassuring, Fr. Chris notes. "People are looking for a refresher on what they may have learned way back in religious education classes. The Sacraments are vital to our Catholic faith. They are entrusted to us by God. It makes our Catholic Church unique from all other Christian denominations, apart from the Orthodox."

By grace alone

In his book, he recalls a common misconception. "I hear all the time, 'Father, I'm a good person. I'll get to Heaven when I die.' Or, 'I'm fine; I never killed anybody.' Well, Jesus' words in the Bible and the message conveyed to *St. Faustina* in her *Diary* say something a bit different. Narrow is the road to life and few follow it (see Mt 7:13-14). Wide is the path to destruction and many are on it. Heaven is not a prize for those who are good by nature, but for those who are made good by sanctifying grace. We need the help of God's grace, which is guaranteed only in the Sacraments.

"The bottom line? Start accepting Christ now, so that when He comes to you at the end of your life, it will be easier to say, 'Yes!' And the best way to begin is by understanding the vital role of the Sacraments in getting you to Heaven." MH



To order *Understanding the Sacraments: God's Grace Guaranteed!* (Product code B67-UNDB), visit ShopMercy.org or call 1-800-462-7426.

ALL RISE!



Jubilee Year pilgrims arriving on Eden Hill are amazed at the rapid progress of construction at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy. We can now clearly see the structures of the new Chapel and the Monastery building, rising in the field beside the outdoor Stations of the Cross. All of this is made possible through the generous donations of Marian Helpers to the “Together for Christ and His Church” capital campaign. Thank you! (PHOTOS BY BR. MARK FANDERS, MIC)

Follow our progress at [TogetherForChrist.org](https://www.togetherforchrist.org)



SAINT PIER
GIORGIO FRASSATI



SAINT BARTOLO
LONGO



SAINT CARLO
ACUTIS

SAINTLY TRIO

INSPIRATION AND LESSONS FOR MARIAN HELPERS

By Fr. Mark Baron, MIC ("Father Joseph, MIC")

This fall, for the first time in his pontificate, Pope Leo XIV will canonize nine new saints. Three of these are well-known and, in my opinion, a great source of inspiration for members of our Marian Family. I'm referring to St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis (both canonized on Sept. 7), and Blessed Bartolo Longo, who will be declared a saint with the six others on World Mission Sunday, Oct. 19.

Continued on page 14

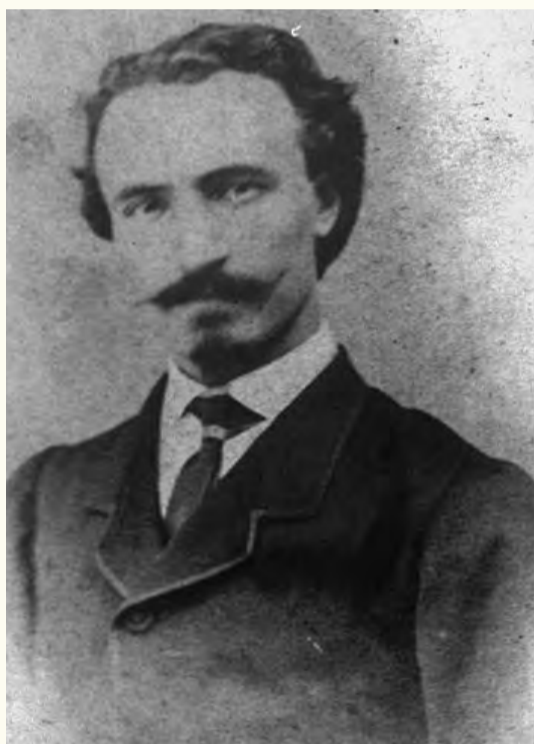
SAINTLY TRIO

Saint Carlo is the teenager known for his devotion to the Eucharist and creating an online exhibition of Eucharistic miracles. Blessed Bartolo is the former satanist turned champion of the Rosary and founder of the great shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary at Pompeii, in Italy. And St. Pier Giorgio, the young Italian mountaineer and student, was acclaimed as the “man of the beatitudes.”

In my opinion, this saintly trio’s witness to the Gospel and ways of living our Catholic faith are perfectly aligned with what it means — or ought to mean — to be a Marian Helper. It’s fitting to take a closer look in this, the centennial year of the Association of Marian Helpers.

Blessed Bartolo Longo

Bartolo Longo (1841-1926; feast day: Oct. 5, shared with St. Faustina) was a freak, and I do not mean that in a good way. He didn’t stay a freak, but honestly, how bad do you have to be to go as far as being ordained a priest of Satan? That takes commitment. That takes — I assume study, though I’m not personally familiar with how Satanists prepare and train their priests. Something it’s best not to spend too much time thinking about.



But Bartolo found his way home. That’s the really important part of his life and legacy — he found his way home to Christ and His Church. Bartolo had leaned in to evil, to service to the devil, to the enemy of all good, of humanity. And even with all that, even with whatever hellish things he’d done, still Jesus and Mary called him home to the faith, to the Church, and to the side of good. That means there’s hope for all of us, no matter how far we’ve fallen, no matter how evil we’ve been.

There is hope. There is hope for you, Marian Helpers. There is hope for your family members who have fallen away or done awful evil things. There is hope for your neighbors. There is hope for everyone. And Bartolo Longo shows us how to help them — with the Rosary; serving Christ and His Church by loving Our Lady and using her devotions to bring others home to God.

Saint Carlo Acutis

Carlo Acutis (1991-2006; feast day: Oct. 12) was an extraordinary young man. He died at 15, but in that short lifetime, he went a lot farther in his generous love of God and neighbor than most of us do in a longer lifetime. See, it’s not actually that complicated to become holy. It all



comes down to love of God and neighbor, or living like Jesus did. It can be hard — don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying it was easy to do what Carlo Acutis did. After all, how many teenagers, confronted by a leukemia diagnosis, promptly and peacefully offer up their sufferings for the pope and the Church? That takes some serious courage and fortitude.

I find it so hopeful that Carlo Acutis managed that level of preparation for suffering and death in the modern world. He was a fairly normal teenager much of the time, loving his video games, loving life. But he also was willing to share his faith with his friends and neighbors. He loved the poor and the Holy Souls in Purgatory, and shared generously from his allowance to buy things to help the homeless. He did what he could with what he had where he was.

Our Catholic Tradition speaks of the importance of living according to the duties of our state in life. Carlo Acutis showed us what that looks like in the 21st century.

Marian Helpers, I say: Be like Carlo. If you’re called to an ordinary life as a lay person, embrace it! Love the Sacraments. Love God. Love neighbor. Love your ordinary life, your family and neighbors. Be ordinary and holy at the same time, and holy in your ordinariness. That will make you extraordinary.

Saint Pier Giorgio Frassati

Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925; feast day: July 4) was my kind of guy. He loved his sports and the great outdoors, especially mountain climbing. That’s why you’ll see people quoting a slogan of his, “*Verso l’alto*,” which means “to the heights.” He meant it both in terms of he really wanted to go



mountain climbing, and he meant it in terms of the spiritual life.

God summons us to what's hard, to what's challenging, to go to where we will encounter Him. We are called to get closer to God throughout our lives, even if that means sacrifice, even if that means spiritual exercises and blood, sweat, and tears. But we are also called to do this joyfully.

Pier Giorgio radiated joy. He seemed a carefree young man, a normal devout Italian guy of his generation — but when he died, his funeral was packed with the thousands of people he had helped or befriended. Like Carlo Acutis, he was ordinary and holy, which made him extraordinary. That's the heart of the Christian vocation, to be salt, light, and yeast in the world, to be temples of the Holy Spirit transforming the world from within. You are meant to give flavor to ordinary life, to bring light into dark places and keep it there, to be yeast in the dough of the created world, bringing in air, bringing in grace.

Pier Giorgio shows what that's like. We are meant to live with his same sense of “magnanimity,” of generosity of spirit. We are the heirs of God Almighty, enriched with enormous graces. We can be open-handed, generous, not anxious about our charity to others because God can and does provide, especially when His children give alms prudently but freely. We are called to embrace hard challenges, knowing that if God calls us to do them, He will give us the grace to get through, but also to have the detachment and the humility to embrace being faithful, even if we are not successful.

Marian Helpers, be joyful like Pier Giorgio. Be Catholic. Be brave.

We will soon be blessed by these three holy men's canonizations. May they continue to teach us, intercede for us, and show us the Marian way of proceeding.

Father Mark Baron, MIC, is the director of the Association of Marian Helpers (Father Joseph, MIC). Joining the Association, a spiritual benefit society approved by the Holy See, is free and easy: visit MICPrayers.org.

MH

100 Years Young!

Happy 100th birthday, Association of Marian Helpers! And we have Bl. George Matulaitis, the heroic Renovator of the Marian Congregation, to thank for our longevity.

How so? “On Oct. 27, 1910, Bl. George outlined the idea of comprehensive involvement of the laity in the work of evangelization in his *Journal*,” explains Br. Andrew Mączyński, MIC, a former “Fr. Joseph, MIC,” and the general promoter of the Association worldwide.

“Soon after the establishment of the religious house in Chicago, Illinois, which was to become the seat of the future St. Casimir's Province, the Marians there established the first Association of Marian Helpers. Blessed George strongly encouraged the formation of said Association.”

The idea has roots in the writings of St. Stanislaus Papczyński, who founded the Marian Congregation in 1670.

“Our Founder wrote a treatise entitled *Templum Dei Mysticum*,” notes Br. Andrew. “In it he bases the formation of the laity on the acquisition of religious knowledge and the practice of life leading to Christian perfection.”



Working with the laity

So when Bl. George set to work to bring back the Marian Fathers from one member to a real international organization again, he knew the importance of working with the laity.

The Chicago Marians began the work of the Association in 1925 and developed the first statutes, which were approved by the Renovator prior to his death in 1927.

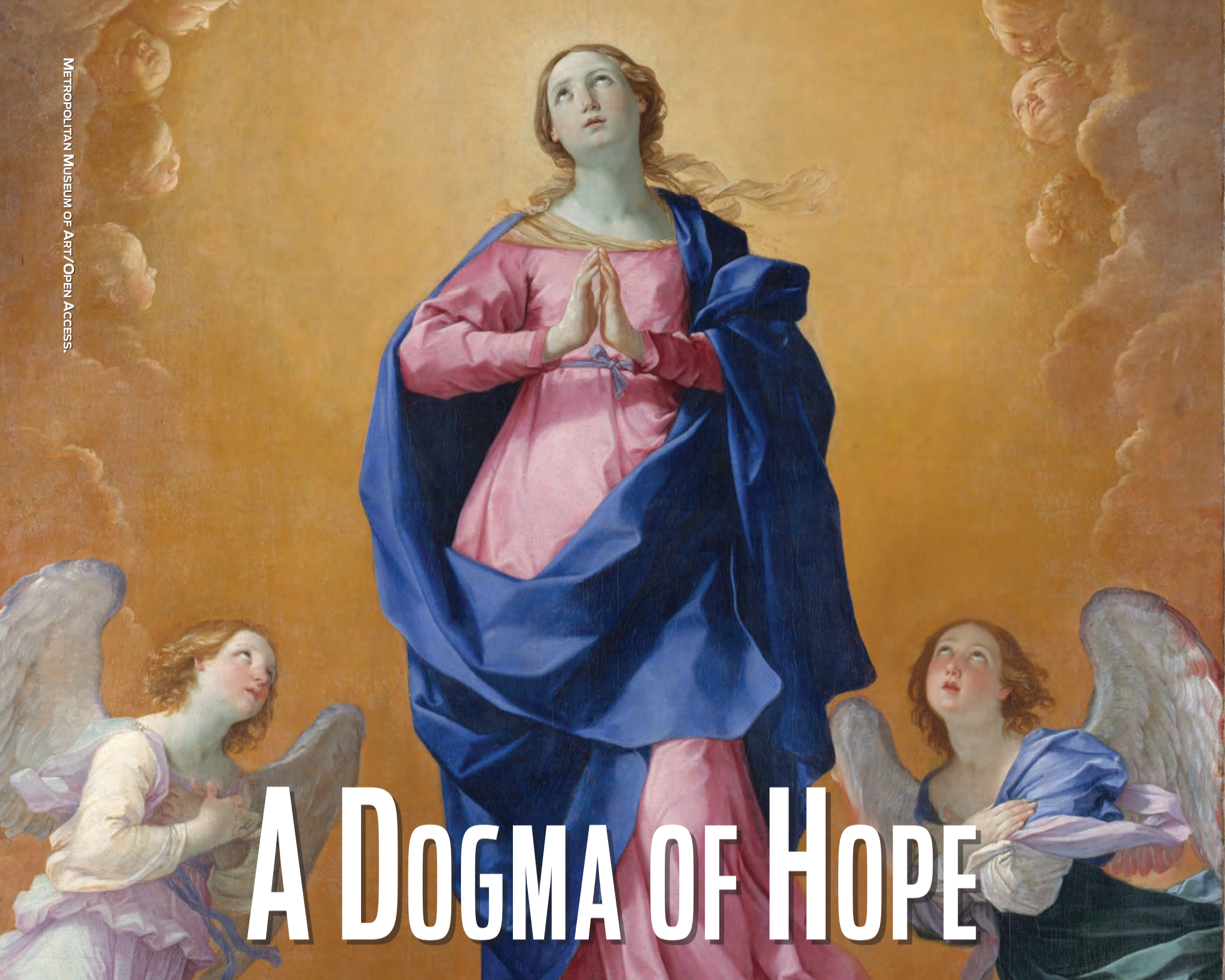
Meanwhile, in the St. Stanislaus Kostka Province, Fr. Walter Pelczynski, MIC, purchased the Eden Hill property in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, in 1943, and established the Association's presence there in 1944.

Since the 2006 union of the two American provinces in the one Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy Province, the Marian Helpers Center has been the national headquarters for the Association, pioneering the best practices and tools for evangelization and catechesis used by the whole Marian Family around the world.

Happy birthday, Marian Helpers!

Sign up at MICPrayers.org

MH



A DOGMA OF HOPE

75 YEARS OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY

By Robert Stackpole, STD

Seventy-five years ago, on November 1, 1950, Ven. Pope Pius XII proclaimed to the Church and the world: “By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.”

Within the Catholic Church, there was near unanimity among the Church’s bishops and theologians at the time in support of the definition of this dogma. Indeed, the pope had consulted extensively with them before deciding to

make the proclamation.

Outside the Church, however, widespread incomprehension, and in some circles even dismay, were the most common reactions. Protestants in particular objected that

the Catholic Church was teaching as a dogma yet another belief that could not be proven from Scripture alone. (Of course, the Catholic Church has never held that everything divinely revealed must be provable from the Bible all by itself — that’s unbiblical, the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*, not a Catholic principle.) Other Christians complained that it marked a devastating blow to ecumenism, setting up another obstacle to reunion between Rome and other Christian bodies.

Many outside the Church just missed the point. But most Catholics did not, and as a result, the dogma has been cherished by the faithful ever since.

Dark time of the proclamation

Think first of the historical context in which the pope published the truth of Mary’s Assumption. Just five years prior to the proclamation, World War II finally came to an end, after the loss of more than 20 million lives and the horrors of the Holocaust. Literature at the time shows that many people in the 1940s were losing their faith in God’s love in the midst of all this misery, and turning to secular ideologies instead for human hope and salvation, especially to Communism.

Then on August 29, 1949, the Soviet Union detonated their first A-bomb, thus marking the end of America’s monopoly on atomic weapons, and plunging the world into the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. For the first time in human history, humanity faced the real possibility of wars of mutual, and even global, extinction.

Then the first armed conflict of the Cold War began on June 22, 1950, when Communist North Korea invaded South Korea. In short, it was a time of war-weariness, profound fear, and rising hopelessness: a turning away from God, and to the false promises of secularism and Communism instead.

What humanity needed most was a renewed proclamation of the love of God, the dignity of human life, and a fresh sign of ultimate hope — and Pope Pius knew that God’s dealings with the Virgin Mother of His incarnate Son could provide the antidote. The Holy Father therefore reached into the treasury of the Church’s Tradition, and held aloft the radiant truth of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, body and soul.

He stated, “While the illusory teachings of materialism and the corruption of morals that follows from these teachings

threaten to extinguish the light of virtue and to ruin the lives of men, in this magnificent way all may see clearly to what a lofty goal our bodies and souls are destined.”

The light of hope

The dogma of the Assumption, the pope reasoned, is not only a unique privilege given to Mary. (Even the saints after their death have to await the Final Judgment and the Last Day to receive their glorified and resurrected bodies.) It is also a sign of hope for all the faithful: a loud and triumphant proclamation of the full truth of Easter.

We sometimes say that the Easter faith, in a nutshell, is that “Christ is risen.” If our hearts live in union with Him, we, too, shall rise again to a glorified life, body and soul, just like His. As St. Paul once promised: “He shall change our lowly body to be like His glorious body” (Phil 3:21). That is precisely what the Assumption of Mary proclaims: Christ

is risen — and He is now bringing all faithful hearts with Him to glory. And the sign of this hope to all the Church is that the person who was closest to Christ’s own loving Heart has already been raised to glory before us.

Hope for our time

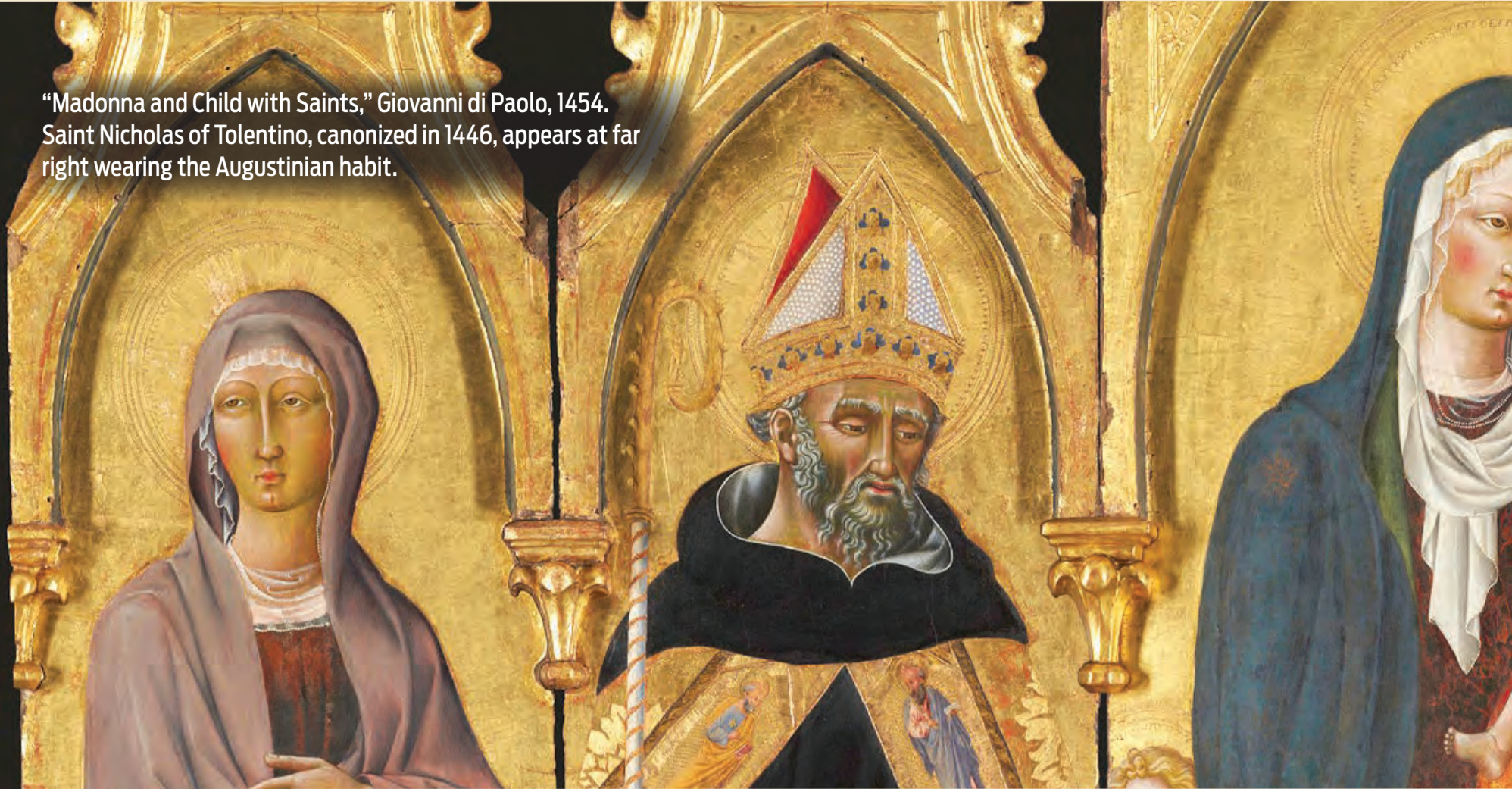
In many ways our time is not unlike the era of the proclamation of this dogma: Today, conflicts rage in various parts of the globe, and others could ignite at any moment, while the nations of the world are rapidly rearming for war. Many turn for aid, not to faith and prayer, but to the false gods of secularism and material comforts. No one summed it up better than Pope Benedict XVI in his general audience in Rome on August 16, 2006:

By contemplating Mary in heavenly glory, ... we live with our gaze fixed on eternal goods; we will one day share in this same glory. ... We may be sure of it: from on high, Mary follows our footsteps with gentle concern, dispels the gloom in moments of darkness and distress, reassures us with her motherly hand. Supported by awareness of this, let us continue confidently on our path of Christian commitment wherever Providence may lead us. Let us forge ahead in our lives under Mary’s guidance.

Dr. Robert Stackpole is the emeritus director of the John Paul II Institute for Divine Mercy and the author of Mary, Who She is and Why She Matters (B67-MBK), a Marian Press title available now at ShopMercy.org.

MH

“Madonna and Child with Saints,” Giovanni di Paolo, 1454.
Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, canonized in 1446, appears at far
right wearing the Augustinian habit.



PATRON OF THE HOLY SOULS

By Fr. Dan Cambra, MIC

November is the month traditionally dedicated by the Church to praying for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. It is a time specially enriched by the Church with indulgences, with grants of the graces necessary to hasten the time a soul spends in Purgatory as it awaits heavenly glory. That means we Marian Fathers — among whose founding charisms was praying for the dying and dead — and Marian Helpers have a special duty to take advantage of these grants of grace from Holy Mother Church and set the captives free.

Now this November is different in a number of important ways, thanks in large part to our new Holy Father and his religious order. Let me explain.

A Pope of firsts

We are living and practicing our faith under a new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV. He is the first American pope;

definitely the first Chicago native to be elected pope, and the first member of the Augustinian Order (the OSAs) to be elected pope.

As you read in the summer issue of this magazine, our General Superior of the Marian Fathers, Fr. Joe Roesch (a member of our American Province), was in Rome for the announcement of the new Holy Father. We Marians live



METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART/OPEN ACCESS.

now under an American General Superior as well as an American pope!

“Let us pray for Pope Leo XIV and for the Church throughout the world,” Fr. Joe wrote. “As the Holy Father desires, may our world be filled with the peace of Christ, may everyone recognize that God loves us all, and may the world be open to the gentle guidance of Our Lady as we traverse the pathway to Heaven!”

Amen!

Saint Nicholas of Tolentino

Now, I want to take this occasion to reintroduce you all to another famous Augustinian priest, St. Nicholas of Tolentino (1245-1305), whom then-Friar Robert Prevost chose as his patron saint on Aug. 29, 1981, when he took perpetual vows. We celebrate St. Nicholas’ feast on Sept. 10 (shortly before the 15th Annual Mercy for Souls Conference on Sept. 13 — please join us!).

Pope Leo’s home province of Augustinian Friars tell the story of St. Nicholas of Tolentino on their website, MidwestAugustinians.org:

As a priest and religious, he was full of charity towards his brother Augustinians as well as towards the people to whom he ministered. He visited the sick and cared for the needy. He was a noted preacher of the Gospel. He gave special attention to those who had fallen away from the Church. People considered him a miracle

worker. He often fasted and performed other works of penance. He spent long hours in prayer.

The story is told that . . . Nicholas, while asleep in bed, heard the voice of a deceased friar he had known. This friar told Nicholas that he was in Purgatory, and urged him to celebrate the Eucharist for him and other souls there, so that they would be set free by the power of Christ. Nicholas did so for seven days. The friar again spoke to Nicholas, thanking him and assuring him that a large number of souls were now with God. Because of this Nicholas was proclaimed patron of the souls in Purgatory.

We invite you to join the Marians this November in our month-long remembrance of all the faithful departed. Please visit Marian.org/b67 to join us in our November remembrance.

Full of wonder

When the Marian Family lives our founding charism of praying for the Holy Souls in Purgatory, we practice one of the most blessed forms of Works of Mercy. Saint Nicholas of Tolentino’s intercession for the souls in Purgatory proves that. The Church has tasked one of her most powerful intercessors with the same work you and I practice — what better signal can we have of the importance of persisting in offering prayers, suffrages, and indulgences for the dead?

Pray for the souls in Purgatory, like St. Nicholas of Tolentino did. And pray for his brother Augustinian, Pope Leo XIV.

Father Dan Cambra, MIC, is the spiritual director of the Holy Souls Soldality. Visit PrayForSouls.org to learn more. MH



Among the memorable stops during the pilgrimage to Poland was the House of St. Michael the Archangel in the Marian Forest (Puszcza Mariańska). It was here in 1670 that Stanislaus Papczyński founded the first Polish male order, the Marians of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

HISTORY AND HERITAGE

MARIAN SEMINARIANS TOUR POLAND

By Br. Josh, MIC

In May, Br. Andrew Mączyński, MIC, led a large group of Marian seminarians, brothers, and novices on an unforgettable trip to Poland. Father Timothy Childers, MIC, joined us as our religious superior, and Fr. Daniel Klimek helped as a translator; both priests provided Masses for the group. Brother Andrew was an expert guide. Our trip spanned 17 days, with one overnight in Lithuania, and the rest of that time spent traveling through Poland. Our purpose was to visit the Marian heritage sites, becoming more deeply immersed in Marian history and identity.

When our plane arrived in Fryderyk Chopin Airport in Warsaw, many of our group of Marian pilgrims were in a fog of exhaustion. It was an eight-hour red-eye flight from JFK Airport in New York City to Copenhagen, Denmark, and from Denmark another 90 minutes after the layover. To more quickly adjust to the time difference, some people deliberately tried not to sleep until reaching Poland. One mentioned later, “That was the worst mistake I ever made.”

In the footsteps of the Founder

After resting from our long journey, one of the first places we visited was Góra Kalwaria, the Church of the Lord’s Cenacle, where the Marian Founder, St. Stanislaus Papczyński (1631-1701) ministered and was buried. Saint Stanislaus once had a table in the center of the church representing that on which the Lord held the Last Supper. The Holy Spirit inspired him once to lay a dead girl on that table while he celebrated Mass at St. Raphael’s altar, and the girl came back to life.

The surface of that table is the top piece of the Cenacle’s altar today; we reverently touched it and prayed for St. Stanislaus’ intercession.

We also revered the remains of Bishop Stefan Wierzbowski, who worked closely with St. Stanislaus and is considered by some Marians to be the “co-founder” of our order. Though he is not canonized, his body appears to be incorrupt.

Licheń and Częstochowa

We were awed by one of our next stops, the Basilica of Our Lady of Licheń. Those of us who had been to Rome could see that it was easily comparable in grandeur, scale, and beauty to what we had seen there. The art inside the basilica was wonderful and the extensive grounds were full of beautiful statues.

Licheń was also special to me as a place honoring some of the Virgin Mary’s Polish apparitions — I love it when Our



Celebrating Mass at the “spiritual capitol of Poland,” Jasna Gora, where Our Lady of Częstochowa, the “Black Madonna,” resides. (PHOTOS BY GIUSEPPE MIGNANO)

Lady visits us. Some seminarians said they would love to take a week just to stay at Licheń, admire the beauty, and pray.

One of our next stops was the “spiritual capitol of Poland,” Jasna Gora, where Our Lady of Częstochowa resides. We celebrated Mass right in front of the Black Madonna, a miraculous image whose cheek is broken either by the natural deterioration of the painting, as one of our tour guides told us, or by a Protestant Swede’s sword. The wall on the right side of the chapel was covered with crutches left by people miraculously healed before this image. When Swedes attempted to conquer Jasna Gora in 1655, the Virgin Mary is believed to have appeared to the invaders, terrifying them into retreat.

Continued on page 22



Some of our men made a traditional shuffle on their knees around the image. Others, including me, spent all night before the Black Madonna in a prayer vigil led by the local priests. We were invited to come up in front of the Black Madonna to receive a special blessing. We were congratulated on the new American pope, and asked to each lead a couple of Hail Marys of a Rosary decade, praying the first part in English while the people responded “Holy Mary, Mother of God ...” in Polish.

Blessed George and St. Faustina

In addition to seeing the tomb of St. Stanislaus, we stopped at the tomb of the Marian Renovator, Bl. George Matulaitis (1871-1927) in Lithuania; at St. Faustina’s tomb; and at sites closely linked with Pope St. John Paul II. We met sisters from religious orders founded by Bl. George and by St. Faustina’s priest-confessor, Bl. Michael Sopoćko, as well as sisters from other religious orders, and many Polish Marians.

We also visited Niepokalanów, St. Maximilian Kolbe’s “City of the Immaculate” in Poland, which today has a sizable Franciscan community, despite having been decimated by the Nazis. All of these holy sites were blessed places to pray.

We visited the religious house where St. Faustina used to live and where she saw key visions linked to the Divine Mercy devotion. Our guide told us a story of how Communist authorities gave the order to bulldoze all the buildings in the area, but on their list of buildings to destroy, they forgot to put the one St. Faustina was in. Therefore, it was the only building left standing, and it remains to this day. The chapel where Jesus sometimes appeared to her was destroyed, however.

I found it striking that Jesus allowed His own house to be destroyed but saved His bride’s house. To me, that says something about what kind of Person Jesus is.

The White Habit

At the end of our pilgrimage, all of our men in temporary vows received our Congregation’s white habit, and we are free to wear it whenever we please. The garment honors Mary’s Immaculate Conception, the heart of our order’s charism. When I asked two Polish superiors for their understanding of our Marian identity, they pointed to the Immaculate Conception as being the core of who we are called to be and what we are called to witness to.

Receiving the white habit felt like a culmination of our gazing into the Marian heritage. For me, the white habit seemed to carry a message: Go and live by what you have seen. MH



Above, outside the Marian Church of Our Lady of Sorrows in Goźlin, Poland.

Below, Mass at the Chapel of the Miraculous Image of the Merciful Jesus and the tomb of St. Faustina in Łagiewniki Shrine.



Spiritual treasure

SAINT STANISLAUS KOSTKA PARISH IN ADAMS, MASS.

By Chris Sparks

Thirty miles due north of the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy, close to the Vermont border, is a spiritual treasure and a vital piece of the history of the Marian Fathers in the United States.

Without St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Adams, Massachusetts, there may well not be a St. Faustina Kowalska. We might not have her Diary, either in Polish or in translation. In fact, the Marian Fathers may not have come to Stockbridge at all, or created the Association of Marian Helpers as we know it today.

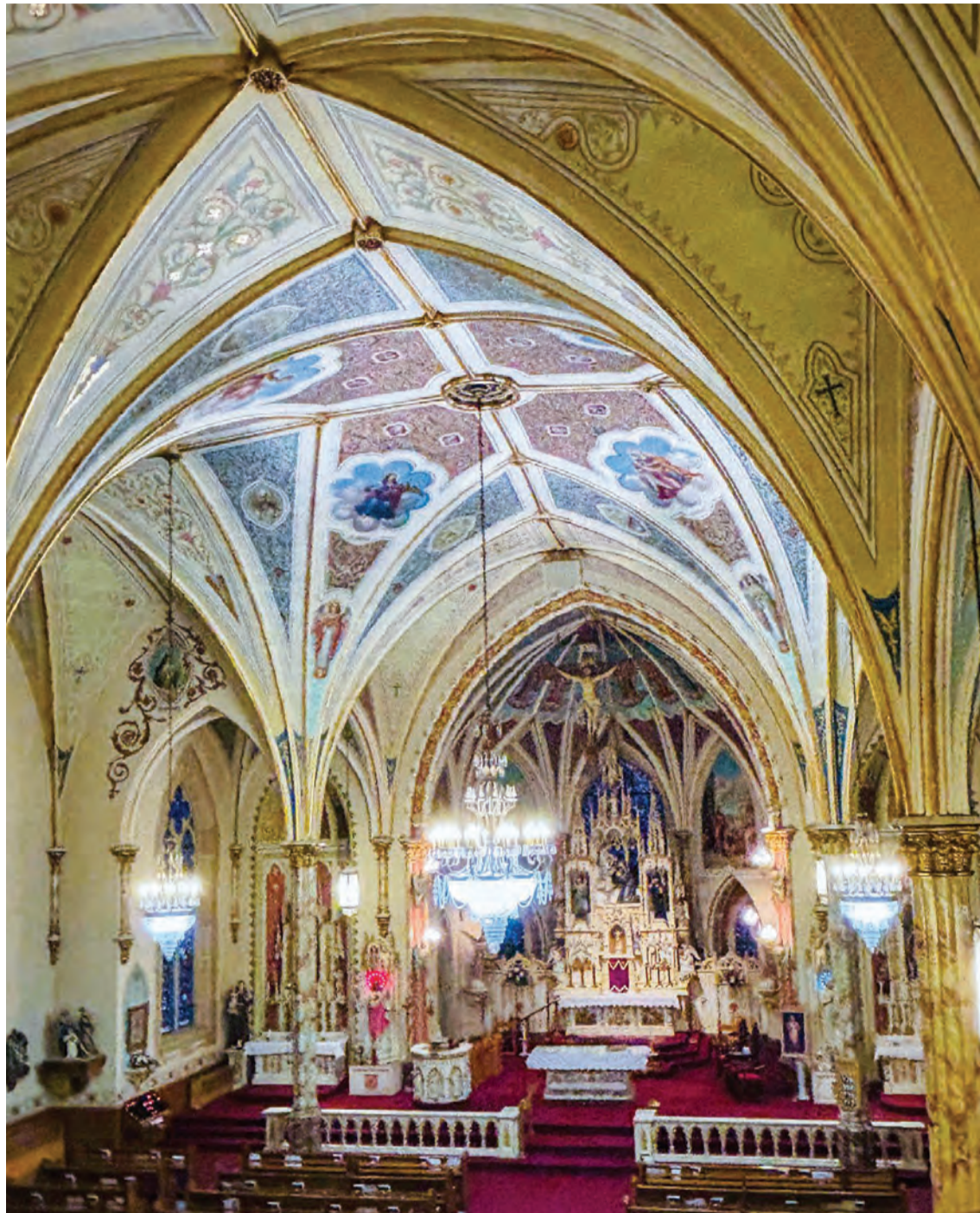
The Marian connection

Why? From St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish came some of the most consequential priestly and religious vocations of the last 150 years — or indeed, if we take seriously Jesus' revelation to St. Faustina that she would prepare the world for His Second Coming (see *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*, 429, 635, 1732), we may say that St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish gave the Church and the world some of the most consequential priestly and religious vocations of *all time*.

Father Walter Pelczynski, MIC (1916-2000), originally a parishioner at St. Stanislaus Kostka, would grow up to enter the Marian Fathers and oversee the purchase of Eden Hill for the Congregation, the site that would become the home of the Association of Marian Helpers and the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy (in what was then, prior to 2006, called the St. Stanislaus Kostka Province).

Father Seraphim Michalenko, MIC (1930-2021), also originally a parishioner at St. Stanislaus Kostka, would grow up to enter the Marian Fathers and become the vice-postulator for the cause for canonization of St. Faustina in North America. He would smuggle the microfilm of the *Diary* out of Poland right under the noses of the Communist authorities and oversee its proper transcription, transliteration, and translation before publishing it and spreading it worldwide.

All this forms part of the legacy of St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, where the first Divine Mercy Image to be publicly displayed in the Western hemisphere was hung. Dubbed "The Gem of the Berkshires," its stunning interior artistry features resplendent wall and ceiling paintings, extensive statuary, and



magnificent stained-glass windows.

The parish in Adams has poured out immense spiritual treasures on the world. Now, the parish has embarked on a restoration campaign.

Restoration work

"St. Stan's needs periodic maintenance to keep everything in good repair," the parish explains on their website. "Long years of Berkshire wind, rain, and snow have loosened roof slates, snapped snow guards, clogged gutters, and deteriorated steeple ornaments. Most recently, water leakage has led to mold growth in the church basement (Kolbe Hall). A church as uniquely beautiful and historically significant as St. Stan's cannot be allowed to deteriorate."

Visit SSKPreservation.org to learn more.

MH



TO MARY, VIA BASEBALL

God can use anyone's voice to show you His love for you through the Blessed Virgin Mary. Including the voice of your childhood bliss.

By Jay Sorgi

We who grew up in the 1980s regularly heard the voices of Michael Jackson and Huey Lewis and the News topping the charts as we spun the FM radio dial. Tom Brokaw or Peter Jennings would often ring in our ears while visuals of

the end of the Cold War came across the screen.

And if you loved baseball back then, few prominent voices could stick inside your memory as well as the late, great Vin Scully (on the screen above). "Twooo-and-twooo

to Pedro Guerrero” could only be proclaimed with perfect elocution by the “GOAT” (Greatest of All Time) of baseball broadcasters.

Voices of childhood

Of course, growing up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin during the 80s, Bob Uecker was the AM radio sound of my baseball-loving childhood as he entered the second of six decades as the voice of the Brewers before his death earlier this year. I was blessed to later call “Ueck” a co-worker for 22 years while covering news and sports at WTMJ Radio.

Yet when the biggest of games would come on your television set — the “Game of the Week” during the season, the World Series or League Championship Series in October — that smoothed-over slight Bronx accent with the ultimate levels of class would invariably flow through the television speakers: Vin Scully from Yankee Stadium, Fenway Park, his home park of Dodger Stadium.

Hail Marys

Scully’s Irish baritone was heard far more often in our home than Rosaries. They weren’t prayed too often in our house, one with four children attending Catholic school. We were given stories of devotion to the mother of Jesus, but it didn’t become part of our practice as kids, and it didn’t become part of regular routine for me as an adult.

My Catholic faith has always been the defining element of my life — one deeply imbued into the lessons of Matthew 25 and John 15, “Love one another as I have loved you.” Hail Marys became a deeper part of my life as I met and dated the incredible woman who is now my wife of 17-and-a-half years. We would pray them at the drop of a hat, a moment of worry and concern, or a moment of great celebration.

But Rosaries? Not my thing.

Until a couple of months after Vin Scully retired in 2016, that is.

Hooked

Three years earlier, Scully told the *National Catholic Register*:

The one saint everyone should have a devotion to is the Blessed Virgin Mary. It has been said, and I believe it to be true, that her prayers are more powerful than those of the rest of heaven combined. No one was closer or more devoted to Christ on earth, so it only makes sense to see the same thing in heaven. Now, the Blessed Virgin seeks to help her spiritual children get home to spend eternity with her Son.

So it’s not surprising that the very first project Scully chose to do after 67 years of broadcasting the Los Angeles Dodgers and Major League Baseball was a Rosary. He recorded it with Catholic Athletes for Christ.

With sudden strength, God hooked me to it, hooking me to the Blessed Mother who further hooked me even stronger to Jesus with it.

I listened to a very unusual presentation of the Rosary in my experience. Scully not only shared with the listener — truly, the prayer participant — what each mystery is within the Rosary. He would also read the entire Biblical passage. His intonations helped me feel the strength God was funneling to Mary through the angel Gabriel, or the visceral

pain as the Roman soldiers struck Jesus with a reed while mocking Him, or the wonderment and joy of Mary Magdelene and the disciples recognizing Christ had risen from the dead.

The greatest baseball storyteller of them all was suddenly telling me the greatest story ever told.

As I prayed those 53 Hail Marys

and more, I could more completely contemplate those blessed truths coming from those moments deep in the Word of God, and find them reaching inside me where I needed healing.

God, through Mary

And God, through Mary, did the work. He used an everyday voice of my childhood, a fellow Jesuit-educated sports nut, to show that Ignatian truth that you can find God in all things.

You can hear His handiwork in the most unexpected voices, a sound that never leaves you.

Just like I miss hearing Bob Uecker break us in half with his comedic genius, I miss Vin Scully calling baseball on Saturday afternoons as the Shakespeare of sports.

That’s where that Rosary recording comes in, one I’ve now devotedly prayed with just about every other day for the past eight years.

God, Mary, and Vin’s voice have calmed my anxiety, renewed my faith and hope, surrounded my grief, and soundtracked my celebrations with a blanketing, perfect love that never ends.

Just like the circles that line the surface of a baseball, or the sound of Vin Scully in my memory.

Jay Sorgi is a veteran news and sports reporter with decades of experience with the Green Bay Packers Radio Network. He is also the author of Greater Than the Games, a study of Olympic host city bids.

MH

“The greatest baseball storyteller of them all was suddenly telling me the greatest story ever told, via the Rosary.”



The Friedrichs — Mara (10), Bernadette (14), Pia (8), mom Marian, Gideon (6), dad Matt holding Tirian, Isaiah (16), and Kateri (12) — at the county fair, on Marian and Matt's 18th wedding anniversary.

'GOD PLANNED THIS'

By Marian Friedrichs

“Do you have other children?” the phlebotomist asked smilingly, looking up from the order my midwife had sent over to the lab.

I swallowed and blinked hard. “Yes. Six.”

“Wow. That’s a lot.” She was still smiling as she began gathering her supplies: vials, a tourniquet, Band-Aids. She had two children of her own, she told me. They were still in elementary school. She couldn’t imagine having seven.

Worries

I hadn't expected to cry. I tried not to. But I had been awake since around 3 in the morning, worrying about my baby. At 45 years old, I knew there was a good chance this pregnancy would not make it to term. And there were signs that it might already be over.

My midwife had done her best to reassure me. If I was having normal pregnancy symptoms and my hormone levels were within range, things would most likely turn out well, she said.

But I was not having normal pregnancy symptoms. The symptoms I was having were not normal at all, not for me. And now, here I was, sitting in the phlebotomist's chair so my hormone levels could be measured. And the tears came.

"I'm afraid," I choked out. "I'm afraid it's already too late."

The phlebotomist's face turned grave, her voice soothing and concerned. "OK," she said gently. "Well, we're going to find out what's going on." I nodded dumbly as she tied the tourniquet around my arm.

God's plan

"And I can tell you one thing for sure," she added, with new firmness. "God planned for you to be the mother of these seven children, and whatever happens, you will be able to handle it."

God planned this. I will be able to handle it. I clung to her words over the next few days, as the test results and my body itself confirmed what I had feared: we had lost the baby. That little one, whom I would have given anything to hold and raise as I had the other six, had lived a brief life whose every hour had been planned by God. Even if it had not been planned by us.

Before this unexpected pregnancy, my husband and I had believed we had sufficiently serious reasons to use Natural Family Planning (NFP), in accordance with Church teaching. When I laid those reasons before our pastor in the confessional, he agreed.

But a surprising thing happened after we learned we had conceived. All at once, the obstacles before which our child-bearing had come to a halt did not seem as great as they once had. When I nervously told my husband about the pregnancy, he was overjoyed, waving away all mention of those obstacles.

"It will be awesome," he said. "Everything will work out." God had planned this, and we would be able to handle it.

Open to life

I once read that being open to life means being open to everything, including death. The blessing of that child

brought with it both the thrill of receiving and the terrible ache of losing. After the miscarriage, there was no talk of resuming NFP. Instead, in the sad silence, there was unspoken agreement: We would eagerly accept any more gifts God chose to send us.

Well, He did.

Our son, Tirian Michael, was born on March 25, 2025 — the Solemnity of the Annunciation, when the Church remembers the day a young girl received the astonishing news that God's plan for her was both unsettling and unthinkably magnificent, and that, only by the grace of that same God, she would be able to handle it all.

Tirian was baptized on April 27, the Feast of the Divine Mercy, a day whose graces are known and available to us

because another young girl, surprised by Jesus' voice calling her in the midst of a village dance, obediently left her family and boarded a train from her home in the Polish countryside to the city of Warsaw. Helena Kowalska knew nothing about where she was to go or what she was to do there, except that the Lord would show her a convent. When He guided her to the very

door, she was denied entrance.

Alone in a large city, Helena followed the Lord's promptings to a place where she could live and work until the time came for her to become one of His brides and, one day, the Secretary who would remind the world of His fathomless Mercy. He had planned it all, and with His help, she handled it.

Trust and receive

My husband and I named our son after the last king of Narnia in C.S. Lewis' beloved fantasy series. In *The Last Battle*, young King Tirian leads his beleaguered people in fighting to uphold the noble principles for which Narnia has always stood. Tirian has never seen Aslan (the Christ figure in this imaginary world), but he never loses faith in Aslan or abandons his teachings, even when many of his Narnian subjects have been duped into doing so. Tirian knows that his Lord has a plan, and that as king he can, must, and will handle his part.

Through the Divine Mercy Image, Jesus pleads with His people to trust Him. "**he more a soul trusts,**" He told St. Faustina, "**the more it will receive**" (*Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*, 1578). The more a soul trusts, the more grace it will receive to handle whatever He has planned for it, which is always life, and that in abundance. MH

"I can tell you one thing for sure. God planned for you to be the mother of these seven children, and whatever happens, you will be able to handle it."



GOSPEL PICNIC LET'S BEGIN!

By Julia Rose

There's a real-life picnic story behind *Gospel Picnic*, the Marian Fathers' first foray into children's video programming, posted weekly on DivineMercyPlus.org, their exclusive streaming website.

"The idea came from my brother, Dan, and his wife, Julie," explains the host of *Gospel Picnic*, Fr. Andy Davy, MIC. "They have six children, and were looking for practical, little things to do that can have a big impact in terms of imparting the faith. They started a tradition of reading the Sunday Gospel while picnicking before their Saturday movie night."

Fast-forward a few years, and *Gospel Picnic* was born. Since its debut in November 2024 and with more than 40 weekly episodes to date, it has steadily built an audience, with parents across the country grateful for the wholesome fare.

Storytelling

"By combining puppetry, storytelling, and animation, *Gospel Picnic* helps children anchor the Sunday Gospel in their hearts and minds ahead of time, so that when they hear it proclaimed at Mass, it's not just 'blah-blah-blah,' but something they already know, love, and understand," says

Stacey Box, executive producer and head of the Marian Fathers' video department. "Plus, it's a lot of fun."

Each 6-10-minute episode (posted on Wednesdays) opens with a catchy title song ("*Gospel Picnic* let's begin!") followed by Fr. Andy inviting young viewers to sit at the picnic table and listen to his reading of Sunday's Gospel. A question from a child about the reading follows, and Fr. Andy's response. The show concludes with Fr. Andy's "homework," which encourages young viewers to continue reflecting on the Gospel, and asking, for example, for them to try to attend Eucharistic Adoration, think about one way their family can "spend time getting to know Jesus' voice," or even write a letter to the pope!

Episodes are visually appealing, with colorful graphics and animation to bring the Gospel story to life. And there are puppets, most notably "Fr. Carlos," whose priest garb was made by a Visitation Sister. Father Andy discovered the



power of puppetry while visiting residents in senior centers. “It just brought them a lot of joy,” he says. “They were like kids again.”

Gospel Picnic, he notes, is “a mix of jumping between the goofy and deep. Using the power of images to captivate young hearts and draw them into an encounter to meet the love of God in a fun way. It makes the Bible fun, and church on Sunday fun.”

“The response so far has been overwhelmingly positive,” Stacey notes. “Parents are telling us that their children are engaged and listening more attentively at Mass. In an age when many families are struggling to keep their children active in the faith, this show meets that need.”

Mother knows best

Just ask Fr. Andy’s mom, K.C. She proudly shows *Gospel Picnic* to her first-grade religious education class at Mother of God School in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

“Mom says they were able to enjoy it and absorb it, not just as a fun and goofy thing, but as a very seriously beautiful

message,” Fr. Andy says. “Children love a good story.”

There’s similar feedback from other religious education teachers and students. “I remember watching *Gospel Picnic* in our class,” says Maggie, age 10, at St. Ann’s Church in Lenox, Massachusetts. Not only did she say she’d watch more of them, but she understood the Gospel better after watching it.

Father Andy is committed to preparing a new episode every week, fitting it in between his duties as prefect of formation and local superior

in Steubenville, Ohio. It’s *that* important.

“We’re setting some good foundations for kids to not be afraid of the Bible, to be excited about it, and be more present at Sunday Mass,” Fr. Andy concludes. “We’re really trying to set a model of a way to share the beauty and joy of the Gospel, and allow that to be contagious — to actually push away the darkness.”

Gospel Picnic is available for free on DivineMercyPlus.org, with a new episode released every Wednesday in anticipation of the following Sunday’s Mass.

MH

“We’re setting some good foundations for kids to not be afraid of the Bible, to be excited about it, and be more present at Sunday Mass.”



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HIGHWAY WITNESS

Wayne and Laurie Dennis first encountered the Divine Mercy message on Divine Mercy Sunday in 2000. However, it wasn't until a few years later, when they read the Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, that they truly began to grasp the depth of the message. Inspired by what they had learned, they felt called to share this beautiful message with others.

Their journey into spreading Divine Mercy led them to discover the Marian Fathers around 2006. In their effort to help others understand Divine Mercy, they began distributing Divine Mercy Message and Devotion books.

Initially, they were unaware of the Marian Fathers at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, they found themselves drawn to these humble and holy men.



Faith and Service

The Dennises have been active members of their Texas parish, St. Ann's, since 1996. They have found numerous ways to serve their parish. Once a month, Laurie hosts a Bible Study in their home where they watch an EWTN "Living Divine Mercy" episode and then discuss it.

Each year, their parish hosts an annual Fall Carnival, which attracts around 30,000 attendees. The event is a hub of community engagement, featuring rides, games, food, crafts, live entertainment, and much more.

The Dennises saw this as a perfect opportunity to spread the Divine Mercy message, so they, along with Marian Helpers Lynne and Stephen Ryan and Mark and Michelle Ifft, set up a Divine Mercy booth for the festival.

But that wasn't quite big enough...

For years, Laurie had noticed religious billboards on road trips and often thought, "Why aren't there more Catholic billboards?" This thought became even stronger when their eldest son began school in Oklahoma. On one of the many drives from the Lone Star State to the Sooner State, Laurie felt a deep conviction that the Divine Mercy Image needed to be on billboards.

Wayne looked at Laurie like she had lost her mind, but

after spending time in prayer and seeing an 18-wheeler with a Divine Mercy Image on the back, it became clear what they were being called to do. A billboard on a Texas interstate could reach countless people, and with that confirmation, they began conversations with our graphics team and their local billboard companies.

The Dennises' hope is that each person who sees the Divine Mercy Image and visits the website (which links to the Marian Fathers' website, TheDivineMercy.org) will be drawn closer to God.

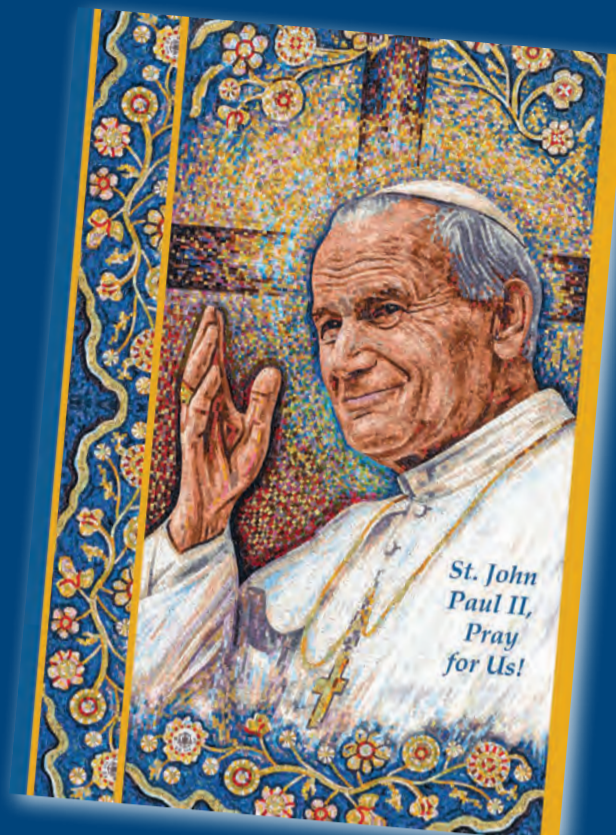
As a deacon in their parish often says, "If we show up, God will do the rest."

Living Divine Mercy

For the Dennis family, Divine Mercy is not just a message — it's a way of life. They are a testament to the power of faith and the transformative impact of God's mercy. By supporting capital projects and seminarians, they help ensure the Marian Fathers' mission thrives for generations to come. They encourage others to join in this vital support, fostering a lasting legacy of faith.



Jacqueline Morris is a Donor Relations Officer for the Marian Fathers. You may reach her at (413) 298-1390; jmorris@Marian.org; or Association of Marian Helpers, Stockbridge, MA 01263. Visit giving.Marian.org to learn more.



GIVE THE ULTIMATE GIFT OF PRAYER

Enroll yourself, your loved ones, or anyone in need of God's mercy to be remembered by the Marian Fathers in honor of **St. Faustina** and **St. John Paul II**. These Novenas (Sept. 26-Oct. 4 and Oct. 13-21) will be celebrated at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

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GRACES RECEIVED

Son finds job after long search

My son told us that he had lost his job and had been looking for jobs for four months with no success. He moved in with us and continued searching without getting even one call for an interview. Then, when I read the testimonies in *Marian Helper*, I decided to take a leap of faith and started a novena to Bl. George. Less than two months later, my son announced that he had been called for an interview! On the day of the interview, he was offered a job!

Thank you for sharing with us about this blessed priest who I hope will soon be a saint.

— VH, email

Dream job!

My nephew was let go from his trade position after a few months when his supervisor told him repeatedly he was too slow, yet failed to teach him ways that would improve his efficiency. I prayed to Blessed George after reading about him in *Marian Helper*. Within a few weeks, my nephew was offered his dream job. He appears to now be thriving!

Thank you, Bl. George!

— LM, email

A new job and a promotion

In *Marian Helper*, I saw that a reader tore out the page with Bl. George's photo and the prayer for a special grace, and posted it on her refrigerator. Every morning, she prayed for her son to find a job, and he found one. So, I decided to do the same. Every morning, I prayed for my nephew to find a job. I am the co-signer for his student

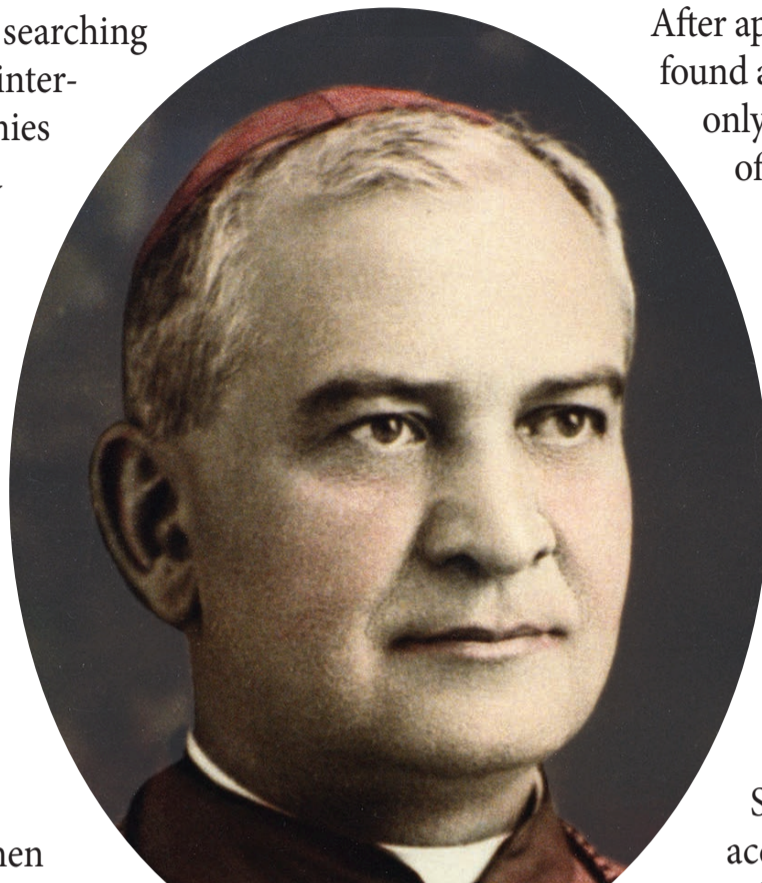
loan and was very concerned that, if he didn't find a job, I would have to make the loan payments to save my credit.

This would have created a financial hardship.

After approximately one month, my nephew found a job! He likes the work and, after only a few weeks on the job, his manager offered him a promotion!

I feel confident that, through Bl. George's intercession, my nephew found a job.

— LS, email



Acknowledgements
of graces received through
the intercession of
Blessed George Matulaitis,
Renovator of the Marian
Fathers (1871-1927).

Offered college admission

I would like to share the grace that I have received through the intercession of Bl. George. I was graduating from high school and really wanted to attend California State University, Long Beach. I was accepted to all the other universities that I applied to, but not Long Beach. So, I registered for the waiting list. The chances of being admitted were slim to none.

I said the prayer for the intercession of Bl. George for months. Today, I am grateful to announce that I have been offered admission to California State University, Long Beach!

Thank you, Bl. George, for your intercession!

— CNO, email

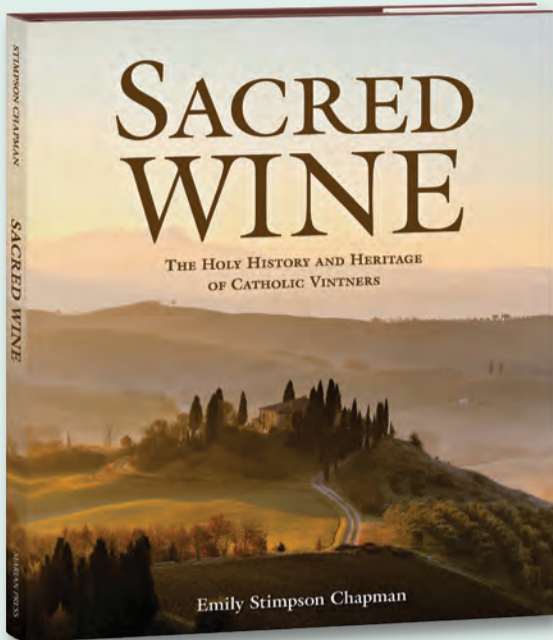
For a Blessed George prayer card (B67-CBGP), call toll free 1-800-462-7426. If you have received graces through his intercession, please write: Br. Andrew Mączyński, MIC, Vice Postulator of the Marian Causes of Canonization, 2 Prospect Hill Road, Stockbridge, MA, 01263. Email: graces@Marian.org.

Prayer for a Special Grace Through the Intercession of Blessed George

O God, our Lord and Father, You surround us always by Your care; receive our humble petition, and through the intercession of Blessed George, who suffered so much for Your glory and for the increase of Your Kingdom here on earth, grant me the grace (mention intention), for which I ask You with confidence, promising to live from now on with greater fidelity to Your commandments. Amen.

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

New from Marian Press



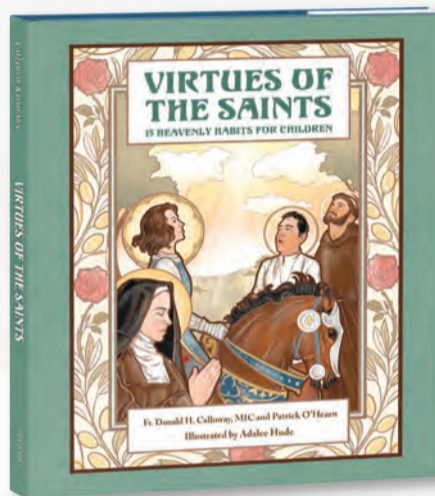
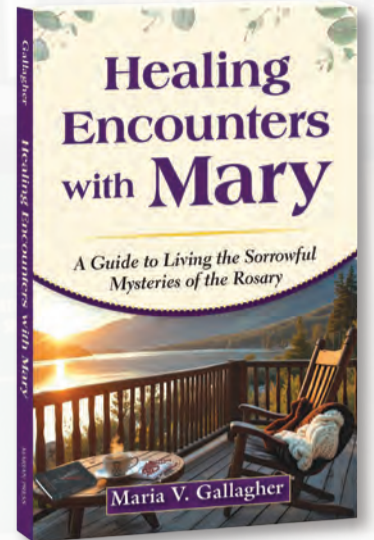
Sacred Wine

In this lavishly illustrated book, Emily Stimpson Chapman tells the stories of 12 wineries in Italy, France, and Spain whose existence have been shaped by the Catholic faith. Most of the wineries began as monasteries. A few still are. Walk the land where the grapes were grown, hear the stories told about the wine in the cellars where the bottles age, and pray in the churches where the men and women who first grew the grapes once prayed ... or still do pray. Cheers! [B67-SWBK](#) \$34.95.



Healing Encounters with Mary: A Guide to Living the Mysteries of the Rosary

In this third volume of her popular series on the Mysteries of the Rosary, Maria V. Gallagher offers personal reflections and Scriptural meditations to enhance your appreciation of the Sorrowful Mysteries. It also provides some strategies for growing in the various virtues associated with each Mystery. You will learn about various saints who experienced a special connection with the Blessed Mother, and discover the science of the Cross in the school of Our Lady through her Rosary. [B67-HEWM](#) \$16.95.



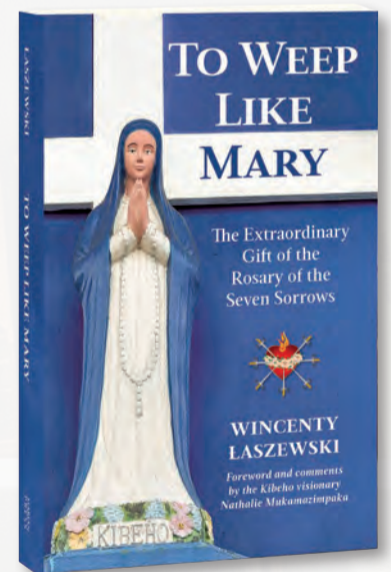
Virtues of the Saints: 15 Heavenly Habits for Children

Besides the graces of the Sacraments, God has another way for us to grow in faith from a mustard seed into a giant tree: a life of virtue, or good habits, which must be practiced daily if they are to increase. In this children's book (with beautiful illustrations by Adalee Hude), authors Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC, and Patrick O'Hearn describe 15 of the most important virtues for boys and girls, exploring how saints lived them out. Color illustrations!

[B67-VIRT](#) \$29.95.

To Weep Like Mary: The Extraordinary Gift of the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows

Our Lady points us to a different kind of Rosary in the apparitions in Kibeho, Rwanda (1981-1989): the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows. Why is the Blessed Mother speaking about it just now and pointing out the necessity of reciting it in our times? Delve deeply into the wisdom of Our Lady of Kibeho in this heartfelt book by Wincenty Laszewski, including commentary by visionary Nathalie Mukamazimpaka. [B67-WLMB](#) \$16.95.



Order toll-free: 1-800-462-7426

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Congratulations to two Marian Press authors who were honored with **2025 Catholic Media Association Book Awards!**

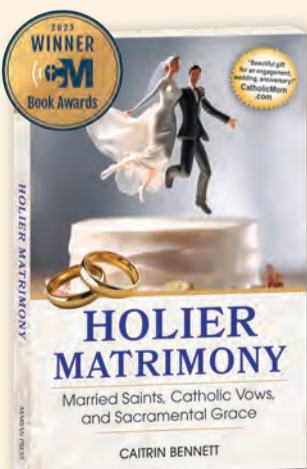
Winner, First Place, Pastoral Ministry – Parish Life:

Holier Matrimony: Married Saints, Catholic Vows, and Sacramental Grace by Caitrin Bennett

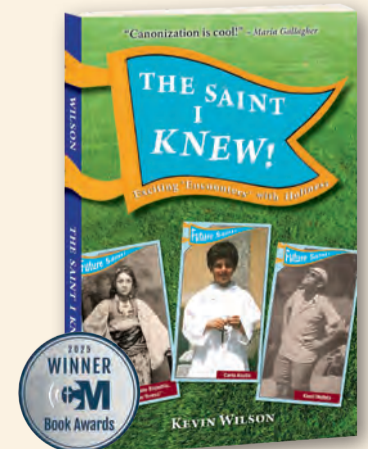
Winner, Second Place, Fiction Short Story Collection:

The Saint I Knew! Exciting Encounters with Holiness by Kevin Wilson

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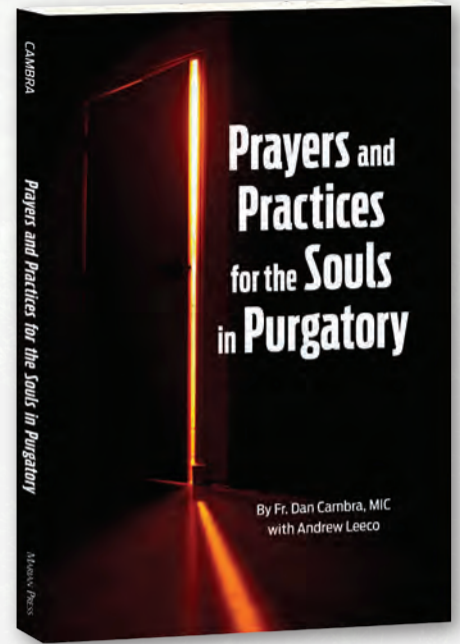


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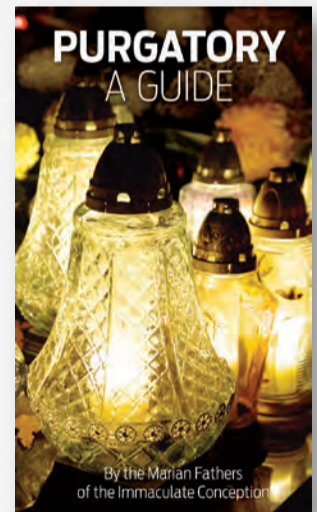
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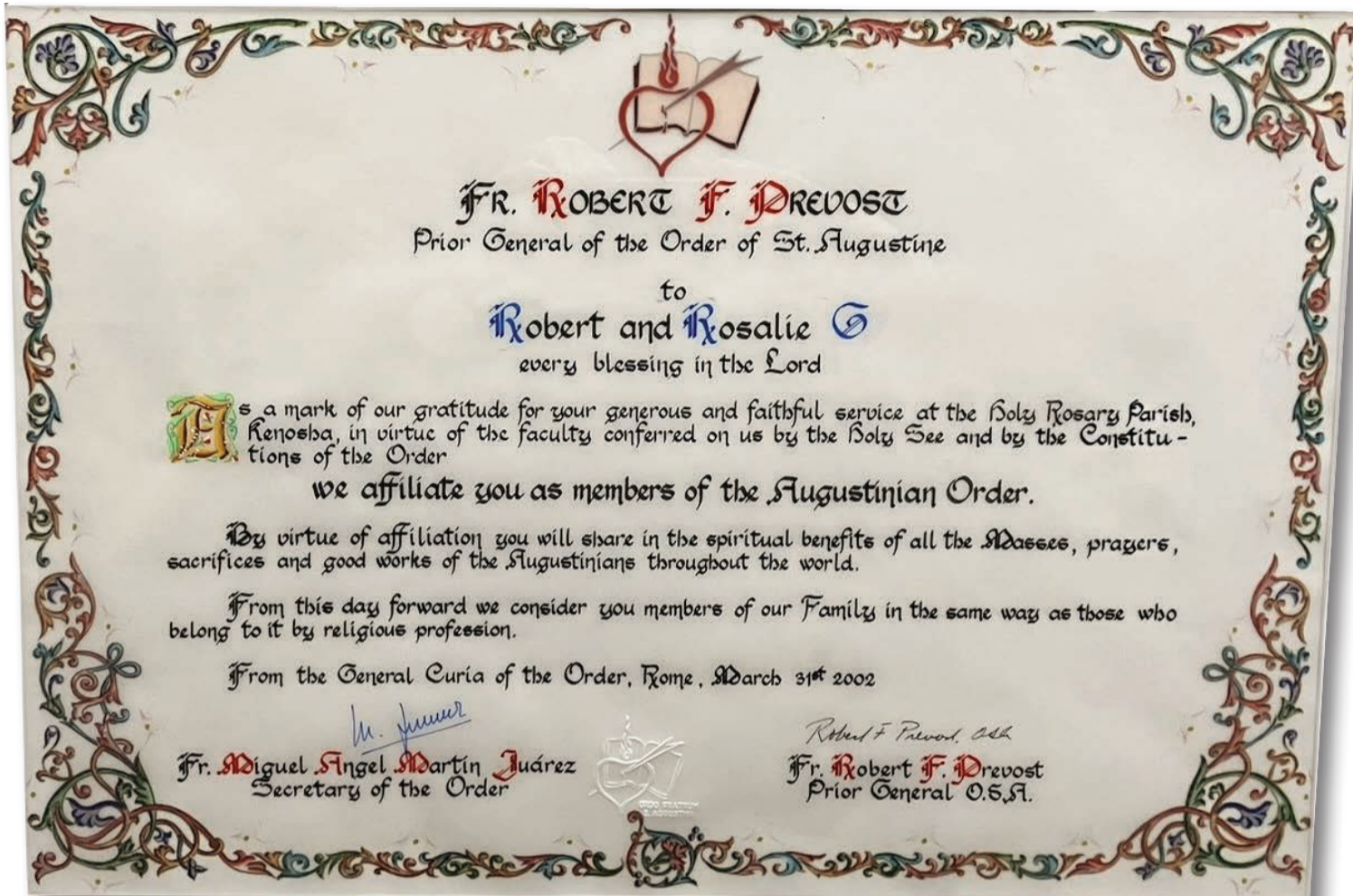
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From the
VAULTS



“We know Fr. Prevost!” writes Fr. John Larson, MIC, from Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii Parish in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

“Some parishioners immediately recognized the name of Fr. Robert Prevost when he was announced as the new pope, taking the name Leo XIV. Not only is he a member of the Augustinians who administered our parish for about 68 years, but he visited our parish at least twice. (The Marian Fathers took over administration of the parish in 2010).

“On June 7, 1997, a member of the parish, Fr. Philip Cook, OSA, was ordained an Augustinian priest. We know Fr. Prevost visited, but we don’t have any photos that show this.

“On Oct. 9, 1999, when Fr. Prevost was the provincial of the Augustinians in the Midwest, he came (above) to celebrate the 95th anniversary of our parish and the 65th anniversary of the Augustinians administering the parish.

“We also have his signature on a document (top) honoring a husband and wife as third-order Augustinians. He signed this in 2002 when he was the Prior General of the order.

“I can assure you our parish was not expecting to have been a place previously visited by the current Holy Father, but we are happy to be known as such a place!”

MH



The journey begins

Our vocations program continues to thrive, thanks be to God — and your support! On July 5, the Marian Fathers joyfully welcomed five new men into the community through the Postulant Entrance Rite, celebrated by the Very Rev. Chris Alar, MIC, with Fr. Matthew Tomey, MIC, postulant director, assisting.

Please keep these men in your prayers as they begin their journey of discernment and formation: (left-right) Fr. Scott, Benjamin, Joseph, Wolfgang, and Marciano. May Our Lady guide and protect them along the way!

Attend a retreat

Father Donald invites you to attend a **VOCATION RETREAT** at the Marian House of Studies in Steubenville, Ohio.

The next retreats:

Oct. 3-5

Nov. 28-30

Dec. 12-14

Learn more

Email: vocations@Marian.org

Visit: Marian.org/vocations

Write: Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC
Vocation Director

**Marian Fathers of the
Immaculate Conception**

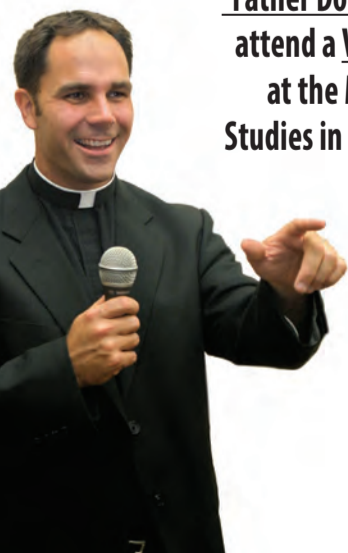
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