

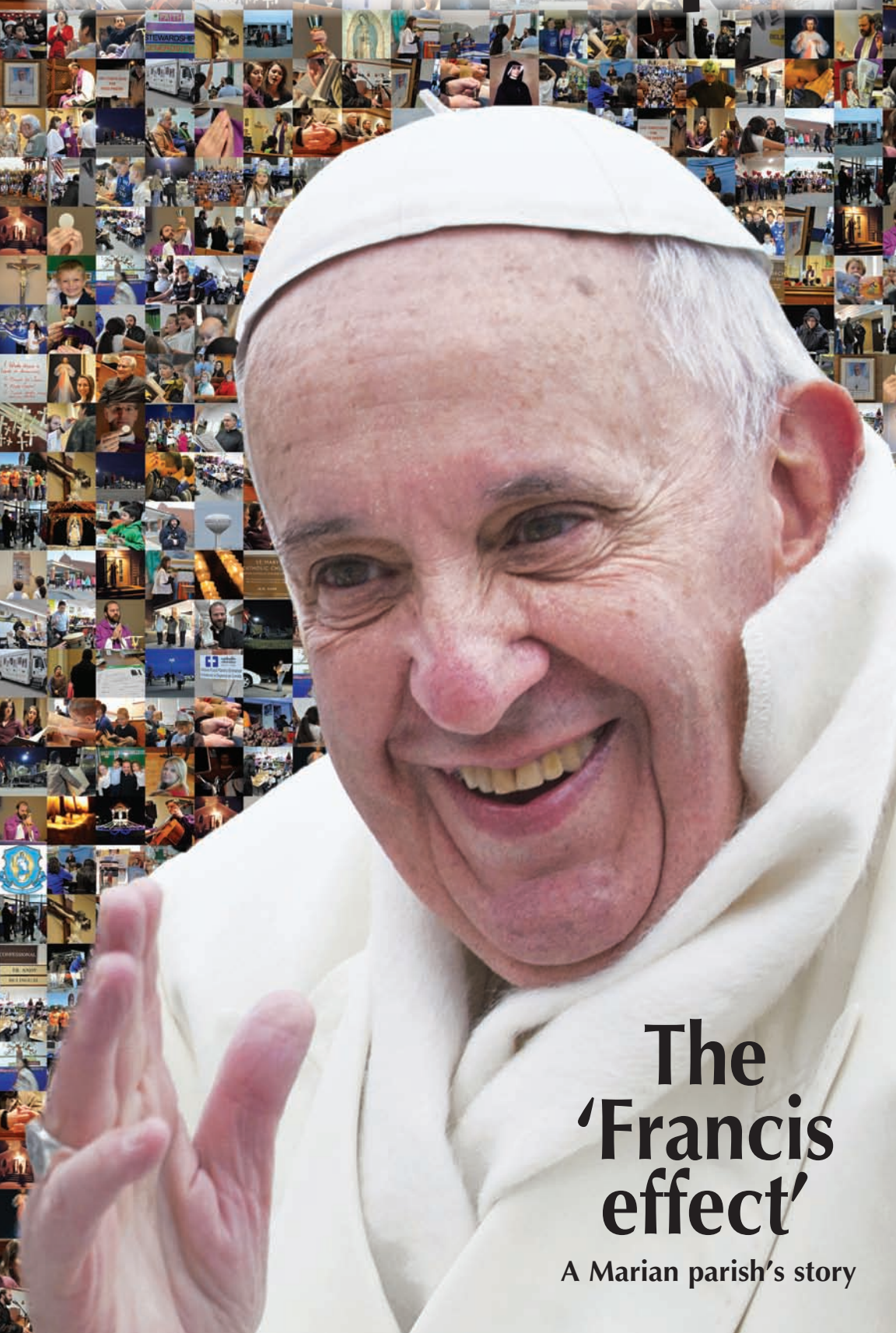
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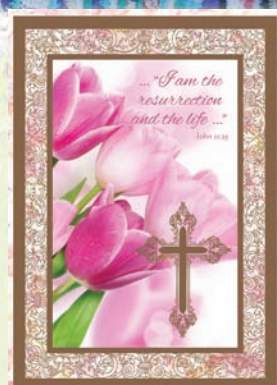
A Marian parish's story



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MARIAN HELPER

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On the cover: Pope Francis, the great pastor who puts mercy into action, is shown with a background of the people and activities of St. Mary's Parish in Plano, Illinois. Pope Francis has inspired pastor Fr. Andy Davy, MIC, and St. Mary's Parish to embrace his call to action. Photos by Felix Carroll. Photo of Pope Francis from Bigstock.

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.

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The Marians 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:



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- 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.

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The Association is a spiritual benefit society that prayerfully and financially supports Marian priests and brothers.

More than 1.5 million members share in the spiritual benefits of the Holy Masses, prayers, and good works of the Marians.

Through *Marian Helper* magazine and many other resources, members receive information about the Marian family and are encouraged to strive for personal holiness.

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Father Joseph Writes

Fr. Joseph, MIC

Getting to know you

One of my key goals during 2015 as director of the Association of Marian Helpers is to get to know many more of you, our Marian Helpers. I plan to do this by spending time with you when you come on pilgrimage to the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy and by launching Marian Helper regional gatherings this fall.

Why? Because I want to know your spiritual needs and the sorts of challenges you face in living the Catholic faith, so we can do a better job here at the National Shrine and the Marian Helpers Center of helping you grow spiritually — whether it's through stories in this magazine, the books we publish, content on our websites, or my letters to you.

My bottom line with this initiative is that the salvation and spiritual wellbeing of you, our Marian Helpers, is my first priority. And while it all starts with the Masses and prayers we Marians offer for you, it also entails getting to know you and serving you better as part of our extended Marian family.

In my years as a seminarian, I had the privilege of meeting many of you who have visited the National Shrine. You may remember me giving a talk on Divine Mercy at the Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine or serving as your guide on a tour of Eden Hill.

Then again, you may remember me from a Divine Mercy mission in your parish several years ago. As a seminarian, I assisted Fr. Dan Cambra, MIC, director of the Marian Evangelization Team, on many parish missions.

Speaking of making a difference in the spiritual wellbeing of others, I remember one parish we visited that seemed particularly receptive to the message of mercy — yet

God's grace was working even

more than we realized. Near the end of the mission, we were overjoyed to learn that the priests could not believe what they were seeing: Parishioners from several former parishes were coming together when just recently they were not even speaking to each other. We were humbled to realize that through our words, Christ was healing wounds previously caused by disagreements concerning parish administration and mergers.

While I could share many other experiences like this one, let me explain in more detail my initiative. First, I am working with Fr. Anthony Gramlich, MIC, rector of the National Shrine, to enhance our “holy hospitality” to pilgrims. These will include amenities such as a Pilgrimage Welcome Center, a place where you can relax, watch videos about Eden Hill, and even enjoy food and beverages. I will also make every effort to personally greet as many of you as I can when you come to the National Shrine during pilgrimage season, which runs from late May to late October.

In addition to enhancing your experience of God's mercy here on Eden Hill, we want to bring God's message of mercy to you! In order to do this, I've decided to resurrect an initiative of Fr. Walter Pelczynski, MIC, the first director of the Association of Marian Helpers. For years, he would invite Marian Helpers in different parts of the country to gather in their respective regions, so they could discuss and plan ways to spread the Divine Mercy message and devotion. Father Pel's goal was to help his Marian Helpers or associates grow in living the message and sharing it as apostles of Divine Mercy.

I'm excited to begin this initiative in the Northeast region this fall and then to expand it to the Midwest, the Southeast, the Southwest, the West, and the Northwest regions in the coming years.

So, Lord willing, if I haven't met you already, I may meet you this year at the Shrine or at our first regional gathering.

“Father Joseph, MIC,” is the honorary title of the director of the Association of Marian Helpers. The current director is Fr. Chris Alar, MIC.



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Father Joseph's Mailbox

Marian Helpers share how their involvement in Hearts Afire: Parish-based Programs (HAPP®) has fostered renewal in their parishes. HAPP covers Marian consecration, Divine Mercy spirituality, and basic theology in small groups, drawing upon books written by Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC.

'They were learning to trust'

When we started HAPP here, we were one of the later pilot programs for 33 Days to Morning Glory. We held our first



33 Days class in the summer. People said, "Oh, no, you don't want to do it in the summer. You won't have anyone show up." We had 55 people show up for our first class. We have had a total of eight classes, and we have had between 30 and 60 people for a class. In total, we've had more than 400 people take the HAPP classes, and we hope to keep drawing in more and more.

Some of the people who came to the class had lost their job before starting the program, and two or three people also believe that the prayers and making their consecration to Our Lady helped them get a job. We have had people who said that their spirituality was kind of dry, and they found the class reignited their love for Jesus and Mary. Many in the class shared that they were learning to trust and rely on Our Lady and her Son as well as her Spouse, the Holy Spirit. It opened up their whole world once they were able to trust.

— P & C LL, Centennial, Colorado

'We got to talk about evangelization'

One of the things the HAPP program enabled us to do — especially with The 'One Thing' Is Three and Consoling the Heart of Jesus — is we got to talk a lot about evangelization. We had lengthy discussions on how we are supposed to love each other like we love Jesus and that we are supposed to console His Heart. How do you do it? You do it through service to others.

We have seen increased interest in assisting our parish ministry. Between our ministry fair and the HAPP program, I have noticed more people who haven't participated in the

past that are now stepping forward. Overall, we have seen a lot of interest parish-wide in the HAPP programs.

— CK, New Palestine, Indiana

'A strengthening of spirituality'

I am very grateful to God for what He is doing in our small rural parishes through consecration to His Mother, the Immaculate Conception.



When I started as a pastor, I learned the parishes hadn't had a pastor for six months, and many had stopped coming to Sunday Mass. I figured that if anything was going to work in renewing the parishes, it would be the combination of Marian consecration, the Divine Mercy devotion, and Eucharistic Adoration.

We started praying the Rosary during Adoration before Masses (and the Divine Mercy Chaplet during the three o'clock hour on Fridays and Saturdays), and we offered copies of 33 Days to Morning Glory for free. I then offered the HAPP Marian Consecration group retreat several times throughout 2013, culminating in a community consecration to the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8. We offered five successive group retreats, alternating between the two parishes, and some people did the consecration preparation privately.

We clearly saw a strengthening of spirituality in the community and a desire for more HAPP retreats. Thus, we continued with Consoling the Heart of Jesus, and completed The 'One Thing' Is Three last year.

On Aug. 28, our Adoration Chapel began with 33 hours of weekly Adoration, a miracle in parishes that were not accustomed to Adoration. This weekly Adoration has clearly been a fruit of the Marian consecration retreats and the other HAPP retreats.

— Fr. RT, Whitehall and Fort Ann, New York

I'm happy to hear how our HAPP programs have been a source of renewal in your parishes. Other Marian Helpers who are interested in bringing the programs to their parishes can visit allheartsafire.org, call 1-877-200-4277 or email HAPP@marian.org.

— Fr. Joseph, MIC

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Share how your involvement in HAPP has fostered renewal in your parishes on our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/MarianHelpers](https://www.facebook.com/MarianHelpers) or e-mail us at mailbox@marian.org.



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THE SECOND GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD

NOW IS THE TIME OF MERCY

By FR. MICHAEL E. GAITLEY, MIC

MARIAN PRESS, 256 PP., \$14.95, PRE-ORDER NOW; AVAILABLE FIRST WEEK IN MARCH.

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In 2012, I gave a talk at a parish, a brief history lesson, that was later produced on a CD by Lighthouse Catholic Media. By the end of the year, it became Lighthouse's bestselling CD. Apparently, more people liked history than I realized! Or more likely, I think it was the title, "The Second Greatest Story Ever Told," that grabbed their attention.

The story I told that evening, I believe, really is the second greatest story in the history of humanity. Yet nobody is telling it! And there isn't a book that gives the whole remarkable story. The purpose of this present work is to offer the full story.

The central figure of this amazing story is St. John Paul II. Now, you may be saying, "But I already know his story. I've read this book or that book about him." If you already know his story, that's great. But I bet you still haven't heard what's most important about him. Or, if you have heard it, you've probably only gotten bits and pieces and not the full, glorious picture. That's because, for whatever reason, this "most important thing" is hardly mentioned by most of John Paul's biographers.

What makes his life the second best story ever? It's Divine Mercy. It's what John Paul II himself described as a "special task" assigned to him by God, something that "formed the image" of his pontificate. It's the mystery that, according to Pope Benedict XVI, "was at the center" of John Paul's papacy. It's what Pope Francis recognizes as a "great intuition" of John Paul II for our time.

Now, at this point, you may be saying, "Oh, is that all? I've already heard that John Paul II liked Divine Mercy. I know that Pope Francis keeps speaking about it. I've heard this story before." Again, you may have heard bits and pieces, but here you'll get the whole story. Here you'll find amazing connections, such as those between Divine Mercy, John Paul, and Fatima, that you've never heard before. So enjoy reading *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told*. I think you'll be *amazed*.

— From the Introduction by Fr. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC

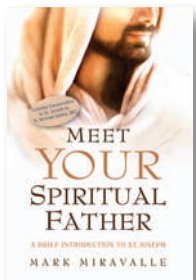
MEET YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO ST. JOSEPH

By MARK MIRAVALLE

MARIAN PRESS, 156 PP., \$12.95

PRODUCT CODES: **B25-MYSF**



In *Meet Your Mother*, Marian scholar and popular author Dr. Mark Miravalle helped us appreciate and love the Blessed Virgin Mary as our spiritual mother. Now, in *Meet Your Spiritual Father*, he invites us to grow in love and devotion to St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus.

The book opens with the compelling point that in our devotion to the saints, our love for St. Joseph should rank right after our unique love for the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In making the case for focusing our devotion to St. Joseph on his spiritual fatherhood, Dr. Miravalle writes, "I encourage you to keep one simple guiding principle ever in your mind and heart: *Who St. Joseph was to Jesus, St. Joseph is to you*. In other words, as St. Joseph was a virginal father to Jesus, the Head of the Body of Christ, so also he is a father to you, to each and every member of Christ's Body. Simply put, you could have the same human spiritual father that Jesus Christ had while on earth — if you allow yourself to truly meet your spiritual father."

In fact, this understanding of St. Joseph as a spiritual father to every member of the Body of Christ, as Dr. Miravalle points out, lines up perfectly with the papal teaching on St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. For, just as he guided and protected Jesus Christ, so St. Joseph does for the Lord's Church today.

Along with papal teaching on St. Joseph, you'll also find in these pages special prayers and devotions to St. Joseph to help you grow in love for your spiritual father. There's even a section on consecrating yourself to St. Joseph.

So, get to know your spiritual father and learn how much he loves you.



Ask a Marian

with Fr. Joe Roesch, MIC

What's the purpose of Lent?

Q. How can I prepare well for Lent, which starts on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18?

A. You can begin by understanding Lent's purpose and the Church's requirements. Lent is the 40-day penitential period to prepare our hearts to celebrate the solemnity of Easter Sunday and the entire 50-day season of Easter. It is modeled after the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert preparing for His public ministry. The Spanish word for Lent, *Cuaresma*, means 40th. Our English word "Lent" originally meant spring. The root for this word means "long," because the days lengthen during the spring. As we emerge from the darkness of winter and nature begins to blossom, our thoughts turn toward new life.

We are called to prepare our hearts for Easter by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. On Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, we are admonished to turn away from sin and to be faithful to the Gospel. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting and abstinence. Those over the age of 14 must abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and the Fridays of Lent, as well as on the other Fridays of the year. (In the United States, outside of the season of Lent, another sacrifice may be substituted for abstinence from meat on Fridays.) Since Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are also fast days, those from the ages of 18-59 are required to eat less: one meal and two smaller meals that, taken together, are not more than one main meal. These are the things that the Church requires of us during Lent.

The Church also recommends: confessing our sins, praying more (for example, attending daily Mass and praying the Stations of the Cross on Fridays), as well as making sacrifices or giving something up during Lent. In fact, giving the money saved through such sacrifices to the poor is a beautiful way to practice almsgiving, which purifies our hearts and makes atonement for our sins.

To sum up, what Christ desires most of us during Lent is a contrite and humble heart, open to His mercy.

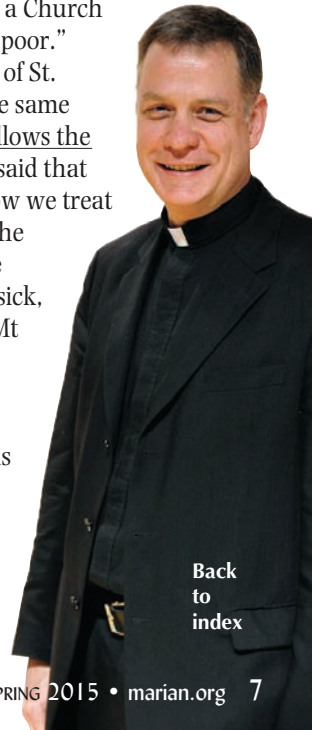
Q. Why does Pope Francis have such a heart for the poor?

A. Pope Francis told a beautiful story about his election as Pope. When the voting made it clear that he would be elected, his friend, Cardinal Claudio Hummes from Brazil, said to him, "Don't forget the poor." At that moment, the thought came into his head to choose the name Francis after the Poor Man of Assisi, known for his deep love of the poor and for living out his vow of poverty in an exemplary way.

Pope Francis has touched many by his simple lifestyle, epitomized by his decision to be driven around Rome in a 5-year-old Ford Focus. He also has a great concern for the poor, the refugees, the outcasts, the forgotten ones. Wherever he goes, he visits the poor in the slums. In Italy, Pope Francis has not yet visited some of the major cities. Instead, he has visited some forgotten places to seek out the least ones. For example, his first apostolic trip in Italy was to an island in the southern part of the country where refugees had drowned trying to reach Italy from Africa.

Pope Francis was well known in his native Argentina for reaching out to the poor. He famously took the subway to work and visited the poor in the slums of Buenos Aires. At the beginning of his pontificate, he said, "How I would like a Church that is poor and for the poor." He follows the example of St. Francis who wanted the same thing. Most of all, he follows the example of Christ who said that we will be judged by how we treat the least among us — the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the poor, the sick, and the prisoners (see Mt 25:31-46).

Pope Francis knows that money and power can be traps that lead us away from Christ. The poor can teach us to depend totally on God.



Fr. Joe Roesch, MIC, welcomes your questions. Send them to: Ask a Marian, Editorial, Eden Hill, Stockbridge, MA 01263, or email ask@marian.org.

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On Aug. 26, 2014, Christian refugees from Mosul find a home in Merga Souva, Iraq. The group has a church by their compound that ministers to 140 Christians who have all fled from the Islamic State, a jihadist group that has seized large parts of Syria and Iraq.

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted’

Marian General echoes Pope’s concern for persecuted.

Interview by Fr. Joe Roesch, MIC

A roll call of countries where Christians are persecuted in the Pope’s Christmas message to the city of Rome and to the world: That doesn’t sound like a very happy Christmas gift, and yet for our persecuted brethren, knowing that their plight hasn’t been forgotten means the world to them. I spoke to the Superior General of the Marian Fathers, the Very Rev. Fr. Andrzej Pakula, MIC, to learn more about why Pope Francis keeps drawing attention to our brothers and sisters suffering for Jesus.

Why is Pope Francis drawing attention to the persecution of Christians around the world?

In the Gospel, we hear that Jesus looked on the crowds with compassion. The compassion of Jesus was not just a pious glance from afar in which He commiserated with those poor people around Him who were suffering. Jesus literally suffers with those who suffer, feeling their pain and anguish. I think the Pope, as the Vicar of Christ, is trying to call the Church to a similar compassion for our brothers and

sisters who are suffering. We need to be in solidarity with them, pray for them, and find ways to help.

How bad is the persecution of Christians at present?

We hear on the news of persecution of Christians in the Middle East and Africa, among other places. Some of it is horrendous and blatant. Other times, it is more subtle. Often it is related to wars and terrorism. The Holy Father recently met with Christian refugees in Turkey and has stated that he would go to Iraq if he could. I don’t know how to quantify the persecution today as opposed to the persecution through history, but there are certainly many Christians in the world who are suffering terribly today.

Why is persecution a perennial fact in the life of the Church?

Jesus once said to His disciples, “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.” He often warned us of ongoing persecution

and included it among the beatitudes. Certain governments are wary of Christians because they are afraid that they threaten the social order and conformity with their ideology. We also know that there is a spiritual battle that is ongoing against Christ and His Church. This is a continuous reality throughout history.

How have the Marians experienced persecution throughout history?

In 1798, after Napoleon seized Rome, he threw all foreign religious communities out of the city, including ours. The Partitioning of Poland also affected how our Congregation could grow and be

governed in the 1800s. Religious communities were expelled from Portugal in 1834, including our own. In retaliation for a Polish national uprising against Czarist Russia in 1863, religious communities such as ours were prohibited from taking in new members. A number of Marians were sent to prison camps and hard labor in Siberia.

Some were martyred for their faith. Our community came to the point of extinction by 1908, having only one surviving member due to religious persecution. By 1928, the renovated Marian community had a mission in Harbin, Manchuria. Government officials closed it down in 1948. Our men were dispersed: some were martyred and some sent to the gulag in Siberia. Two of our men in Belorussia, Blessed George Kaszyra and Blessed Anthony Leszczewicz, were martyred by the Nazis during World War II. Knowing all their parishioners would be killed, they chose to stay and help them prepare for death. Then, after World War II, many of our men who served in various countries behind the Iron Curtain suffered persecution for many years at the hands of the Communists until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989.

In 1994, our Marians were eyewitnesses to the genocide in Rwanda. Innocent people were killed before their eyes. Their lives were threatened. They and their ministries are affected to this day. Everyone in that country needs healing of one sort or another. One of

our men has worked for years to offer counseling to priests, religious, and many lay persons so that their hearts can be healed in order to help other people.

How do these experiences of persecution help shape the Marians today?

The Marians were forced to live clandestinely and had to stop wearing a religious habit. Our way of doing ministry was restricted. In the 20th century, many Marians had to live clandestinely under the Communist regimes in countries that were either part of or under the orbit of the former Soviet Union.



The Superior General of the Marian Fathers, the Very Rev. Fr. Andrzej Pakula, MIC, says the most important thing Marian Helpers can do to help is to pray for those who are facing persecution.

Are any of the Marians or Marian ministries around the globe currently experiencing persecution?

In some countries where we work, there is a sort of soft persecution. There are limits placed on how our pastoral ministry can be carried out. Priests can work only in a parish, nowhere else. In some places, we can't

send foreign priests to work.

Our Marians in Ukraine are affected by the ongoing war in their country. There is a lack of stability and uncertainty about the future. This is especially true in Crimea, where the Marians have a parish in Sevastapol. Will the people in that parish continue to have a priest to take care of their spiritual needs?

How can Marian Helpers assist those who are being persecuted?

The most important thing the Marian Helpers can do is pray. Many of these problems are not easily resolved, and it is even a sensitive topic to discuss them. There is an unfounded fear on the part of some governments toward Christians. Some laws and practices are based on presumptions about Christians that are not always true. What to do? Some things can only be decided on a higher level than the government of a particular country. So pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide Pope Francis and the Church that we would be able to stay on the path that Christ has set for us.

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Divine Mercy Conference scheduled for March 21

The 10th annual Divine Mercy Conference will take place March 21 at Cardinal Spellman High School in Bronx, New York.

Conference organizer Ed Miller paid tribute to the role of the late Fr. Benedict Groeschel, CFR, in helping the Divine Mercy Conference develop into the major gathering of world-class speakers and fervent devotees of the message and devotion that it is today.

Father Benedict, said Miller, lent the support of his own considerable reputation and the manpower of his religious community, the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, providing a wealth of established speakers. Over the last three years, the conference continued to grow in stature, even as Fr. Groeschel's failing health forced him to become significantly less involved. With his death in 2014, the Divine Mercy Conference mourns a great friend.

Holy Mass will be celebrated by the Archdiocese of Detroit's Archbishop Allen Vigneron. New and returning speakers will include Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, the director of the Association of Marian Helpers; Dr. Bryan Thatcher, director of Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy; Fr. Glen Sudano, CFR, one of the founding members of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal; Msgr. James Lisante, a radio and TV personality; Catherine Wiley, founder of the international Catholic Grandparents Association; and Fr. Frank Pavone, MEV, national director for Priests for Life.

Go to thedinemercy.org/bronx for more information and to register.

Mercy Congress planned for April

This April, the red and pale rays of Divine Mercy will shine in the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland, California.

Hosted by the Diocese of Oakland and



The annual Divine Mercy Conference, which draws large crowds like this one from 2012, will be held March 21 in Bronx, New York.

the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, the "Divine Mercy — Fullness of the Faith" regional North American Congress on Mercy (NACOM) will be celebrated in the cathedral from Friday, April 24- Sunday, April 26.

The Most Reverend Michael Barber, SJ, bishop of Oakland, and Fr. Carl Arcosa, the Divine Mercy coordinator for the Diocese of Oakland, invited the Marians to turn what had been scheduled as a simple one-day Divine Mercy conference into a full, three-day regional NACOM. The event serves as a follow-up to the Third World Apostolic Congress on Mercy (WACOM) that took place last year in Bogotá, Colombia, and also as preparation for the national NACOM planned for October 2016 in the Diocese of Orange, California.

Visit mercycongress.org for more information and to register.

'Father Joseph, MIC' directs pilgrimage

All Marian Helpers are welcome! Father Chris Alar, MIC, director of the Association of Marian Helpers, will serve as spiritual director on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land from May 11-20. Led by Steve and Janet Ray, creators of the acclaimed "Footprints of God" series, and joined in the Holy Land by the Catholic tour guide preferred by the Vatican, pilgrims will visit many key sites from the life of Christ and the early Church, including Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem.

Call (413) 298-1303 or visit marian.org/pilgrimages for more information.

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FEATURED SPEAKERS



Fr. Chris Alar, MIC



Fr. Glen Sudano, CFR



Catherine Wiley



Fr. Frank Pavone, MEV



Msgr. James Lisante



Dr. Bryan Thatcher



Archbishop Allen Vigneron

10th annual DIVINE MERCY CONFERENCE

March 21, 2015 • 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. • Cardinal Spellman High School – Bronx, N.Y.

For information and registration: thedinemercy.org/bronx • 1-800-462-7426

In the News: Marians' Divine Mercy Apostolates

Healthcare conference held at Vatican City

Members of Healthcare Professionals for Divine Mercy attended the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers' 29th International Conference "The Person with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Animating Hope," which ran from Nov. 20-22 in Vatican City.

"My takeaway from the conference was the profound need to care for family members who are living with autistic children or young adults day in and day out," said Marie Romagnano, RN, founder of Healthcare Professionals for Divine Mercy. "Some of these children are very docile. Others are extremely agitated. Many of them can't be left alone. They're attached to one of the parents or a particular person. In addition to the medical care, pastoral care is needed for the whole family."

Organized by Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski, prefect of the sponsoring pontifical council, the conference drew attendees from all over the world, including a number of European families with autistic loved ones.

"By Archbishop Zimowski's commitment to this group of patients, he's showing his love and support not for only the patient, but for the family members and the healthcare providers," said Marie. She called it "an example of the comprehensive approach that he's recommending for individuals with medical problems whose needs are not being addressed."

That comprehensive approach is further demonstrated in the recently released English-language edition of Archbishop Zimowski's book *On the Way of the Suffering Person: God Has Visited His People* (B25-GHVBK, \$19.95).

Archbishop Zimowski will be the keynote speaker for the 11th Annual Divine Mercy



Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski, shown with Marie Romagnano, will be the keynote speaker for the 11th Annual Divine Mercy Healthcare Conference.

Medicine, Bioethics, and Spirituality Conference, running May 6-7 in Worcester, Massachusetts. Visit thedivinemercy.org/worcester for more information and to register.

EADM ships container to Philippines

Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy (EADM) continue their works of mercy, reports director Dr. Bryan Thatcher, MD.

"A container of medical supplies and religious materials was shipped last month to the poor in Manila," said Dr. Thatcher.

Dr. Thatcher will speak on Feb. 21-24 at St. Luke Church, Ellington, Connecticut; Feb. 28 at St. Lucie's in Port St. Lucie, Florida; March 10-16 in Guam; and March 21 at the Divine Mercy Conference in Bronx, New York.

Visit thedivinemercy.org/eadm/about to learn more about EADM.

Update on Divine Mercy for America

Dave and Joan Maroney of Mother of Mercy Messengers (MOMM) are hard at work on their Divine Mercy for America (DMFA) campaign, an outreach to get as many people as possible praying for our country.

"We are booked this spring in eastern Florida, South Dakota, and Oakland, California," said Joan of their travel plans.

And they continue to expand the reach of the campaign. On March 20, Marian Helpers are invited to St. Bernadette Parish in Surrey, British Columbia, as Joan and Dave debut Divine Mercy for Canada. For more information, visit thedivinemercy.org/momm/canada.

DMFA is also in the middle of a membership drive in the United States. "The goal is to have teammates in every state and every diocese," Joan said. Visit divinemercyforamerica.org for more information and to sign up.

THE APOSTOLATES WANT TO HELP YOU SPREAD DIVINE MERCY



The Divine Mercy Apostolates represent four unique lay outreaches of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception. They bring the message of Divine Mercy to communities throughout the world.

For more information, call 1-866-895-3236 or visit thedivinemercy.org/ministries.



THE 'FRANCIS EFFECT'

Inspired by
Pope, Marian
parish shares
its story
of renewal.

Story and photos by Felix Carroll



On a cold, dark evening in December, Fr. Andy Davy, MIC, steps up to the front door of his parish chapel in a quiet neighborhood in Plano, Illinois, but he doesn't need a key to open it. Not any more. It's unlocked — 24/7.

The worst thing that's happened was when a young girl from the neighborhood recently climbed up into the choir loft, thrust her hand into a piñata, and stole some candy.

Pope Francis has said "our church doors should always be open," and it's safe to say the Holy Father wasn't speaking figuratively. His advocacy for unobstructed ingress into the Catholic Church — literally and figuratively — has been the hallmark of a two-year papacy that's transforming the Church.

There's a term for this transformation: the "Francis effect." Saint Mary's, one of five parishes in the United States administered by the Marian Fathers, illustrates what can happen when Pope Francis's rallying cries for authentic discipleship are answered.

A holy 'mess'

"I want a mess in the dioceses! ... The parishes, the schools, the institutions, exist to go out!"

Those were Pope Francis's words at World Youth Day in 2013. Father Andy, the pastor of St. Mary's, was in Brazil for the occasion. He returned to Plano wide-eyed, fortified, and resolute to build upon his parish's existing ministries, create new ones, and boldly go where parishioners have rarely gone before: out of their "comfort zones" and into a secular culture that's increasingly indifferent, dismissive, or outright hostile toward the faith.

"For so many people, the norm was you go to church because you have to, or only because you'll go to hell if you don't," says Fr. Andy, who was ordained in 2009, one of about a dozen new Marian priests whose vocations were greatly influenced by St. John Paul II and his call for a "New Evangelization."

In the minds of many — including Fr. Andy — the Holy Spirit has drawn a perfect blueprint for a revitalized Church by means of three consecutive Popes. Saint John Paul II was the great philosopher who laid the

groundwork for a springtime for the Church; followed by Pope Benedict XVI, the great theologian who inspired the faithful to rediscover the basic truths of the faith, grounded in Christ's mercy; followed by Pope Francis, the great pastor who puts mercy into action and embraces the simplicity and risk-taking spirit of the Church's earliest years.

Parishes such as St. Mary's strive to practice what Pope Francis preaches — to make Christ matter to the modern world; to create hope among the young; to be servants to the old; to be poor among the poor; and to include the excluded.

And to do so *joyfully*. Or, to put it in the Pope's words, to not be "sourpusses."

"He really *did* use the word 'sourpusses,' didn't he?" marvels Fr. Andy. Yes, Pope Francis employed the word "sourpusses" in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangeli Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*, released on Nov. 24, 2013.

Indeed, in a parish undergoing the Francis

effect, people will *want* to go to Mass; they'll *want* to live the faith.

"Instead of taking the world to task, Pope Francis is taking the Church to task first. He's waking us up. He's calling upon us to love Jesus in a personal way and to become an army of intentional disciples who go out into the world to love and serve as Jesus loves and serves."

— Fr. Andy Davy, MIC,
pastor of St. Mary's Parish

Who are we?

In the fall of 2013, Fr. Andy stood before his congregation during Sunday Mass and asked, "How many of you know our parish's mission statement?" Not a hand was raised. He admitted he couldn't recite it either. He knew it was wordy and well-intentioned. But the fact he and his congregation were unfamiliar with it was proof enough it needed revision.

On the spot, Fr. Andy suggested the following 14-word mission statement: "To be led, and to lead others, into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ."

Adhering to the mission entails making Mass "matter," starting first with carefully crafted homilies that make the Gospel relevant to people's lives. It means forming intentional disciples who are missionary and evangelizing by nature. It entails being concerned with who's *not* here and loving them too much to sit in church and wait.

"Pope Francis has helped our parish to change our whole mindset," says Fr. Andy. "We have to be a 'missionary parish.' We

cannot be content to just sit in our pews while the world needs to know the love of Jesus.”

Feeding body and soul

Wearing a soiled, oversized winter coat, a man named Craig blows heat into his hands as he takes a seat in the pews of the church on a bitterly cold evening a week before Christmas. He’s not a parishioner, but that doesn’t matter right now to the St. Mary’s volunteers unloading food outside. He heard through word of mouth the parish was handing out free boxes of food, and he needs food.

Plano, a town on the far western edge of the Chicago suburbs with a population of 11,000, has borne the brunt of a drawn-out economic downturn. A father of one daughter, Craig, who was laid off two years ago from a manufacturing job and now works for minimum wage at two retail chain stores, says he has been moved by St. Mary’s generosity.

Enough to attend Mass?

“I’d like to, yeah,” he says. “I’m not sure how Christian I am, but yeah.”

The Francis effect is responsible for St. Mary’s securing a grant last summer under Catholic Charities that brings a mobile food pantry to town seven times a year. The food is blessed by Fr. Andy, boxed up by parishioners, and distributed to about 200 families. The boxes include baked turkeys, fresh vegetables — the good stuff.

“Our parish had taken collections for the poor for years, but we had never really done hands-on ministry to this extent,” says Fr. Andy. “And now we are tasting the sweetness

of serving others that we might not ever have encountered, and it’s catching fire.”

Indeed, the food truck has helped build relations with the larger community, including the public schools. Father Andy, who now makes it a point to be a presence at high school sporting events, was asked to bless the football team last fall. A priest blessing a public school sports team is just about unheard of these days.

“The Holy Father wants us to step out,” says Fr. Andy, “and this is the sort of grace that can occur as a result.”

Ministries on the move

The food truck is one of many St. Mary’s ministries making a holy mess. Membership in the parish’s youth group has soared from five to 40 students in the last couple years.

“And these are teens who *want* to be here,” says Isabel Rubio, one of the group leaders.

A men’s ministry formed two years ago now attracts 25-30 men for Saturday morning fellowship.

“We talk. We pray for each other. We step out in faith together,” says John Lovetere, a member of the ministry.

The parish now hosts Marriage Encounters in Spanish. There are more ministries beyond that. The parish is looking for ways of providing medical assistance to the poor and uninsured.

And the parish is forming young disciples in its kindergarten-through-eighth grade elementary school, which puts heavy emphasis on both catechesis and works of mercy. Father Andy, priest-in-residence Fr. Michael Callea, MIC, and Fr. Matthew Lamoureux, MIC,

► Listen to homily messages from St. Mary’s.

► Listen to homily messages in Spanish from St. Mary’s.

Voices from the pews

LEXI LOVETERE

Leader in St. Mary’s “Y Disciple” youth group

Young Catholics are now embracing social media, for a good purpose. This is so important. We now see videos made by young Catholics around the country. They’re funny and cool, and they’re drawing in the youth. We have teens who aren’t even Catholic coming to our youth group now, and they want to be there.



DOUGLAS WELLS

Deacon at St. Mary’s Parish

We’re learning that when ministering to those living outside of the faith, you have to first let them know they have value. You love the sinner, hate the sin. You have to be present to them, serve them as if they’re Jesus Christ Himself. We’re trying to see with the eyes of Jesus Christ — that’s the ticket.



ESTELA MARTINEZ

Coordinator of St. Mary’s mobile food pantry

It’s very exciting to be able to help those in need. That’s what we are here on earth to do — help one another, as our Savior says. We’re only here for a short time, and we have to make the best of it. This [the food pantry] is a great blessing to our parish, one of many ministries to come.



pastor of a nearby parish, are all deeply involved in the school.

“When I was growing up, we didn’t talk to priests. We were afraid of priests,” says third-grade teacher Lisa McGill. “That’s not the case here, and one of the results is the eighth graders actually *want* to go to confession now.”

Parishioners agree that the seeds for the Francis effect were first planted in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, when the parish instituted Eucharistic Adoration in its chapel. Adoration continues nearly around the clock, seven days a week.

Indeed, a revitalized Church all starts and ends with Jesus.

“When we talk of the crisis in the culture and an erosion of faith,” says Fr. Andy, “that forces us to get to the heart of the Gospel. There’s so much to do, and it sounds overwhelming, but really it’s very exciting.”

Food for thought

In the meantime, St. Mary’s Parish has come to understand it cannot attract non-churchgoers to the Sacraments through coercion. They must first respect the dignity

Recommended reading

These three resources have proved invaluable in St. Mary Church’s efforts to revitalize its community life:

- *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*) by Pope Francis, 2013.
- *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, and Making Church Matter* by Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran (Ave Maria Press, 2013).
- *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* by Sherry Weddell (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012).

ish’s many ministries. “We tell them they are always welcome here, and maybe they didn’t know that before.”

On the evening of the food distribution, Deacon Doug has placed piles of pamphlets at the door that contain information about the Catholic faith. While awaiting his turn to collect his food, Craig thumbs through a pamphlet. Whether he comes to Mass is a matter now for the Holy Spirit to sort out, Deacon Doug says.

In the meantime, you can’t feed the soul without first feeding the stomach. To that end, Deacon Doug heads out to the food truck. He opens the church door. Along with his fellow parishioners, he steels himself against a stiff wind as he steps out of his comfort zone.

of each person and love the person as Jesus does.

Case in point: When parishioners gather to distribute food for the poor, they do so with a prayer that the recipients will equate this warm church building with hope, refuge, and healing.

“It’s a soft sell,” says Deacon Doug Wells, a jack-of-all-trades in the par-

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► See a slideshow of St. Mary’s Parish.

DAVID BEER

Member of St. Mary’s “That Man is You” men’s ministry

A lot of the time as Catholics, we are told what to do, but we’re not shown how to do it, how to get started. Volunteering? OK, but what do you do, where do you go? Feed the hungry? OK, but where, how? With Fr. Andy pushing us, we’re figuring out “how” and “where” and then testing our faith, stepping out, and trusting in the Lord.



HELEN LEIN

Member of Rosary group

We pray a lot. The harder things get in the world, the more Rosaries we pray. The family is in tough shape in this country. Children are being raised without a mother or a father. I know with the school here, through Fr. Andy, the children are given such a good example to be good and kind and holy and to put others before themselves. This is what the world needs.



HEATHER NELSON

CCD teacher for teens

Each week, we have a 90-minute time frame to make an impact on the students. We pray that through the Holy Spirit, they can defy the odds and not drift away from the faith. We can’t introduce the faith as being totally about the “rules.” We also have to share the joy of being Catholic, of being different. We hope to at least plant a seed in their hearts, letting them know that they can always call upon Jesus and Mary no matter what. And if they drift away, they can always come home to the Church.





FELIX CARROLL

Twice a week, Blanche Koprek volunteers her time to pray *individually* for hundreds of intentions sent in to the Divine Mercy Intercessory Prayerline. “People need prayers,” says Blanche, who prays before the Blessed Sacrament. “A lot of people are struggling — *really* struggling. I feel privileged that I can help.”

BLANCHE STORMS HEAVEN FOR YOU

Prayerline volunteer lifts up your intentions to Jesus in the tabernacle.

by Felix Carroll

A rosary entwined in her fingers keeps her tethered to heaven, and if not for being tethered to heaven, Blanche Koprek would have been overwhelmed years ago by the stark evil of a world that’s come undone.

If you were to read — page after page after page — what she reads a couple of days each week, you’d do likewise. Here are a few examples:

Please pray for two elementary schoolchildren whose parents committed suicide today.

Please pray that God would give me strength. My husband walked out on me this week.

Please pray for our newborn daughter who is having seizures.

Be advised, rest assured: When you send in a request for the lighting of a votive candle for your intention at Our Lady of Mercy Candle Shrine located in the Marian Helpers Center,

Blanche or one of her fellow intercessors gets word and prays for the intention.

‘A lot of people are struggling’

Twice a week, Blanche volunteers her time to pray *individually* for hundreds of intentions sent in to the Marians’ Divine Mercy Intercessory Prayerline.

Each morning in the softly lit oratory adjacent to the Prayerline’s office, Blanche takes her position in the front pew, left side. She has with her stacks of prayer intentions, neatened up at their edges. One by one — for hours — she reads them to herself before the Blessed Sacrament while praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. It’s an emotionally demanding role.

“People need prayers,” says Blanche. “A lot of people are struggling — *really* struggling. I feel privileged that I can help.”

A paradox personified, Blanche is short in

stature but a spiritual giant; bent earthward but focused upon heaven; hard of hearing but keenly alert to the tread of others' misfortune. She's a small-town girl bounded by the big picture. She's practically oblivious to world events, yet well versed in the matter of most consequence: Jesus seeks to save souls, He requests our help, and He hears our prayers.

"With Blanche, we all feel like we're rubbing elbows with a living saint," says Cathy Chichester, the Prayerline manager.

A fixture, a spiritual force

Blanche, who turns 93 on March 24, has been a fixture at the Marian Helpers Center for nearly 60 years, beginning as a staff member and now as a volunteer in her retirement.

Born and raised in the tiny, chimney-topped town of Housatonic, Massachusetts, near Stockbridge, Blanche comes from salt-of-the-earth Polish stock. She had three brothers. Her parents worked at the textile mill. Her mother, Teofila, taught them all to pray. Blanche says that was the greatest gift she ever received.

Her mother kept religious statues and paintings in every room of their three-story Grove Street duplex, where Blanche still lives. Nearly everything remains in place, including a framed certificate from Blanche's First Holy Communion.

Blanche never married.

"The right one never came along," she says, with a God's-will-be-done shrug.

Prayerline employee Br. Paul Brandt, FSD, picks her up and drives her home. She rarely ever calls in sick, but if she does, she'll profusely apologize.

"This is her special time with Jesus," Cathy says, "and if she can't make it, she looks at it like she's letting the Lord down."

She leads a simple life.

In her second-story bedroom overlook-

ing the village of Housatonic, Blanche irons the altar cloths and vestments for her parish, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. She's a lector there on weekdays. She continues to make it a point to visit friends and family who are infirm.

She doesn't watch television. She doesn't listen to the radio. Once she gets home, she removes her hearing aid to save the battery.

"Blanche knows what she needs to know," says Br. Paul, who first met Blanche in 1963. "She sees the sadness of the world. She lives the realities of the 150 to 200 people whose prayer intentions she reads each day, and those realities profoundly affect her."

Blanche concurs with that.

"Sometimes I do need to put the prayer requests down for a moment and take a little walk," she says. "That helps, and so does praying the Stations of the Cross."

Timeless sense for modern times

With equal parts wistfulness and worry, Blanche will lean in

and share stories of simpler times. (You could cross-check her memories with paintings from the same era by Norman Rockwell, who lived nearby.) Love of God came first, families stayed together, and, by and large, the culture conducted itself under a common moral code.

Her recollections serve as a benchmark against a sobering shift in a society that clearly needs prayer. Broken marriages, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity, suicide, pornography — these are the ills cited in many prayer requests submitted to the Prayerline.

"I do the best I can," says Blanche.

And that's a lot.

Having gathered a stack of prayer requests in the Prayerline office on a recent morning, Blanche shuffles into the adjacent oratory to settle in. She never feels alone in there because she isn't.

"I'm always with Jesus," she says, pointing to the tabernacle, "and I'm so fortunate." **MH**

Prayerline, by the numbers

- Founded in 1995, the Prayerline receives about 93,500 requests a year for votive candles to be lit for individual intentions. Another 213,000 prayer requests come in annually via phone, mail, email, and its website: 1-800-804-3823, prayerline@marian.org, or thedivinemercy.org/prayer. Upon request, a candle is lit and burns for your intention, and each intention is prayed for individually.
- The Prayerline's two fulltime staff are assisted by four part-timers, six in-house volunteers, three Marian seminarians, 64 home-based volunteers, and 4,000 people around the world who pray a Holy Hour once a week for all the intentions.
- All the intentions are remembered by the Marian Fathers each day during two daily Masses and in their personal prayers.

► How you can help the Prayerline.



The Divine Mercy image was first publicly displayed in the Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy, the Gate of Dawn, in Vilnius from April 26-28, 1935. Inset: The image displayed was painted under Sr. Faustina's direction.

Liberating souls on the Feast of Mercy

How Sr. Faustina witnessed Jesus setting the captives free.

Excerpted from *Faustina: The Mystic and Her Message* by Ewa Czaczkowska

The first time the image of Divine Mercy received public veneration on Divine Mercy Sunday, the forces of hell could not withstand the graces that poured forth.

On Good Friday, April 19, 1935, Sr. Faustina heard these words of Jesus: "I desire that the image be publicly honored" (*Diary*, 414). Even before Easter, Faustina had told Fr. [Michael] Sopocko that the Lord Jesus was angry with him and was demanding that Fr. Sopocko display His image in the Gate of Dawn for three days, during the celebrations marking the close of the Jubilee the Church was then celebrating, the 1900th anniversary of the Redemption. The closing of the celebration fell on the first Sunday after Easter. Just as Fr. Sopocko was trying to figure out how to carry out this request, the phone rang. The pastor of the Shrine of the Gate of Dawn, Fr. Stanislaus Zawadzki, was calling to ask Fr. Sopocko to preach sermons during the three-day celebrations for the close of the Jubilee at

the shrine. Father Sopocko agreed, but set one condition: the image of Jesus was to be hung as a decoration at the Gate of Dawn during the celebrations. Father Zawadzki consented to it. ...

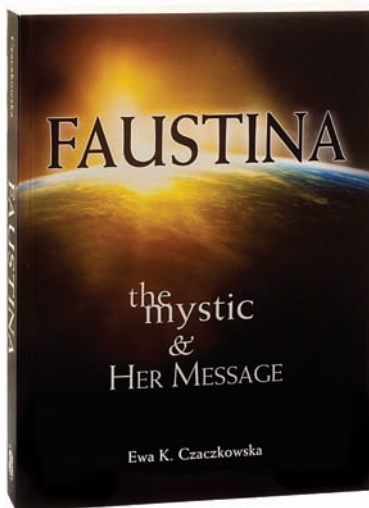
Sister Faustina must have been overjoyed to learn that the image of the Merciful Jesus was going to be displayed on the Sunday after Easter at the Gate of Dawn, which was the most important place for religious worship, not just in Vilnius, but in the entire Republic — of equal importance to the shrine in Czestochowa. ... In no way did [the image] impede the view of the miraculous image of the Mother of God. It was hung to the left of the chapel, in the front-facing upper window of the galleries on the side of the church dedicated to St. Teresa. ...

The image of the Merciful Jesus was placed [at] 7 p.m. on April 25, 1935. Sister Faustina witnessed this moment. She was among those who were decorating the image with wreaths of greenery. No one saw what Faustina saw,

however. She saw “a sudden movement of the hand of Jesus, as He made a large sign of the cross.” That evening, when she was in her cell, she also saw “the image going over the town, and the town was covered with what appeared to be a mesh and nets. As Jesus passed, He cut through all the nets and finally made a large sign of the cross and disappeared” (*Diary*, 416). ...

Mother Borgia Tichy recalled, “Some shook their heads or shrugged their shoulders, not understanding the subject of the painting; others marveled at the two rays, [pale] and red, streaming not from His Heart but from underneath His raised garment in the area of the Heart. As far as I could tell, they considered the image to be a new rendition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Not attaching any more significance to it, they walked away.”

The following day, Friday, April 26, was a typical spring day. ... Nearly 20,000 people gathered around the Gate of Dawn. Just a handful of people were able to fit into the small chapel and the galleries. The majority stood outside, on the narrow street bordered by St. Teresa’s Church to the left and row



MARIAN PRESS

To order *Faustina: The Mystic and Her Message*, visit shopmercy.org or call 1-800-462-7426. The product code is B25-BIOSF. The special price is \$19.95.

houses to the right. ... A Mass concluding the Jubilee of Redemption was celebrated in the chapel. Father Sopocho preached the sermon. He spoke of Divine Mercy. He later admitted that he spoke not “in connection with Sr. Faustina’s experiences or the image, but in connection with the idea that Divine Mercy is redemption.”

Faustina wrote, however, that when Fr. Sopocho began to speak, “the image came alive and the rays pierced the hearts of the people gathered there, but not all to the same degree. Some received more, some less. ... Then I heard the words, ‘You are a witness of My mercy. You shall stand before My throne forever as a living witness to My mercy’” (*Diary*, 417). On the way back to the convent, “a great multitude of demons” surrounded Faustina. They threatened her with terrible tortures. “Voices could be heard, ‘She has snatched away everything we have worked for over so many years!’ When I asked them, ‘Where have you come from in such great numbers?’ the wicked forms answered, ‘Out of human hearts; stop tormenting us!’” (*Diary*, 418).

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Get ready for Divine Mercy Sunday!



Visit thedivinemercy.org/celebrate for all you’ll need to celebrate the feast day.



Margaret Pontes, by her son's gravestone. "He knew what really mattered," she says. "He would say that we shouldn't be looking for complete happiness here on earth, because we won't find it until we get to heaven."

'ALL I NEEDED TO HEAR'

How a grieving mother's confidence in St. Joseph was restored.

by Felix Carroll

They pulled her son's lifeless body from the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Sept. 3, 1996. The medical examiner ruled the cause of death was by drowning but said that the facts leading up to his drowning were "undetermined." The family of Richard James Pontes, 33, is certain he was murdered. His face was severely injured. The killer was never caught.

In preparing to bury him — amid her pain and confusion — Margaret Pontes felt an anger she knew was unbecoming of a faithful Catholic. It was directed toward a favorite saint to whom she had prayed for years: St. Joseph. She couldn't help it.

As far as she was concerned, the humble carpenter chosen by God to be head of the Holy Family and Patron of the universal Church didn't live up to his reputation as "protector of families." More specifically, he didn't protect against drowning, as a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages asserts.

"I didn't even want to hear his name anymore," says Margaret, who lives in Arlington, a few miles from the spot her son enjoyed visiting — and where his body was recovered.

But as the evidence surrounding Richard's



Richard Pontes

death was revealed, so, too, was St. Joseph's presence.

Here are the facts: The State Trooper who found Richard's body was named Joseph. The Trooper's only son was also named Joseph. And the clincher: The Trooper's son and Richard shared the same godmother. The families didn't even know each other. What were the chances? The

Boston metropolitan area is home to 4.7 million people. The chances were slim.

Moreover, the State Trooper noticed a Brown Scapular around Richard's neck, and he immediately called to have a priest come to the scene to pray over Richard's body.

With that, St. Joseph — whose feast day we celebrate March 19 — had his good reputation restored in the Pontes household.

"That was all I needed to hear to realize that St. Joseph was there to help Richard — to help him spiritually," Margaret says. "You still want to tear your hair out, but this all made such a huge difference."

She can accept Richard's death now. But she'll never get over it.

Richard was "different, special," says his mom — "not a saint, but special."

He played drums in a rock band. He was a

gifted artist and writer. He was quiet, but his sense of humor would leave people in stitches. At his graduation ceremony from Butera School of Art in Boston, he wore a tuxedo jacket with tails over a pair of ripped jeans, which prompted a standing ovation from his classmates.

He probably wouldn't have identified himself as Catholic. He was still searching. Yet he loved St. Pope John Paul II. He had a devotion to St. Michael the Archangel. He knew Scripture, chapter and verse.

He rarely discussed his faith, but he wrote about it.

"He would leave these little notes around everywhere that would say things like, 'May I live for the glory of God, and when I die may I triumph in it' — things like that," his mother recalls.

St. Joseph Novena

Bring your family's intentions to faithful St. Joseph during the novena before his feast day at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy. (See the attached envelope for details.) As he did for Margaret Pontes and her family, St. Joseph can help you and your family through the hard times.

In ways they could never have imagined, Richard's death has strengthened the family's faith — and prepared them to cope with the death last August of Richard, Margaret's husband of 57 years. It, too, devastated the family, but again, God gave signs He was arranging things. Against all odds, the elder Richard's grave at Mount Pleasant Cemetery is located about 12 feet from his son's. It wasn't planned that way.

His gravestone has yet to be set. But Richard's is unmistakable. It includes an image of St. Michael and the inscription "Jesus, I trust in Thee." The gravestone's front and back are smooth. Its sides are jagged — on purpose — "because nobody is perfect," says Margaret. "Everyone is a little rough around the edges."

She continues to turn to St. Joseph in prayer, who "did everything that was asked of him by God, as difficult as it was."

As difficult as it is, she continues to pray for the conversion of the person who was responsible for her son's death.

And every day she prays for — and *to* — her son who was no saint.

"But he may be now," she says with a smile.

While going through Richard's belongings following his death, Margaret, her husband, Richard, and their three daughters discovered that Richard had drawn floor-to-ceiling images on his sheetrock walls of Jesus and Mary. He hid them behind furniture.



B25-SJ10GW

Father and Son

"As a father of three children, I drew inspiration from the way Joseph carried out his responsibilities as a husband to Mary and foster father to the Son of God," the artist Corbert Gauthier says of his painting "Father and Son."

"This painting depicts Joseph watching Jesus in their workshop as He planes a piece of wood. I also chose to show Jesus as a young boy since my youngest son was about this age at the time," the artist says. "Another dimension to this painting concerns the light streaming through the arched window in the background, which symbolizes the presence of God the Father."

To order a St. Joseph canvas print, visit DivineMercyArt.com or call 1-800-462-7426.

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Bring your family to the Shrine this year

by Chris Sparks

This year, you may want to plan a family pilgrimage to the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy and come on the last Saturday of the month.

The Marian Fathers at the National Shrine are pleased to announce their special events for the upcoming pilgrimage season, including

the opportunity for families to receive a special blessing on the last Saturday of every month at the 2 p.m. Mass.

The special blessing for families is being offered in light of the focus on family as the Church prepares for the World Meeting of Families with the Holy Father in September in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and then for the Ordinary Synod on the Family in Rome in October. The Extraordinary Synod on the Family was held last October in Rome.

“The Lord has entrusted us with many great blessings,” said Shrine Rector Fr. Anthony Gramlich, MIC. “Pilgrims help us be faithful to that trust by coming to receive the graces available through the Sacraments and prayer, as well as through veneration of the relics in our care. All are welcome during 2015. Come, let Divine Mercy bless you and transform your mind and heart.”

Here is a listing of the special events planned at the Shrine, running from early May through late October. (See plans for the Shrine’s Divine Mercy Sunday celebration on the facing page.)

- **May 10** — Mother’s Day; Blessing of Mothers, 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Masses; May Crowning, 2 p.m. Mass
- **May 18** — Feast of Marian Founder Blessed Stanislaus Papczynski
- **June 7** — Solemn Corpus Christi Procession after 10:30 a.m. Mass



Many families came to the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy to celebrate National Grandparents Day last year. This year, National Grandparents Day will be celebrated on Sept. 13.

- **June 12** — Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; Sixth Annual Global Rosary Relay for Priests, starting at 6:30 p.m.
- **June 13** — Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; Portuguese Speakers Day
- **June 21** — Father’s Day; Blessing of Fathers, 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Masses

- **June 27** — Filipino Day
- **July 16** — Memorial of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel; Investment with the Brown Scapular — 2 p.m. Mass
- **July 18** — Mass of Remembrance at 2 p.m. in honor of all Holy Innocents
- **Aug. 8** — 11th annual Encuentro Latino
- **Aug. 15** — Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Marian Week begins
- **Aug. 22** — Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Marian Week ends
- **Aug. 29** — Vietnamese Day
- **Sept. 13** — National Grandparents Day
- **Sept. 19** — Polish Day
- **Oct. 4** — Mercy for Souls Conference
- **Oct. 5** — Feast of St. Faustina Kowalska, Apostle of Divine Mercy
- **Oct. 22** — Memorial of St. John Paul II, the Great Mercy Pope.

During their visit, pilgrims have the opportunity to partake of the Shrine’s daily schedule of Holy Masses, confession, and Eucharistic Adoration. They can also pray the Rosary, recite the Novena and Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and venerate relics of St. Faustina and St. John Paul II, among others. Further, they can make the Way of the Cross at the epic outdoor Stations on Eden Hill.

For up-to-date information on Shrine events, please visit thedivinemercy.org/shrine or call (413) 298-3931.

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Cardinal Dolan to be celebrant for Mercy Sunday

by Chris Sparks

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York and a frequent guest at the Marian Fathers' [Divine Mercy Conference in Bronx](#), New York, will be the principal celebrant at the [National Shrine of The Divine Mercy](#) for the Solemn Liturgy at 1 p.m. on [Divine Mercy Sunday](#), April 12, announced Shrine Rector Fr. Anthony Gramlich, MIC.

Cardinal Dolan is one of the best-known Catholic prelates in the United States today, boldly proclaiming the Catholic faith in its fullness through his media appearances, books, blog, and many ministries.

[Saint Faustina](#) will also be in the spotlight. On Saturday evening of Divine Mercy Sunday Weekend, the Marian Fathers will host St. Luke Productions' live drama [Faustina: Messenger of Divine Mercy](#) in place of their usual Mercy Weekend Conference. Created with the expert assistance of the Marians, this show powerfully tells the story of St. Faustina and her call from Jesus to become the Apostle of Divine Mercy. "Leonardo Defilippis and his dedicated team at St. Luke Productions have pulled off something of a miracle with their 90-minute production," said Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC, director of the Marians' Evangelization and Development Office. "I encountered Faustina and the message of Divine Mercy on a new and deeper level."



Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York, has been a frequent guest at the Marian Fathers' [Divine Mercy Conference in the Bronx](#).

The drama will begin at 7:30 p.m. at Monument Mountain Regional High School in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Reservations are required by April 9. Admission is free, but a free-will offering will be taken up. To make reservations, visit thedivinemercy.org/Faustina or call 1-800-462-7426.

On Saturday and Sunday, tents will be set up on Eden Hill for prayer, activities, and groups associated with the Marians. Tents will be available for confessions, Adoration, the Divine Mercy Gift Shop, and more.

One highlight of the weekend will be the prayer banner composed of thousands of pieces of cloth, with each one bearing a Marian Helper's prayer intention for Mercy Sunday. Please visit marian.org/prayerbanner to submit intentions. In the spirit of the [World Meeting of Families in September](#) and the [Ordinary Synod on the Family in October](#), this year's theme is "Families Enveloped in Mercy, 2015."

If you can't make it to the Shrine for Divine Mercy Sunday, don't worry! You also can view the National Shrine's celebration live on [EWTN](#) (Eternal Word Television Network) on April 12. The show begins at noon EST.

About 650 volunteers are needed for the weekend. Those interested in volunteering for any part of the weekend can call 413-298-1114 or email volunteers@marian.org for more information.

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Divine Mercy Sunday weekend schedule

Saturday, April 11

- 8 a.m. — Holy Mass, National Shrine.
- 9 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. — Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Adoration Tent.
- 2:45 p.m. — A procession to the Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine.
- 3 p.m. — Divine Mercy Novena and Chaplet, Exposition of and Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine.
- 4 p.m. — Vigil Mass will be celebrated by Fr. Anthony Gramlich, MIC, Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine.
- 7:30 p.m. — [Faustina: Messenger of Divine Mercy](#) — a live dramatic production. Reservations are required. Get more info at thedivinemercy.org/Faustina. (This special event replaces the usual conference.)

Sunday, April 12

- 9 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. — Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Adoration Tent.
- 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. — Music and spiritual presentations, recitation of the Rosary, Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine.
- 1 p.m. — Solemn Liturgy will be celebrated by Timothy Cardinal Dolan, archbishop of New York, Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine.
- 3 p.m. — Divine Mercy Novena and Chaplet; Exposition of and Benediction with the Most Blessed Sacrament; blessing of religious articles and water, Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine.

On Saturday and Sunday, confessions will be heard from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., tents for enrollments and Masses will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the food court will serve starting at 8 a.m. Gift Shop tents will be open Saturday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Sunday. The votive candle tent, Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto, and the Immaculate Conception Candle Shrine will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. (The Gift Shop will be closed on Monday, April 13.) For up-to-date information, visit thedivinemercy.org/shrine or call (413) 298-1118. For bus info, visit thedivinemercy.org/buses.



Then-Br. Thaddaeus Lancton, MIC, venerates the crucifix during his perpetual vows on Sept. 5, 2014. Each of the Marians receives a large crucifix to wear after professing his final vows.

DEDICATED TO GOD

During special
year, Marians
reflect on
consecrated life.

by Chris Sparks

A Jesuit is Pope. Even nearly two years after Francis's election, that statement sounds unlikely. The Jesuits swear a special fourth vow of obedience to the Holy Father — a Jesuit hadn't ever *become* the Holy Father.

Yet here we are — and under the first-ever Jesuit Pope, the Catholic Church is celebrating a special Year of Consecrated Life, which commenced on Nov. 30, 2014, the First Sunday of Advent, and will conclude on Feb. 2, 2016, the feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

"Pope Francis has a special place in his heart for the consecrated life," said Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC, vocation director for the Marians' American province. "He has to know what it's like to live in community, to pray together, to recreate together. There's a certain fraternity that you feel. I don't think it should be overlooked that he himself is a Jesuit."

Indeed, Pope Francis opens his message for the Year of Consecrated Life by saying, "I am writing to you as the Successor of Peter, to whom the Lord entrusted the task of confirming his brothers and sisters in faith (see

Lk 22:32). But I am also writing to you as a brother who, like yourselves, is consecrated to God."

Deeper awareness of call

The purpose of the special year, said Deacon Thaddaeus Lancton, MIC, is "to deepen the awareness of consecrated life among vowed religious, as well as the whole Church. Any time there is a year with a theme, it is an invitation to rediscover, to go more deeply into the mystery presented in the theme, to see anew with the eyes of faith what God is doing and has done in this area. Consecrated life does not exist only for itself, but to give God glory, be leaven in the Church and the world, and be an eschatological sign of the life to come for the rest of the Church."

What does this consecration mean to those who have accepted it?

"At the heart of consecration is giving yourself completely to God," explained the Very Rev. Fr. Kazimierz Chwalek, MIC, provincial superior of the Marians in the United States and Argentina. "You want the Lord to be at the heart of who you are.

“During this year especially for religious communities, we desire to live this religious consecration. We want to reaffirm again the call with gratitude in our hearts. We’ve got to do this work, and the Lord provides — that’s the wonderful thing. God’s providence is so great. God knows what we need.”



“The world needs mercy,” said Br. Gabriel Cillo, MIC. “It needs to be reminded that it is loved by God, that His children are loved unconditionally by Him.

“Our charism is needed to remind people that Mary is the perfect human person

and model for every human being,” continued Br. Gabriel. “We need to be like her in order to be like Jesus, because she always said yes to God. She is a true hero for us, one of us who really did it, who really attained holiness the way God had always planned for her.”

Springtime of vocations

One of the ways in which God provides for the Church and the world is through the many and varied charisms, or particular calls of the Holy Spirit, given to the religious communities. The Marians have one charism in three aspects: to spread devotion to Mary Immaculate; offer their lives, prayers, and good works for the Holy Souls in Purgatory; and serve the Church where the need is greatest in parishes, shrines, missions, and publishing apostolates. Especially in the U.S., the Marians also promote the Divine Mercy message and devotion as an apostolic work.

Many men are finding the Marians’ charism and their apostolic work immensely attractive today. The Marian Fathers in the U.S. and Argentina have 29 men in formation, and other men are flocking to the monthly vocation retreats led by Fr. Calloway. Why? Because the Marians’ mission is more essential than ever.

Why a special year of consecrated life?

“Religious life is a supernatural gift which must be continually renewed,” said Deacon Thaddaeus. “Religious life is not natural — it is supernatural. Hence, we can’t rely upon ourselves to be good religious; rather, we must constantly turn to the Lord, begging Him to fill us, to give us to drink of the living water from Christ, so as to fulfill our vocation by His grace and give water to others” (see Jn 7:38).

That vocation demands some unique sacrifices. The vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience undergird the consecrated life, presenting unusual challenges, but also unusual opportunities to serve Jesus, His Church, and the world. “I didn’t find the happiness that

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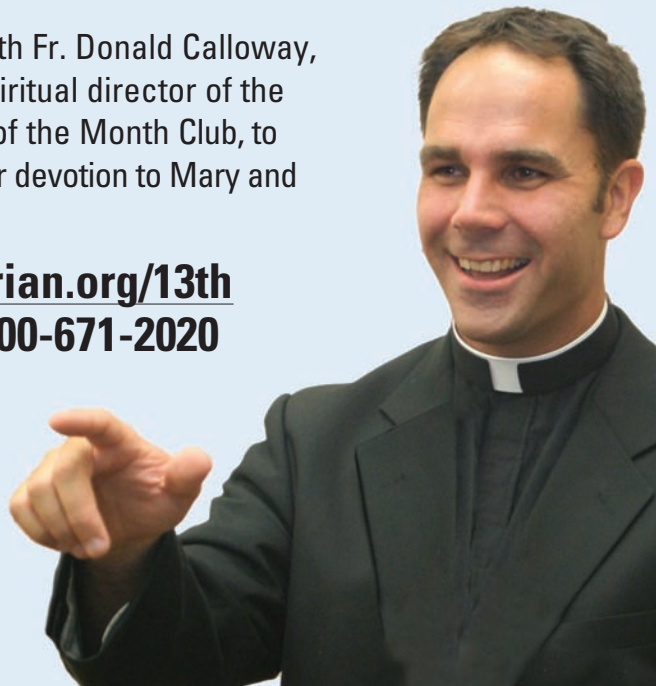
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Graces Received

'My son starts a good job next week'

'He had been looking for a job for two months'

I can't tell you how grateful I am for the intercession of Blessed George. After reading about graces received through the intercession of Blessed George in the *Fall/Winter* issue of *Marian Helper*, I started to ask Blessed George to intercede for my son John who was in desperate need of a good full-time job.

He and his two sons had moved back to Georgia from south Florida after he lost his job and his house. He had been looking for a job for two months.

I saw the letters in *Marian Helper* and thought, "Why not ask Blessed George?" So I started asking him for his intercession. After about two weeks, with no job in sight, Blessed George came through. My son starts a good job next week. I will continue to pray that God makes Blessed George a saint. In my opinion, he already is one.

— JL, Cumming, Georgia

Blessed George intercedes at the dentist's

I was at the dentist today, and in past visits, I've always had trouble with my gum-pocket in the area of my upper left back teeth. The hygienist would read off all 1s, 2s, and 3s (which are acceptable measurements of gum-pocket depth) until she got to that area. At which point, she would typically announce numbers like 4 and 5. Recently, I have been trying to floss before I brush to help with my gum problem. (I used always to floss after brushing.) So, as the hygienist began the measurements, I made a quick request to Blessed



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

George, and it was all 2s and 3s in that region. Did Blessed George intercede on my behalf? I like to think so.

— JM, Fort Collins, Colorado

'I will have the less invasive surgery'

I had been waiting a month for test results to determine if I would need more or less invasive cancer surgery. The night before the results came in, I read about graces received through the intercession of Blessed George in *Marian Helper* magazine. I asked Blessed George to intercede for me. The next day, I was told that I will have the less invasive surgery. I am thankful to Blessed George.

I will continue to ask him for his help as I go through this difficult time.

— NT, Norwalk, Connecticut

'I asked for his help, and the pain ceased'

I was reading *Marian Helper* magazine and came across letters about graces received through the intercession of Blessed George. That same day, I was having bad pains in the left side of my body. I asked Blessed George for his help, and the pain ceased. I was able to continue my daily work. I want to thank Blessed George for his intercession.

— TL, Oxford, Connecticut

For a [Blessed George prayercard](#) (B25-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, Stockbridge, MA 01263. E-mail: graces@marian.org.

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Fr. Chris Alar, MIC
"Fr. Joseph"



Remembered on Eden Hill

by Andrew Leeco

Marilyn (Wolfe) Keyes shares how trust in the Lord has always been a core value with the Wolfe family. The family has learned to turn with trust to Divine Mercy when faced with life-changing events.

In 2002, I was pregnant with my daughter, and we went in for the 20-week ultrasound. During the ultrasound, we were told that she had chronic renal failure and would not make it until birth. We had four consultations in one day, and the doctors all encouraged us to consider aborting this child.

Abortion was *never* a consideration. I told the first doctor, "Our Blessed Mother did not want to watch her Son die anymore than I want to lose one of my children. I know that she will hold our hands and walk us to that cross."

This situation put a lot of fear in us, but my mom and dad turned to faith right away. My sister Laurey and her husband, who have always been very close to the message of Divine Mercy, felt strongly that we needed to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet as a family. We all agreed that at 7 p.m. daily, wherever we were, we would begin to pray the chaplet.

My daughter was born on March 5, 2002, and she is now 12. Her medical prognosis continues to defy what we were told. She has done very well. She will need a kidney transplant someday, but she's not to that point yet.

When our daughter was just about a year old, my family, along with two of my sisters and their families, made a pilgrimage to Eden Hill. It was a very moving experience.

The next time we visited Eden Hill was Mother's Day weekend, May 9, 2009. Our entire family made the trip. The reason for our visit was because our mother had been



Richard and Janet Wolfe, with their children's families, including 23 of their grandchildren, visited Eden Hill on Mother's Day in 2009. Each of the six families has a granite band with their names engraved on it at the Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine. "My mother has always said, 'Big family, big problems,' and that was a big part of why our parents put all our names there at the Shrine," said Marilyn Keyes.

diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. We were all reeling from that news, and we realized we needed to come to Eden Hill. That weekend, we all found direction and peace in accepting God's will for our mother's diagnosis.

For our parents' 50th wedding anniversary, we chose another trip to the Shrine in thanksgiving. During that visit, we all had a chance to see our names that are engraved on granite bands at the Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine. My mother has always said, "Big family, big problems," and that was a big part of why, in trust, our parents put all our names there in 2007. Our parents taught us the message of Divine Mercy and have shown us how to live it.

Like the Wolfe family, benefactors can have a name etched on a stained-glass window, or engraved in granite or marble at the Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine. All benefactors and those they honor are remembered daily at Holy Mass and the Perpetual Novena to Divine Mercy at the National Shrine. To learn more about these and other special opportunities, please contact Fr. Joseph's assistants for special gifts online at MemorialsOnEdenHill.org or call them at 1-800-671-2020.

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► Read about Marilyn's brother who has battled a brain tumor but never stop trusting in God's mercy.

The place that mercy calls home

Create a lasting remembrance and have that special someone's name etched in stained glass, granite, or marble at the Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine.

Visit MemorialsOnEdenHill.org
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“Once again, we have to ask ourselves: Is Jesus really our first and only love, as we promised He would be when we professed our vows? Only if He is, will we be empowered to love, in truth and mercy, every person who crosses our path. For we will have learned from Jesus the meaning and practice of love. We will be able to love because we have His own heart.”

— Pope Francis’s special message to all his fellow consecrated religious

Visit thedivinemercy.org/news/6165 to read the Holy Father’s entire message for the Year of Consecrated Life.

DEDICATED

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I was looking for in the world,” said Fr. Calloway. “Obviously, the mystery of the relationship between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and the vocation of marriage is wonderful. But I felt I needed to be available to His Church entirely. That’s where I found peace.”

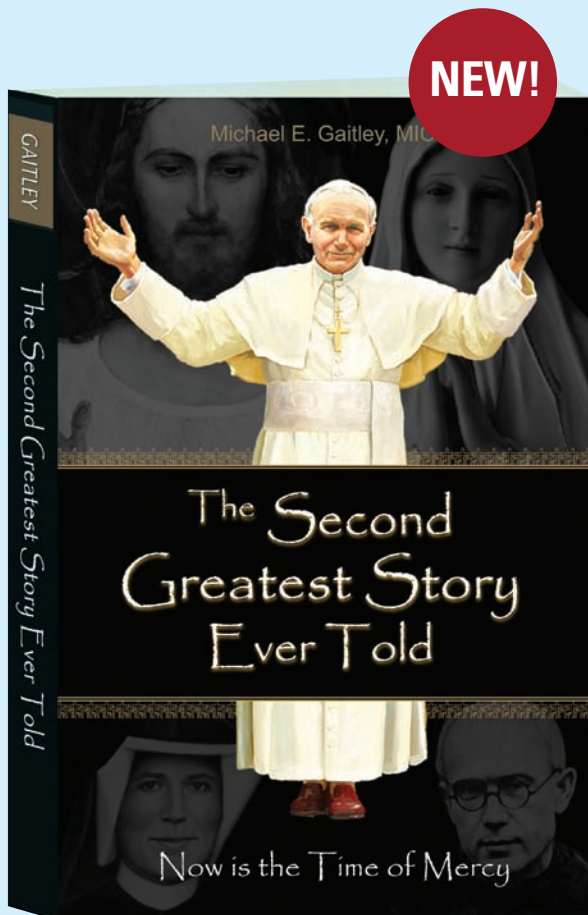
The Holy Father has invited religious communities to celebrate the year in a variety of ways: by opening their doors to the public for open houses; to meet and collaborate with other orders in order to serve both their charisms; and of course, following the express teaching of Vatican II, always to revisit their founder’s charism, writings, and witness of how to live the Christian life.

Deacon Thaddaeus said he is trying to read either some portion of the writings of Marian Founder Blessed Stanislaus Papczyński (1631-1701) or Marian Renovator Blessed George Matulaitis (1871-1927) each day.

“It is easy to be complacent and get used to the rhythm of life,” Deacon Thaddaeus concluded. “This Year of Consecrated Life provides opportunities for us and the whole Church to allow God’s light into our hearts to search our consciences. That searching light allows God to heal up and bind those areas where we have fallen into complacency or darkness, so that we can shine again with the supernatural light of God’s grace and love to a world falling into darkness.”

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See review of book on page 6.

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*Books will ship first week of March.

Outstanding Helpers

by Ellen Miller

Why Helper supports 'Mary's seminarians'

The Marian Fathers have served at St. Peter's Parish in Kenosha, Wisconsin, since 1926, and their dedicated pastoral ministry has inspired parishioners like Chris to support the Marian Congregation as Marian Helpers.

Chris has been helping the Marian seminarians with her prayers and financial offerings for a number of years. She calls them "Mary's seminarians." Every Saturday (which the Church recognizes as Mary's day), she lights a candle by a statue of the Blessed Mother. Then, she offers her Rosary, Mass, and Holy Communion for the seminarians.

I asked Chris to share her story:

Love for Jesus and Mary was passed down to me from my mother and her family. My grandmother Agatha emigrated from Croatia right before the start of World War I. When she arrived at Ellis Island, her one valued possession was her rosary.

My grandfather Marian had arrived in the Midwest from Croatia a few years earlier. He met my grandmother in 1913 at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Whiting, Indiana, where they were married in January of 1914.

My grandfather died fairly young, and my grandmother raised her six children alone. They were poor in material possessions, but they were rich in faith and love for Jesus and Mary. My mom and most of her siblings went to daily Mass.

Then, as a family, Mom had us say the Rosary together daily. Still, I didn't appreciate how important faith really is until my husband, Dick, fell out of a tree, broke his neck, and injured his spinal cord. Seeing firsthand how fragile life really is, I realized how much I needed Jesus and Mary.

As my husband was healing from his accident, I asked our pastor, Fr. Bill Hayward, MIC, at St. Peter's Parish if someone could bring him Holy Communion. He sent a young



Discover why Chris has supported "Mary's seminarians" for many years, including the vocation of Fr. Angelo Casimiro, MIC (above).

Marian who had just been ordained to the transitional diaconate. Then-Deacon Bob Vennetti, MIC, visited us every week and brought Holy Communion. After his ordination to the priesthood on May 13, 2006, the feast of Our Lady of Fatima, Fr. Bob still tried to come every week, with a retired priest filling in if he was unable to make it.

Dick and I were not the only members of my family to receive blessings through the Marians' ministry. My mother became quite frail in her last years, so she came to live with us. During that time, she had many stays in the hospital. We were so grateful that the Marian priests from our parish would visit her and give her blessings and the Anointing of the Sick.

When my Aunt Mary died in 2009, I received a generous bequest through her will. She loved the Divine Mercy and Our Lady, so I decided to honor her love of Mary by supporting the Marian seminarians. God willing, some of them will serve at St. Peter's in the future!

It is also consoling to know that the seminarians pray for Aunt Mary and for our intentions. Wherever they serve Christ and His Church, I know that these future Marian priests will be faithful to the teachings of Holy Mother Church, will love Our Blessed Mother and the Eucharist, and will faithfully serve the People of God.

If you, too, would like to support the Marian seminarians or arrange a gift through your will or other estate plans, please contact me.



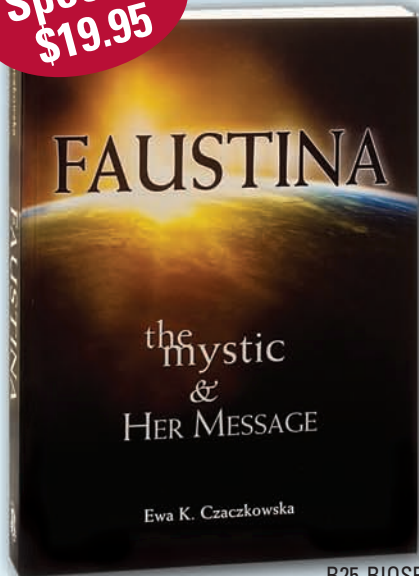
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Ellen Miller is Fr. Joseph's Director for Special Gifts. You can contact her at: Association of Marian Helpers, Stockbridge, MA 01263, or call her toll free at 1-800-671-2020. Email: helpers@marian.org.

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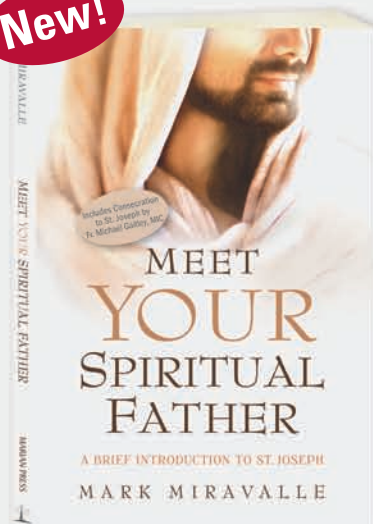
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[See review on page 6.](#)

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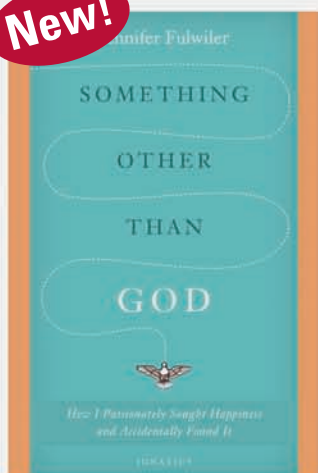
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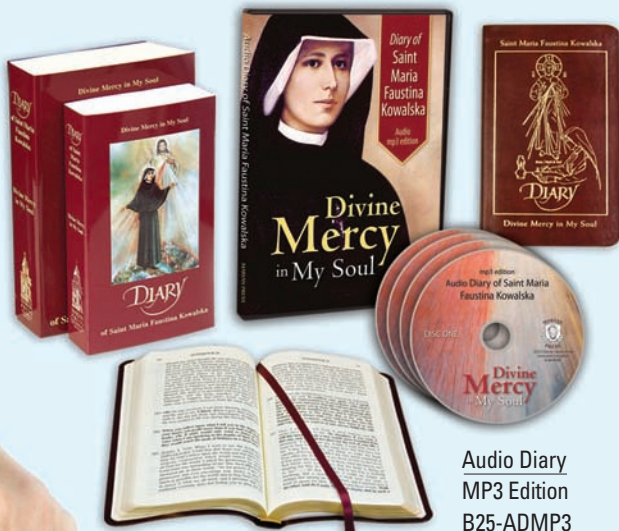
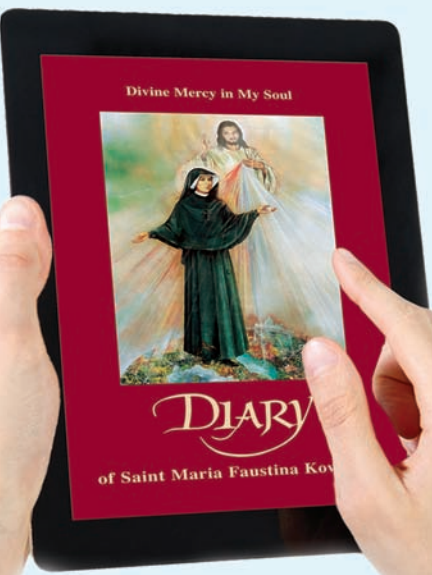
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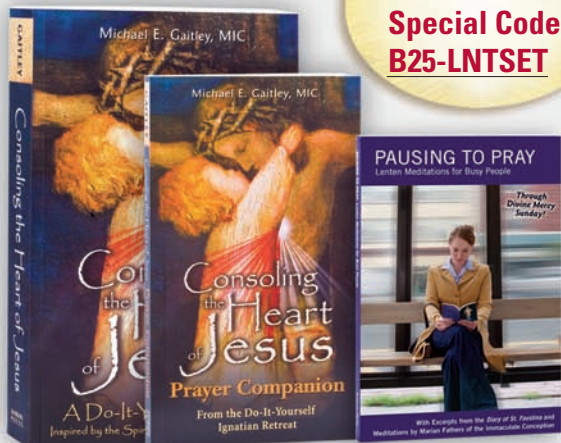
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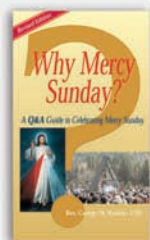
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Between Us

by a Marian and a Helper

'Serving my parish community'

I remember the creaking pews of the small church of my youth, the original church of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania. It was a comforting place, my spiritual home. It's where I learned that Jesus loves me and where I learned to pray.

I remember being home on Christmas break during college and struggling over whether I was being called to the priesthood or marriage. I knew I needed to go to my

"I knew I needed to go to my church and be with Jesus."

church and be with Jesus. Sure enough, in prayer, Jesus gave me the grace to understand He wanted me to give my life solely to Him.

Years later, in my home parish, I was ordained a Marian priest.

Now, here I am serving as pastor of St. Patrick Church in Yorkville, Illinois, where I work with the laity to make our parish "matter" in the lives of hundreds of families.

I know firsthand that a parish can strengthen families and that families can strengthen a parish. So, in addition to sharing the Gospel, what matters most to me is creating an atmosphere where you know you will always be welcomed and where, together, we are inspired to be missionaries in this world.

Keeping in mind my experiences growing up, I pray that the children of our parish will grow in their love for Jesus and that they'll know, "I can always go back there. It is a place of peace. Jesus resides there. He's calling me to discipleship. It's home."



Fr. Matthew Marian



Ralph Helper

As Pope Francis so often emphasizes, mercy is not merely to be preached but to be lived. That has been the overarching principle in my parish, St. Matthew Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, where the message of Divine Mercy has helped to transform our relationship with God and with the world beyond our walls.

Our parish and parishes everywhere have the duty to serve as critical instruments in helping to fulfill Christ's mandate, repeated through St. Faustina, to turn from sin, accept His mercy, and then, as loving servants, spread His mercy to others.

To that end, we now have some 20 Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy (EADM) prayer cenacles, which I lead.

Saint Matthew is an engaged community that sends container shipments of non-perishable goods to the people of Haiti. We reach out to the poor in our community and tithe to charities that provide services to the most needy.

Jesus wants us to be aware that the world's a mess. So what are we going to do about it?

The answer begins with trust. Leading one of the largest parishes in the country, our pastor, Msgr. John J. McSweeney, tells us, "I say every morning and several times a day, 'Jesus, I trust in You.'" In fact, our parish's new satellite location is dedicated to the Divine Mercy, and when you enter, you encounter a welcome mat with the words, "Jesus, I trust in You."

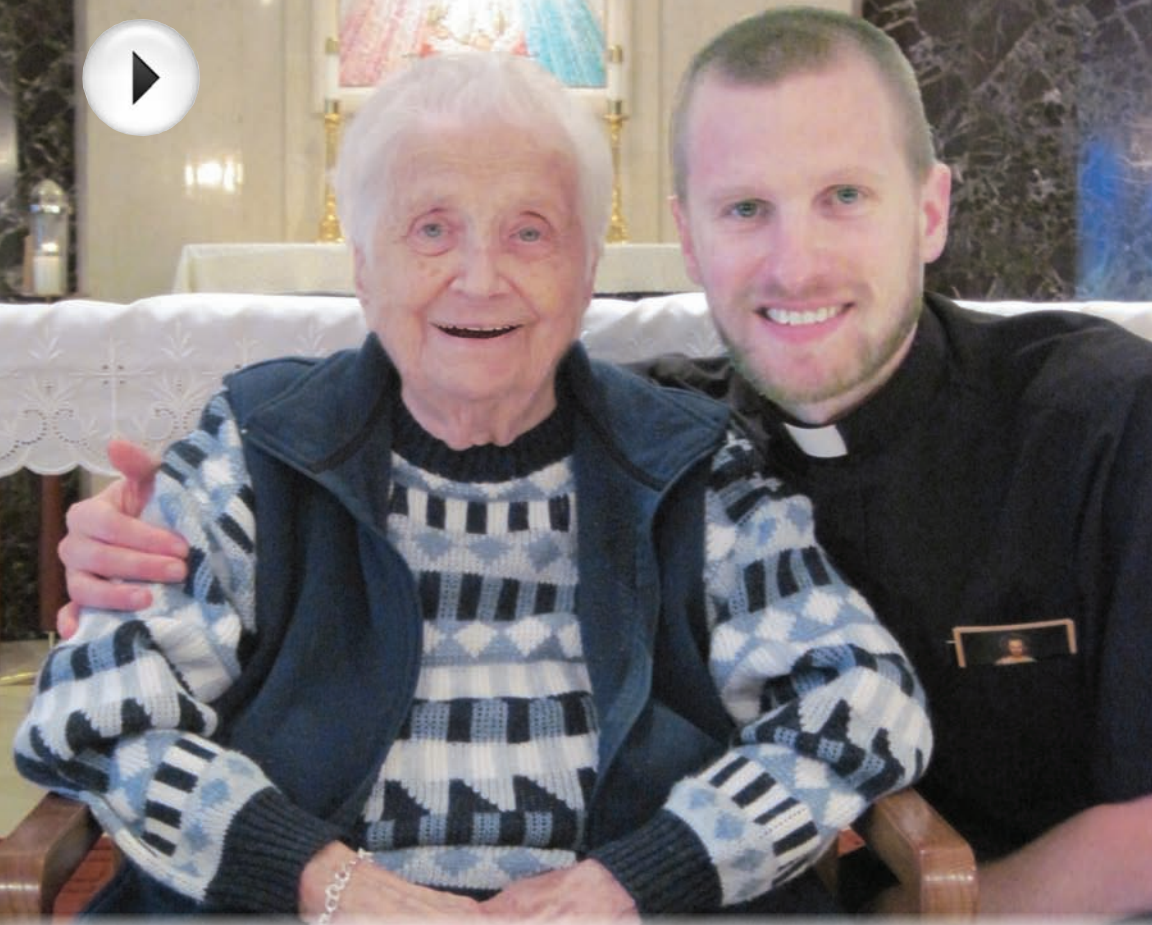
That's so fitting. Jesus welcomes us to trust in Him. Once we trust, the Holy Spirit takes over, and miracles happen.

"We reach out to the poor in our community and tithe to charities."

Fr. Matthew Lamoureux, MIC, has been pastor of St. Patrick in Yorkville, Illinois, for nearly six years.

Ralph Sullivan is leader of the EADM cenacles at St. Matthew Catholic Church, Charlotte, North Carolina.

'How we heard the call'



Marian Helper Martha:

God picked us. He made us out of love. He didn't ask us whether we wanted to be created. Now, He wants us to love back. There's no explaining it. So, when God tells you to do something, you just do it! It's not a conversation; it's an order. God told me to support the Marians. God bless the Marians and their work of saving souls.

Deacon Thaddaeus Lancton, MIC:

I heard the words: "Join the Marians." I looked to see who said those words, and I saw no one but Jesus in the monstrance. I had my direct answer, but I still needed to see what I was getting myself into. I later found out I was joining a family united by Jesus and Mary. That was — and still is — enough for me.

Want to know more about a religious vocation as a Marian?



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

The next retreats will be:
March 6-8
and April 3-5.

Write: **Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC**
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Marians of the Immaculate Conception
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Father Donald talks about the formation process.
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