

INSIDE: Fr. Chris Alar's new book on the Sacraments

Summer 2025

# Marian Helper

Inspiration and news from the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception

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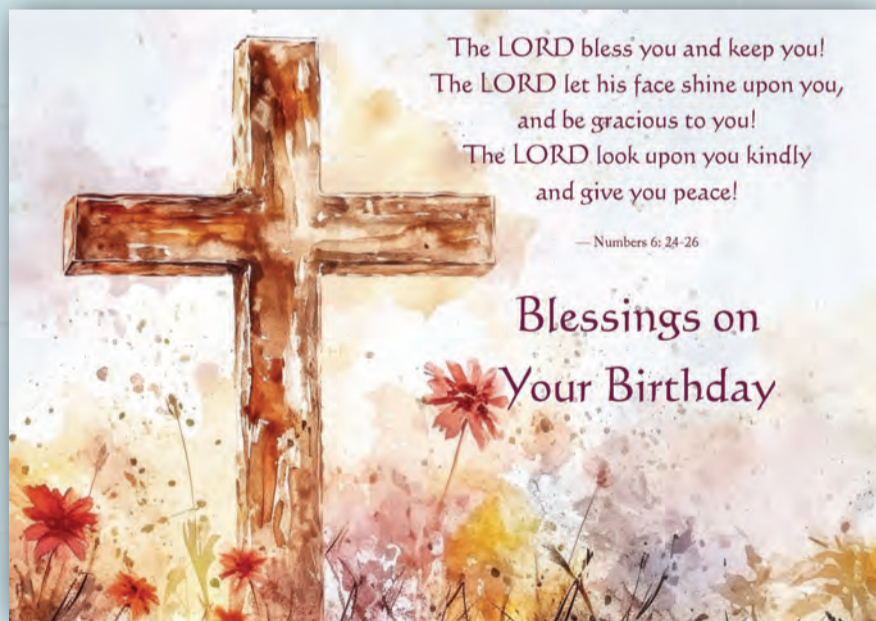
# WELCOME, POPE LEO XIV!



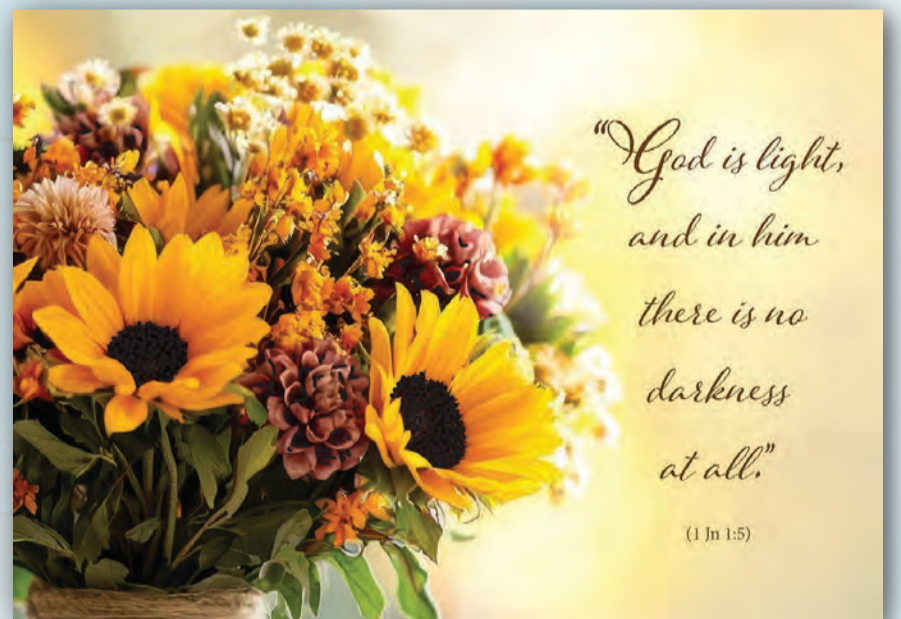
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In his long-awaited second book in the *Explaining the Faith* series, Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, reminds us of the guaranteed grace of the seven Sacraments, gifts from God to help us on the journey to Heaven. In this exclusive excerpt from *Understanding the Sacraments*, Fr. Chris reminds us that the Sacraments all find their origins in the Bible.

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### **MISSION STATEMENT**

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

## WHO WE ARE



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## Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception

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

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

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

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# HABEMUS PAPAM!

**W**hite smoke. A large crowd waiting in anticipation. The announcement from the loggia: “*Habemus Papam!*” There is nothing like it on earth. That’s what I thought as I was eagerly awaiting the announcement of our new pope.

Then it happened. Out came the proto deacon who announced that the next pope will be Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost. An American! Unbelievable! The Catholic world was shocked. The reactions of many Catholic podcasters revealed this. (Some of these were actually quite entertaining.)

In the announcement of Cardinal Prevost as Pope Leo XIV, we were reminded that we serve a God of surprises, and that the saying, “The one who enters the conclave as a pope usually comes out a cardinal” (which simply means that the favorite *never* wins) still holds true.

But what an historical conclave. There has never been an election of a new pope quite like this one. With the rise of social media as a legitimate source of news over the last 10 years, you had access to all kinds of information at your fingertips, such as how popes are elected and in-depth backgrounds of many of the electing cardinals. You could also listen to a variety of commentators talk about who they thought were the frontrunners for the papacy, while at the same time reassuring us that an American would *never* be elected pope. (Of course, I was of that opinion, too.) And the TV coverage, with those drone shots of the Vatican and the papal loggia, were incredible.

I was personally overwhelmed by it all.

But what especially moved me was reflecting on the importance of the moment. This wasn’t just another big event among other big events that occur in the course of time. It is that — but so much more.

This is the election of the Vicar of Christ. The representative of Jesus on earth. Jesus is the invisible Head of the Church, while the office of the papacy serves as the visible sign of Jesus shepherding His flock.

In other words, every time a pope dies and a new one is chosen, we are meant to recall the words that Jesus spoke to Peter in the Gospel of Matthew: “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” This helps us to remember that the selection of a pope is not the same as electing the president of the United States or choosing the next head coach of your favorite sports team. A papal election has a far more eternal significance than a worldly one.

So Pope Leo XIV is our new North American, Chicago-born Pope. Thanks to social media, it’s amazing how we are able to learn so much so quickly about the man born as Robert Prevost. He has two brothers. He’s a White Sox fan. Tennis player. Wordle enthusiast. All these things are interesting but also significant, as they help make our new pontiff more tangible, especially for those of us who are familiar with life in the United States.

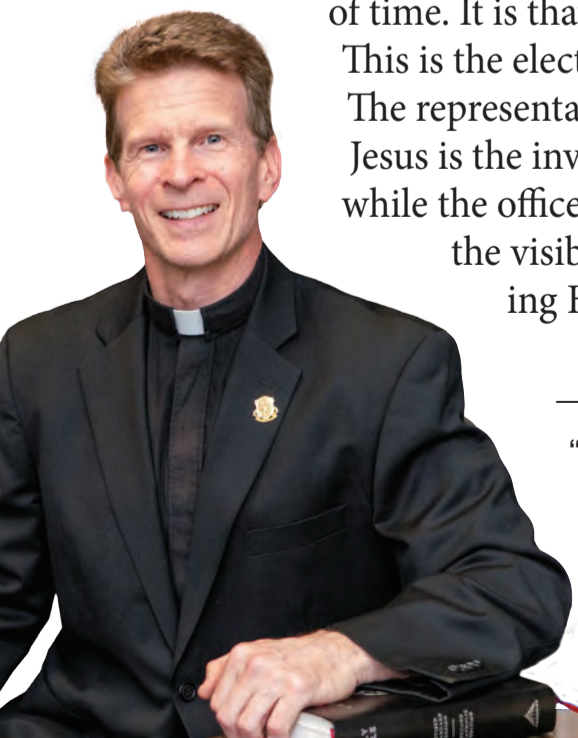
I know the so-called “liberal” vs. “conservative” divide in the Church was reflected in some of the angst leading up to election of the new Vicar of Christ. It was a cause of concern for me, too. Will Leo XIV be progressive in the fashion of Pope Francis, or more traditional like many of the more recent popes? Time will tell.

But whether he is going to be more like Francis or St. John Paul II, whether he is the pope you wanted or not, he is *still* the pope. The legitimate successor of St. Peter. That is something to rejoice about. *Habemus Papam!* And he’s made in the U.S.A.! That’s historic.

Let us pray for our new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, as he takes on this immense responsibility.

May God bless you!

Fr. Joseph, MIC



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



The Divine Mercy altar at St. Francis Xavier Church in Mississauga, Ontario, is decorated for Divine Mercy Sunday.

# CANADIAN MARATHON

## 25 YEARS OF NON-STOP NOVENAS

By Veronica Szczygiel

**N**orma Tan's devotion to Divine Mercy began at a marriage enrichment retreat led by a visiting Filipino priest. As her devotion grew stronger, little did she know that God had great plans for her: to evangelize His message of mercy to her family and community.

But first, heartbreak for the native Filipina who emigrated to Canada in 1967. When the youngest of her three daughters was but 6 months old, her husband left her. Suddenly a single mother, Norma relied on her parents to take care of her children while she took on extra jobs to make ends meet. She worked three jobs as a medical technologist, clocking into her shifts from 7 a.m. until 2 a.m. Juggling a young, growing family, with long hours on the job and little sleep, Norma was stretched thin.

Rather than doubting her faith and turning away from God, Norma leaned in, relying on the Lord even more closely.

## Shared prayer time

Fast forward to the 1990s, and Norma began talking about Divine Mercy to eight of her close friends from St. Francis Xavier Church in Mississauga, Ontario, just west of Toronto. Norma personally introduced the devotion through shared prayer time, conversation, and two videos, one in English and one in Filipino. She taught her friends how to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet and the nine-day Novena. The nine ladies shared prayer time together and even sent pamphlets to their friends and relatives in the Philippines to spread the message.

In 2000, the group approached their parish priest at St. Francis Xavier and asked if they could conduct the Divine Mercy Novena at church from Good Friday to the Feast of Divine Mercy. Ever since then, for the past 25 years, the ladies have decorated a side altar with a framed photograph of the Image of Jesus as Sr. Faustina Kowalska saw Him.

What started as a yearly tradition in church followed by private Novenas at the homes of the core nine founding ladies grew into a community movement.

## Home evangelization

The prayer group evolved into a home evangelization program. For 25 years, the framed Divine Mercy photograph and a statue has moved from home to home so that a nine-day Novena is prayed non-stop throughout the entire year. Norma and her friends reach out to fellow parishioners to ask who is in need of the visitation and who would like to participate, focusing especially on those who are ill, who are enduring crises or problems, and who need overall the intercession of Jesus' deep and unfathomable mercy. Over time, various healings occurred, including a cancer recovery miracle for one of the founding women.

"We started this movement to help those in need of

prayer," Bernadette Remedios, one of the founders, said. "And we hope that our efforts inspire others to do the same in their communities!"

The group continues their mission to spread the message of Divine Mercy to this day. There are so many families and parishioners who partake in the program that filling up the entire year with Novenas is easy. Parents have reported that their children and grandchildren love to take part in the prayer time, too.

And once a year, more than 50 people from St. Francis



For 25 years, the framed Divine Mercy photograph has journeyed from home-to-home so that a nine-day Novena is prayed non-stop throughout the entire year.

Xavier Parish journey south on pilgrimage to the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy in Stockbridge.

## United movement

"It's incredible to see how our small initiative expanded into something that unites the whole community," Norma said. Of course, she attributed the success of the program — as well as her own personal happiness — to Jesus' Divine Mercy.

Divine Mercy helped Norma rise to the challenge of her single motherhood. And the fruits of her devotion showed: Her three daughters all completed college and married wonderful husbands. Norma now has five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, of whom she is so proud. She recounted gleefully, "I have so many blessings from the Lord, I simply cannot count them all!"

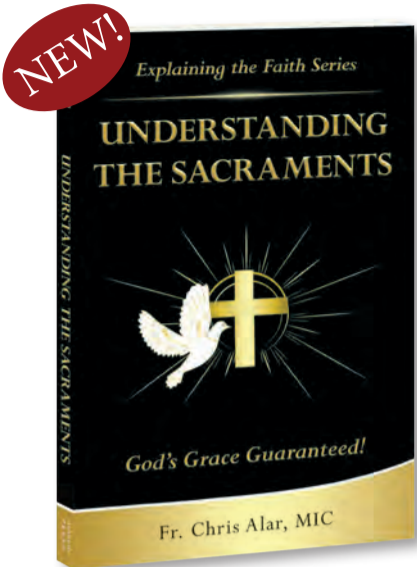
May God bless Norma and all the founding women in their continued endeavors to evangelize and bring peace to others through the message of Divine Mercy. May God bless the priests and parishioners who partake in their prayer movement. And may God inspire us to create similar prayer circles in our own churches and communities!

MH

## FATHER JOSEPH'S PICKS

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Make your summer beach reading inspiring, encouraging, and undeniably Catholic with one of these choices, hot off the press!



### UNDERSTANDING THE SACRAMENTS: GOD'S GRACE GUARANTEED!

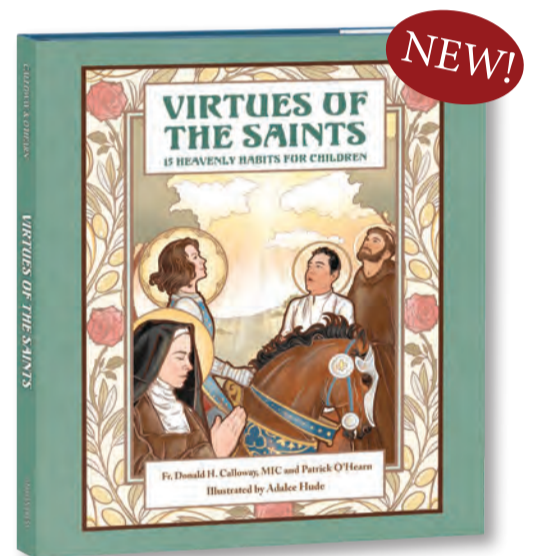
BY FR. CHRIS ALAR, MIC

Why is the Catholic Church different from any other church? It has the seven Sacraments in their fullness — not just symbols, but God's guaranteed grace! They are biblical, instituted by Christ and entrusted to His Church. In the Sacraments, it is Christ Who acts and communicates His grace! In this latest entry in his *Explaining the Faith* series of books, Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, answers such questions as: Why do we baptize infants? Where is Confession in the Bible? Is my marriage valid? And many more! \$16.95. **B66-UNDB**

### VIRTUES OF THE SAINTS: 15 HEAVENLY HABITS FOR CHILDREN

BY FR. DONALD CALLOWAY, MIC AND PATRICK O'HEARN; ILLUSTRATIONS BY ADALEE HUDE.

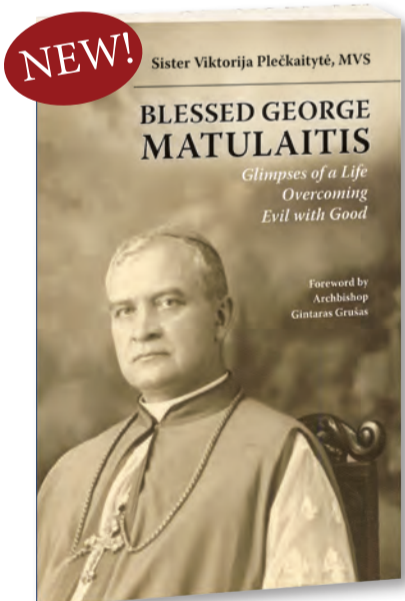
Besides the graces of the Sacraments, God has another way for us to grow in faith from a mustard seed into a giant tree: a life of virtue, or good habits, which must be practiced daily if they are to increase. In this children's book (with beautiful illustrations by Adalee Hude), authors Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC, and Patrick O'Hearn describe 15 of the most important virtues for boys and girls, exploring how saints (including Our Lady, St. Joseph, St. Kateri Tekawitha, Bl. Carlo Acutis, and many more) lived them out. Color illustrations! \$29.95. **B66-VIRT**



### BLESSED GEORGE MATULAITIS: GLIMPSES OF A LIFE OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD

BY SR. VIKTORIJA PLEČKAITYTĖ, MVS

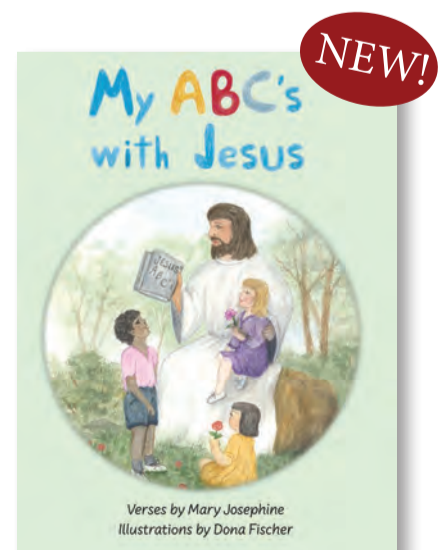
He was the renovator of the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; founder of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Poor; architect of a historic concordat between Lithuania and the Vatican; a professor; seminary rector; bishop; and archbishop, now on the road to sainthood. But what was Bl. George Matulaitis (1871-1927) really like, and how does he inspire us today? In this lively and revealing series of "sketches," Sr. Viktorija Plečkaitytė, MVS, presents him in a new light. \$16.95. **B66-GEOR**



### MY ABC'S WITH JESUS

VERSES BY MARY JOSEPHINE; ILLUSTRATIONS BY DONA FISCHER

This is the portable, take-anywhere book that parents and grandparents have been waiting to read with their young children! Girls and boys can practice their alphabet in a fun and engaging way, with colorful illustrations and clever rhyming verses with a bonus: a lesson about the Catholic faith they are beginning to absorb. From "A" (Angel) to "M" (Mary), "O" (Offer) to "Z" (Zeal), with an extra lesson on trusting Jesus, the Divine Mercy, youngsters will find many reasons to smile, ponder, and be inspired. \$6.95. **B66-BABC**



## REST IN PEACE

**O**n Easter Monday morning, I had just sat down to have coffee with some religious sisters in Rome when we heard of the death of Pope Francis. On Easter Sunday, he had given his last blessing to the Church as he had so ardently wanted to do, just after his *Urbi et Orbi* message (to the City of Rome and to the World) had been read for him. Then he got into the Popemobile to greet the pilgrims there, which turned out to be a final farewell.

Clearly, he had very much wanted to serve as the shepherd of his flock until the very end, and God allowed him to do that despite his sicknesses and sufferings in his final months in office. On Holy Thursday, he had gone to a prison and personally greeted 30 prisoners. He told them that he couldn't wash their feet, but he wanted to be with them to encourage them, to pray for them and for their families.

Pope Francis will be remembered for his humility, for his tireless service to the poorest, and for his desire to go to the forgotten areas so that everyone would feel included. He was certainly not one to do things just because they had always been done that way. He was a trailblazer who had his convictions

and was not afraid to shake things up a bit and follow the path on which he felt that the Lord was leading him.

I was in St. Peter's Square when he was elected on March 13, 2013. He looked a little overwhelmed at first. He asked everyone to pray for Pope Benedict, which he did together with all of us in the Square.

Then, before imparting his first apostolic blessing on the Church, he asked us for a favor. He asked us to pray for him in silence, and he bowed down while we prayed. It was like a prayer meeting, and I was profoundly moved by the moment.

Throughout his pontificate, at every general audience, every Angelus message, and on many other occasions, he continued to ask the Church to pray for him. I was always

impressed with his recognition that he couldn't do his job without the prayerful support of his flock. And he kept asking for our prayers on every occasion.

He followed in the footsteps of St. John Paul II and Pope

Benedict by putting a special emphasis on the message of the *Divine Mercy*. In his papal bull to inaugurate the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis declared that "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy." He said that those words sum up the mystery of our Christian faith.

It was during that Holy Year that he canonized our Founder, *St. Stanislaus Papczyński*, for which we Marians are extremely grateful.

I had the privilege of meeting Pope Francis three times and, on each occasion, he impressed me with his simplicity, his friendliness, and his kindness.

Pope Francis also had a great love for and devotion to Our Lady. He would visit the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on many occasions, especially before and after his apostolic journeys. He was buried at St. Mary Major according to his wishes. I visit the basilica every two weeks for Confession when I am in Rome, so now I will be able to pray at the tomb of Pope Francis.

He always asked for our prayers during his pontificate, and I am sure that he will want us to continue to do so after his death. May he rest in peace! Amen!




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

ON EDEN HILL



Excitement is building on Eden Hill as construction continues on the new Monastery and Chapel, a project made possible by generous donations to the “Together for Christ and His Church” capital campaign. These aerial photos give a good idea of the scope and scale of the work under way, scheduled for completion next year. (PHOTOS BY BR. MARK FANDERS, MIC)

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



# Blustery but beautiful!

By Dr. Joe McAleer

It is certainly true what they say: if you don't like the weather in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, wait 15 minutes — and it will change. That was certainly the case on Eden Hill during Divine Mercy Weekend, April 26-27, 2025.

It seemed as if the four seasons passed over Stockbridge those two days. With torrential rain and gusty wind, patches of warm sunshine and bone-chilling cold — and a good dose of mud thrown in — some 15,000 pilgrims, from as far away as Canada and California, were put to the test. Yet, as documented on the following pages, nothing could dampen the spirit nor the sense of community. We were all here for the same reason: to experience a “second Baptism” by receiving the extraordinary graces promised by our Lord to St. Faustina.

## Rousing start

Heaven certainly “blessed” Eden Hill on Saturday with an all-day rain. But things got off to a rousing start with the Mercy Weekend Conference, featuring talks by Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, (on his new book, *Understanding the Sacraments*) and Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC, reminding us to always keep Our Lady close by. The lines for Confessions were long, and the Gift Tent was packed with shoppers.

The vigil Mass was celebrated by Fr. Matthew Tomeny, MIC, Shrine rector, with Fr. Daniel Klimick offering an inspiring homily. Mercifully, the rain subsided in time for the distribution of Holy Communion and the safe return of all to their cars and buses.

Sunday's forecast was dry, and it mostly was, but the bitter cold and blowing wind were unexpected. The pre-show on EWTN, hosted by Fr. Chris and Fr. Joseph Roesch, MIC, concluded in a dramatic fashion when a gust blew the arrangement of roses off the center table! But the Liturgy and Chaplet proceeded as lovely as ever, presided over by Fr. Donald Calloway.



Father Chris Alar's and Fr. Donald Calloway's talks at Mercy Weekend Conference.

Watch the Divine Mercy Sunday Mass.

## Feels like home

One pilgrim put it best: “Bad weather could never keep me away on Divine Mercy Weekend! The pilgrims from all over the country, of every ethnic background, come together like one big family, all of us united under Jesus, the Divine Mercy. It just feels like home.” Amen!

Our thanks to the hard-working army of 600-plus volunteers and employees, the many vendors and public safety officers, and all the Marians who made Divine Mercy Weekend 2025 a great success. It's teamwork at its very best.

MH

# DIVINE MERCY WEEKEND



The homilist for the Vigil Mass of Divine Mercy Sunday at the Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine was **Fr. Daniel Klimek**. “The theologian Scott Hahn says that when a priest absolves sins, especially mortal sins, he is resurrecting the dead,” said Fr. Daniel. “He is resurrecting the spiritually dead. It is such a sacred truth.”



The Divine Mercy Weekend Conference opened with an energetic talk on the Sacraments by **Fr. Chris Alar, MIC**, provincial superior, based on his new book from Marian Press, *Understanding the Sacraments: God’s Grace Guaranteed*. “What’s the number one function of the priest?” he asked. “The Sacraments! And this is what Divine Mercy Sunday is all about – it’s just a return to the Sacraments.”



“What we say about Our Lady, we can also say about the Church, and about us,” **Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC**, told the Saturday conference. He explained how Our Lady is the Mother of Hope in this Jubilee of Hope – a fitting topic on the same day that Pope Francis was laid to rest in one of the oldest Marian Shrines, the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome.

This was the second Divine Mercy Weekend in a row for **Mary and John** from St. Peter Parish in **Wellsboro, Pennsylvania**. “Mercy is free,” Mary says. “You don’t have to earn it. It’s out there for everybody.”



“We just love to be here. It’s the best day of the year, no matter what, rain or shine,” says **Tuoi** from St. Anne Parish in **Sturbridge, Massachusetts**. She came with many members of her family, including her daughter **Rosie**.



Traveling all the way from St. Dominic Savio Parish in **Los Angeles, California**, are sisters **Joan, Rosa, Hollie, and Yen**.



The steady rain did not deter pilgrims from visiting the National Shrine!



The Blessed Sacrament is processed from the Adoration Tent to the Mother of Mercy Outdoor Shrine, for the recitation of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.



**Father Brian McGrath**, pastor of Catholic parishes in Lee, Otis, and Stockbridge, Massachusetts, never misses Divine Mercy Weekend on Eden Hill. “It’s one of the greatest events in the Berkshires, and it’s in my parish,” he says. “So many graces!”



It was the first visit to the National Shrine for **Nathan and David**, members of the Parish of the Resurrection in **Nashua, New Hampshire**. “Our church was hosting a pilgrimage here today,” Nathan said. They were joined by about 50 of their fellow parishioners.

The Philippines made history this year on April 27, Divine Mercy Sunday, by becoming the first nation in the world to consecrate itself entirely to Jesus through the Divine Mercy.

In 2016 at the Pan-African Congress on Divine Mercy Sunday in Rwanda, bishops in Africa consecrated the continent itself to Divine Mercy. However, the Philippines is the first singular nation to do so.

“This is remarkable; really unprecedented. Never has this been done before in the history of the world — a country consecrating themselves to the Divine Mercy,” Fr. James Cervantes, MIC, told Catholic News Agency. “I believe the bishops are being inspired by the Holy Spirit to lead our country to holiness.”



The bold initiative began with a single spark — a heartfelt letter from Fr. Cervantes to bishops across the country calling for a nationwide consecration to Divine Mercy. Dioceses responded enthusiastically, and soon the idea spread like wildfire.

The Permanent Council of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines gave its official approval, declaring that a national consecration to Divine Mercy as part of the 2025 Jubilee Year celebrations.

“We are doing this because this is what Jesus wants from us,” said Fr. Cervantes. “What we are saying is that we, as a nation, entrust ourselves to You. We as a nation place ourselves into Your hands. We as a nation are at Your disposal.”

God bless the Philippines — and our own Fr. Cervantes!

*Special thanks to catholicnewsagency.com*

**DIVINE MERCY  
WEEKEND**



**Father Matthew Tomeny, MIC**, rector of the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy, administers Holy Communion. Thousands gathered for the Divine Mercy Liturgy, braving the cold, wind, and rain.



Soloist **Ashley Nemeah** brought joyful music to the Divine Mercy Liturgy.



“We have to take our devotion to the Divine Mercy and let it sink in and penetrate into our hearts,” said **Dr. Bryan Thatcher**, the founder of the Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy (EADM). “We have to be the hands and feet of Jesus Christ.”



The annual Pre-Show on EWTN was hosted by **Fr. Chris Alar, MIC**, and **Fr. Joseph Roesch, MIC**.



**The Gundran Family** from **Washington, D.C.**, made their first pilgrimage to Eden Hill, “posing” with the Apostle of Divine Mercy, St. Faustina. “Coming here means prayers answered and a dream come true for us,” said Ray (left).



**Sister Deirdre "Dede" Byrne, POSC**, superior of the Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts and sister of Bishop William Byrne of Springfield, told the faithful, "We cannot love without suffering," yet "love is the most precious part of our being. God is the door to pure love, but Our Lady is the doorknob."



**Father Donald Calloway, MIC**, was the celebrant and homilist for the Divine Mercy Sunday Liturgy. Citing the Gospel reading (Jn 20:19-31) of "doubting" Thomas, he pointed out that everyone present shares in Jesus' words: "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." "Let us rejoice that you have been declared blessed today!" he said. "Let us move forward as apostles of mercy."



Getting ready for the Divine Mercy Sunday Liturgy are **Br. Paul, MIC**, **Br. Jacob, MIC**, and **Br. Alex Chung, MIC**.



The prayer banner was composed of thousands of pieces of cloth with prayer intentions for Divine Mercy Sunday sent in from across the United States and Canada.

**Nermine Rubin**, founder of Water4Mercy and a Marian Helper, shared how her consecration to Jesus through Mary opened her heart to help bring water to poor communities in Africa.



**Geneva from Saugerties, New York**, brought her fiancé and 80-year-old mother to Eden Hill. "I really appreciated the feeling of community from the crowd here and just seeing my mom light up."



NEW FROM  
MARIAN PRESS



# UNDERSTANDING THE SACRAMENTS

By Fr. Chris Alar, MIC

I often get asked, as you may too, “What makes the Catholic Church different from any other Christian church?” While the answer is simple, it comes in two parts. First, the Catholic Church is the only church founded by Jesus Christ Himself. All the Protestant Christian churches were founded by an ordinary man or woman. The second aspect that distinguishes the Catholic Church is the Sacraments.

## Guaranteed Grace

The reason the Sacraments are so important is that the Holy Spirit acts through them. They are not just symbols of grace — they are actual grace itself! The Sacraments give us guaranteed grace and eternal life if we cooperate with this grace. You can’t get anything more important. The Holy Spirit gives us the Church, and the Church in return gives

us the Sacraments.

The Sacraments are connected to ultimately form you into a disciple of Christ. Your spiritual life begins at Baptism. It is matured at Confirmation. Your soul is renewed in Reconciliation after you fall into sin. Your spirit and, perhaps, your body are healed with the Anointing of the Sick. Families are made with Marriage. The Church is sustained

through Holy Orders by giving us priests to give us the Sacraments. And your soul is fed and sustained throughout this whole process because Christ is present in the Eucharist that you receive at Holy Communion.

## In the Bible

The Sacraments are what Christ did on Earth for our salvation. God commanded us to receive the Sacraments as all seven are in the Bible:

**Baptism:** Jesus is baptized by John and hears the Great Commission: “Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased’” (Mk 1:9-11).

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19).

**Confirmation:** The Sacrament of Confirmation is found in Bible passages such as Acts 8:14–17, 9:17, 19:6, and Hebrews 6:2, which speak of a laying on of hands for the purpose of bestowing the Holy Spirit. Sealing with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability” (Acts 2:4). In Ephesians 4:30, the Holy Spirit is described as a “seal” or “mark” on believers.

**Eucharist:** Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. ... Very truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day” (Jn 6:51, 53-54).

**Confession:** Jesus said, “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:19; also Mt 18:18; Jn 20:23).

**Anointing of the Sick:** The Book of James says to confess your sins to one another after speaking to the presbyters (elders): “Are any among you sick? They should call for the

elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven” (Jas 5:14-15).

**Priesthood:** As for the washing of the feet, which was part of the ordination rite in the Aaronic priesthood, Jesus said, “So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (Jn 13:14-15).

Titus 1:5 mentions that pastors were “ordained” in each city in Crete. Acts 13:2-4 describes the Holy Spirit setting apart Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He has called them. Acts 14:23 mentions Paul and Barnabas directing the appointment or ordination of elders “in each church” in Galatia.

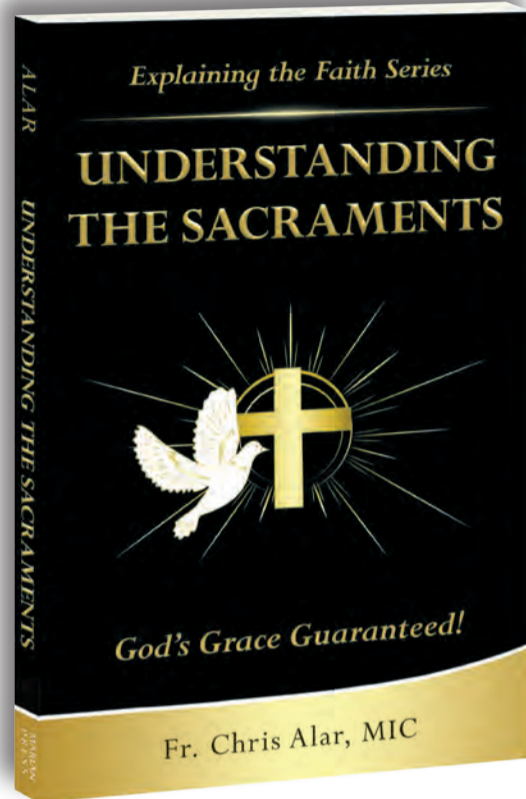
**Marriage:** In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus affirms the biblical view of marriage as a union between one man and one woman, citing Genesis 2:24 to support this. The Wedding at Cana, the setting for Jesus’ first miracle: “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding” (Jn 2:1-2).

Regarding Ephesians 5:22-33, this passage provides guidance for marriage, emphasizing the roles of husbands and wives, and the importance of submission, love, and respect within marriage.

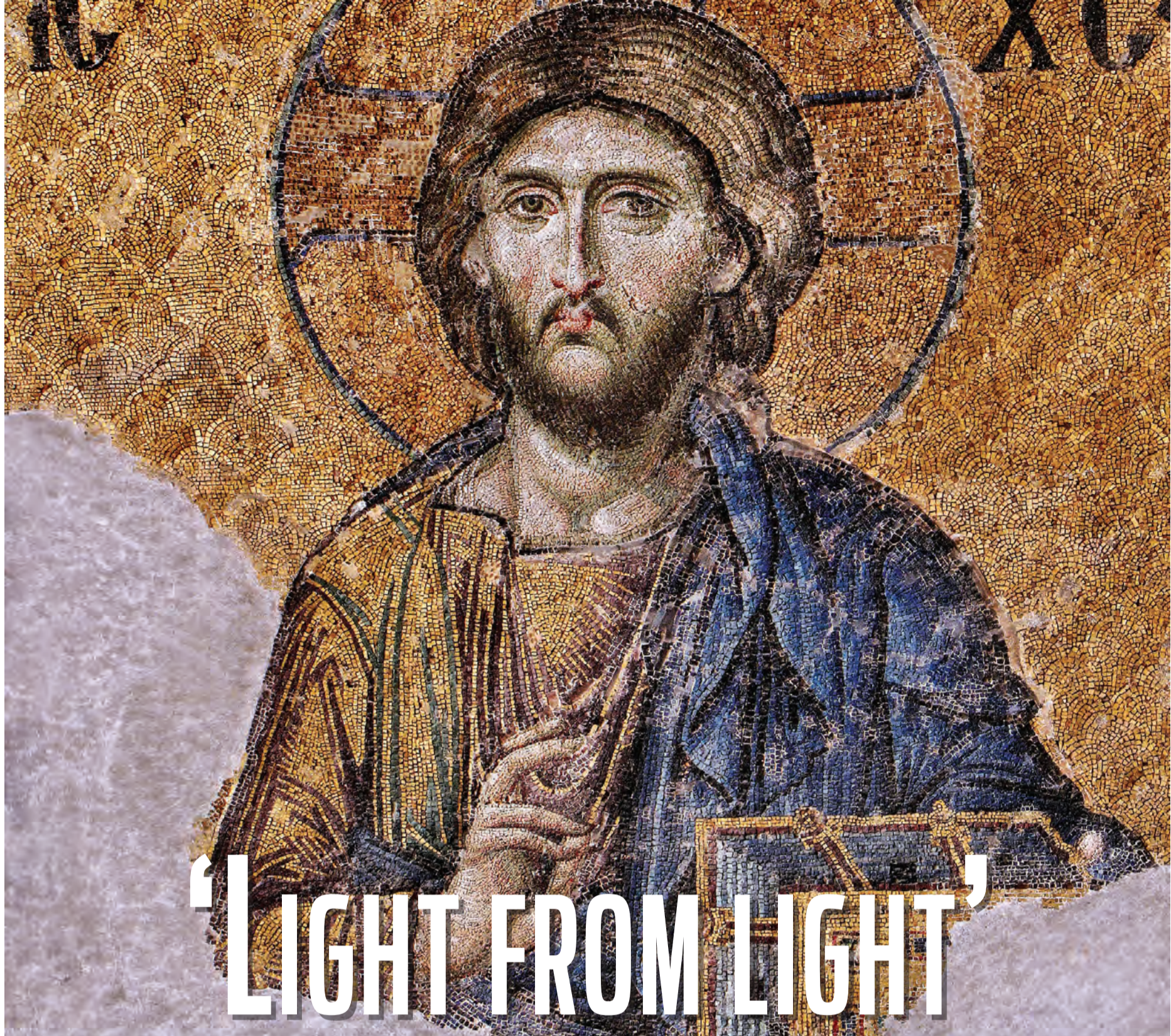
## Essential to the Catholic faith

The Catholic Church is the only religion that possesses all seven Sacraments in full communion with the successor of St. Peter in Rome. It is true that the Eastern Orthodox churches, which broke with Rome in 1054, have all seven valid Sacraments, but Catholic and Orthodox Christians can only receive the Sacraments from each other’s bishops and priests under extraordinary circumstances. The Anglican churches, moreover, believe that they have the apostolic succession of bishops and authentically-ordained priests, but the Catholic Church does not recognize the validity of that claim — especially now that they ordain women to their priesthood as well.

So the Sacraments are vital! Without the unique fullness of the seven Sacraments, the Catholic Church is just one more church among 45,000 other Christian denominations around the world.



To order *Understanding the Sacraments: God's Grace Guaranteed!* (Product code B66-UNDB), visit [ShopMercy.org](http://ShopMercy.org) or call 1-800-462-7426.



Mosaic of *Christ Pantocrator* ("Ruler Over All") from the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (formerly Constantinople), Turkey.

## 1,700 YEARS SINCE THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

By Robert Stackpole, STD

**T**his year we celebrate one of the most extraordinary events in the history of Catholicism: the 1,700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first universal gathering of the Church's bishops in the city of Nicaea (in what is today northern Turkey), to proclaim the central doctrines of the Faith, and to issue the first canons governing the life of global Christianity.

If Nicaea sounds familiar, it should: The Council gave us the Nicene Creed, the profession of our Catholic faith that we pray at every Sunday Mass.

### A response to Arianism

The Council was called by Constantine, the first

Christian Emperor, who had consolidated his power over both the western and eastern portions of the Roman Empire in 324 A.D. Disturbed by reports that the Greek-speaking Christians of the East were divided among themselves by the (heretical) teachings of a priest from Alexandria in Egypt named "Arius," Constantine wanted to ensure that

the Church in his newly-united empire would remain united as well. He chose Nicaea as the location for the council because it was very near to the imperial capital in Constantinople (named after himself), which made it easier for Constantine to keep an eye on its organization and proceedings.

Many historians believe that Bishop Hosius from Cordova in Spain acted as an official representative of Pope St. Sylvester (popes in those days never left the city of Rome, because their residence there was seen to have a special, spiritual connection with the bones and relics of apostles Peter and Paul). We

see this view enshrined in the ancient Eastern Liturgies, where the traditional collect for the feast day of Pope St. Sylvester states: “Father Sylvester ... thou didst appear as a pillar of fire, snatching the faithful

from the Egyptian error, and continually leading them with unerring teaching to the divine light.”

What was this “Egyptian error” that the Pope and all the faithful bishops at the Council so vigorously opposed? It was the teachings of Arius that Jesus Christ was not the *divine* Son of God, but merely a semi-divine being, a lesser god who was created by God the Father before all other creatures, and sent to earth to fulfill His saving mission. The Pope and the bishops saw clearly that this teaching cut the very heart out of the Gospel message.

If Jesus was not really God the Son who came to save us, then our salvation was accomplished by a mere creature and ambassador of God, and not by God Himself in person. It was inconceivable to them that Divine Love could ever say, “I must save these children of mine, and that will mean the most terrible suffering. I will find someone else to do the job.” Divine Love does not send others to suffer in its place. He comes Himself!

In short, the bishops at Nicaea realized that what was at stake here was nothing less than the heart of the Catholic faith: that God loved us so much He came among us as one of us, “Emmanuel ... God with us” (Mt 1:23), to share our lot and to save us.

## The Creed of Nicaea

Today we still recite the Creed of Nicaea at every Mass — although to be precise, what we recite is technically the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, because the original Nicene Creed ended at the words, “And we believe in the Holy Spirit.” It was the Second Ecumenical Council, held in

Constantinople in 381 AD, that added the last paragraph of the creed we use today.

Some of the terminology in the creed we recite is theological jargon many of us may not be familiar with, but a closer look reveals what the bishops were getting at. For example, when they say that the Son of God was “begotten, not made” they have in mind a very simple distinction we are all familiar with. As C.S. Lewis once put it in his classic work *Mere Christianity*:

When you beget, you beget [generate, or originate]

something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind than yourself. A

bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, a man makes a wireless set ...

So, by saying that the Son of God is “begotten, not made,” the bishops meant that He is of the very same nature as His heavenly Father: just like the Father, He possesses all the divine attributes, such as almighty power, infinite knowledge, and perfect goodness.

## Light from light

When the bishops went on to say that the Son is “consubstantial” with the Father, and “God from God, light from light,” they meant that He was not created by the Father one day long ago, but eternally emanates from Him. Again, as Lewis explains: “[W]e must think of the Son always, so to speak, streaming forth from the Father, like light from a lamp or heat from a fire, or thoughts from a mind. He is the self-expression of the Father — what the Father has to say. And there never was a time when He was not saying it.”

And what is the Father saying to us through His “incarnate” Son (that is, His divine Son “in the flesh” as Jesus)? He is forever saying: “I love you so much that I did not think either Bethlehem or Calvary too great a sacrifice to make to bring you back to My Heart.”

Such is the Gospel message of the Creed of Nicaea.

*Dr. Robert Stackpole is the director emeritus of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy and the author of God’s Amazing Mercy: Meditations by St. Faustina’s Confessor and Spiritual Director (B66-SOPB), available now on [ShopMercy.org](http://ShopMercy.org).*

MH



Sitting in front of the green screen in the current, cramped video studio are two faces familiar to TV and online viewers: the Very Rev. Chris Alar, MIC, and Fr. Mark Baron, MIC.

# GREEN DREAM

## HELP US BUILD A NEW STUDIO!

By Dr. Joe McAleer

**I**n 1910, Blessed George Matulaitis (1871-1927), Renovator of our Marian Congregation, issued a clarion call to evangelization: “Animated by the Spirit of Christ, we must try to gather together and organize people of good will — to train and prepare them to work, and then, together with them and through them . . . to win all for Christ, to attract all to Christ.”

The saying goes, “Nothing succeeds like success.” Blessed George could have never anticipated how successful we have become at “winning all for Christ,” especially over the airwaves through our video production, livestreams, and podcasts.

And now we need your help to take this to the next level, with an urgent appeal to construct a new and larger video studio on Eden Hill.

### Reaching millions

First, let’s look at the numbers. Since we started during

the pandemic, more than 100 million people have viewed the daily livestreams on Facebook, YouTube, and our websites from the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy: Mass, the Rosary, and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Amazing! Then there’s “Explaining the Faith,” the popular Saturday talks by our Provincial Superior, the Very Rev. Chris Alar, MIC. Some of his talks have racked up 2 million views on YouTube!

Our video production department has expanded its offerings by leaps and bounds. Living Divine Mercy, our weekly program on EWTN, is in its fourth season with



more than 190 original episodes produced to date. Producing a weekly TV show is a monumental task by itself. But our video department does so much more. There's a new teaching video every Thursday, from "Ask a Marian" and "Saints in Focus" to original series on the Jubilee Year, Lent, Advent, and a variety of other topics. Our podcasts have expanded, in video and audio format. And we've struck gold in a brand new area: children's programming. Gospel Picnic, hosted weekly by Fr. Andy Davy, MIC, is a lively and inviting way to interest kids in the upcoming Sunday Mass readings.

It's no wonder our YouTube viewership is way up, as are visitors to our exclusive streaming site, DivineMercyPlus.org (We encourage you to visit and register!).

## Vital expansion

"To date, we have accomplished so much in a tiny makeshift studio that started life as a storage garage," says Fr. Chris. "It's a cramped space, about 300 square feet, with a leaky roof that's freezing in the winter and hot in the summer. There's no room for a permanent set, just a table and two chairs in front of a small green screen. Soundproofing is a challenge."

With our success and expanding viewership, and in line with our commitment to continuous evangelization, it's

time to build a larger, purpose-built studio adjacent to the Marian Helpers Center here on Eden Hill. "This also falls in line with our Marian Constitutions, which invite us to evangelize using the latest technologies," Fr. Chris adds.



**We invite you to make a donation to our Urgent Appeal to build a new video studio on Eden Hill. Please visit [Marian.org/b66](https://Marian.org/b66).**

With your help, we will raise \$750,000. Those funds will go toward the following:

- A 2,400-square-foot studio building, fully equipped with soundproofing and temperature-controlled for year-round use.
- A grid network across the high ceilings for studio lighting.
- Multiple standing sets for interviews, children's programming, teaching segments, and social media content.
- A wrap-around green screen for dramatic backgrounds.

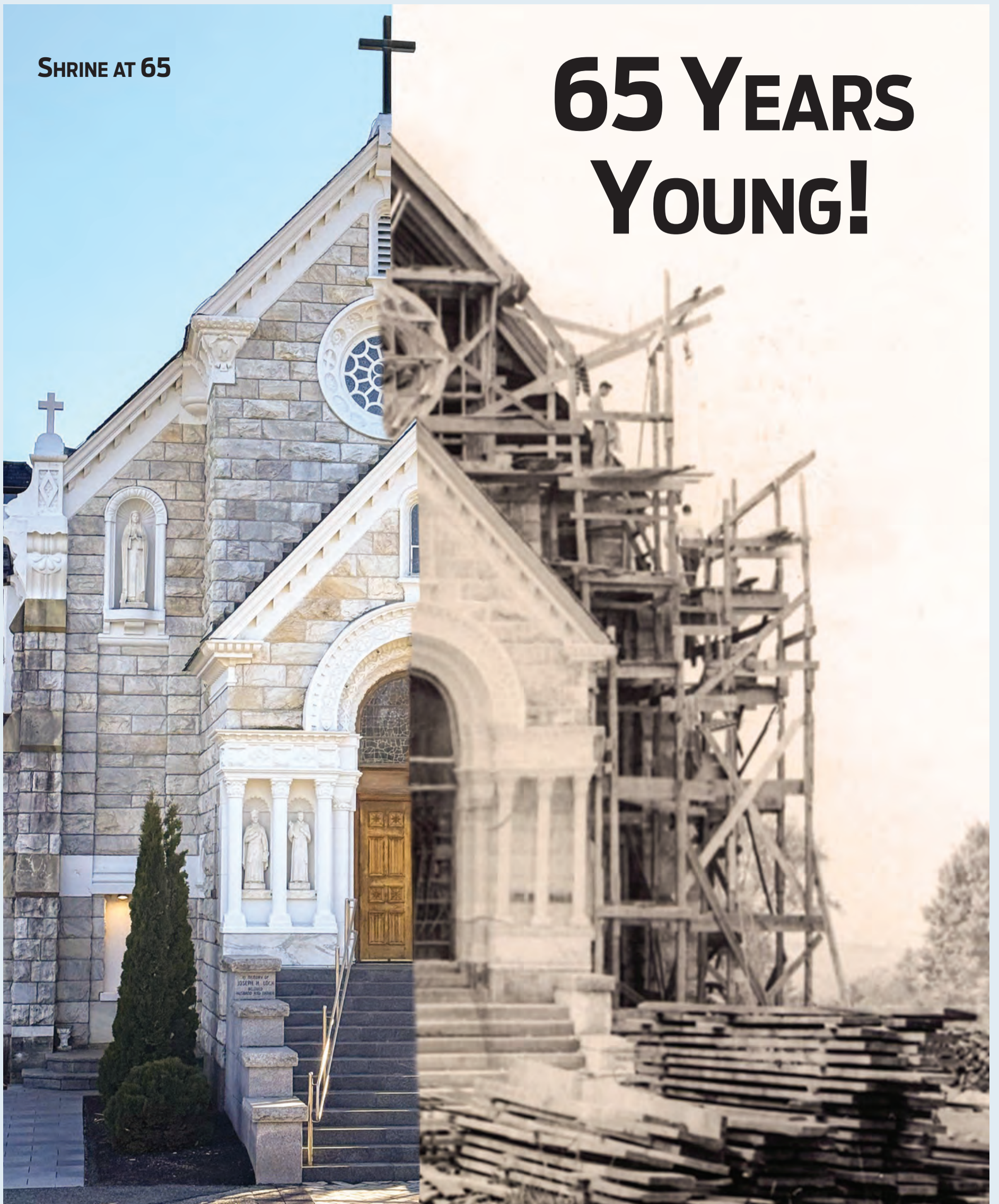
"If, by God's grace, we exceed our goal, every dollar above and beyond our needs for this new studio will be put towards content development for new video productions from the Marian Fathers," says Fr. Mark Baron, MIC, director of the Association of Marian Helpers.

Please consider making a gift. Together as a Marian family, we will continue to transform the culture. We would like to think Blessed George is smiling down upon our efforts, which are in the spirit of his episcopal motto, "Overcoming evil with good."

MH

SHRINE AT 65

# 65 YEARS YOUNG!



Now and then: The National Shrine in 2025 and during construction in the 1950s.

## 10 THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE DIVINE MERCY

Sixty-five years ago, the chapel that would become the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy was completed and blessed. Twenty-five years ago, Sr. Maria Faustina Kowalska of the Most Blessed Sacrament (1905-1938), whose cause for canonization and writings would find such assistance from the Marian Fathers housed at Stockbridge (most especially the former vice postulator for her cause in North America, Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, MIC), was canonized, and Divine Mercy Sunday added to the universal calendar of the Church.

Celebrating those anniversaries in the Jubilee Year of Hope seems appropriate. After all, many tens of thousands have come here to this Shrine to give thanks to the Divine Mercy for graces received, the forgiveness of sins and temporal punishment, and hope restored.

### Incredible impact

“It’s a joy to hear of the testimonies of those who have found spiritual healing and graces in the Masses, devotions, and Confessions offered here at the Shrine,” says Fr. Matthew Tomeny, MIC, Shrine rector. “Some even report graces of miraculous physical healings or ask for prayers to conceive a child. Some penitents say they drove several hours away to come to Confession here after a hiatus away from the Church or some crisis. We once had a group from the Philippines who came to the U.S. only to visit the Shrine for barely three

days before returning home without seeing anything else.

“It’s truly a blessing to glimpse at how the Shrine has touched the thousands and thousands of pilgrims who have visited and who now join us through the internet,” Fr. Matt continues. “We can see how much of an incredible impact Stockbridge has had on the promotion of the Divine Mercy message worldwide, but we will only see in Heaven how much of an impact the Shrine has made in being a center of intercession for the Lord’s mercy upon the whole world.”

Today, many more people attend daily Mass and devotions via livestream at the Shrine than visit Eden Hill in person. And yet even with such worldwide exposure, the Shrine holds many treasures and unexpected blessings that most people have never heard about.

Here, then, in no particular order, are 10 things you may not know about the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy.



### 1 Local Hero

In 1950, the construction of the Shrine of The Divine Mercy was entrusted to Antonio Guerrieri, a 74-year-old resident of Stockbridge. He had just completed the restoration of St. Joseph’s Church in town when the Marians called him to build their new Shrine. Guerrieri was a well-respected master furniture maker and wood carver — crafts for which he had been trained in his native Italy. He had also established a reputation as a restorer, designer, and builder — all skills which he had taught himself.

### 2 Sweat Equity

Throughout the 1950s, Marian novices labored during their novitiate year on the construction, as did seminarians who came for the summers to help maintain the property. Father Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, was one of them. Set that alongside his long labors to establish the Divine Mercy message and devotion (apparently prophesied in Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, 1689), and we can say that Fr. Seraphim built the Shrine of The Divine Mercy both physically and spiritually!





### 3 Elevation

When the chapel was completed and blessed in 1960, it was known as the Shrine of Divine Mercy. That was its title for 36 years until, in 1996, it was elevated to a National Shrine by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, one of only 72 national shrines in the country (see page 36). Since 1990, the annual Divine Mercy Sunday Mass has been broadcast live from the National Shrine by the EWTN Global Catholic Network.

### 4 Faustina's visit?

Inspired by a documentary on Sr. Faustina, Bob and Maureen Digan, with their son, Bobby, came to Eden Hill in search of Fr. Seraphim, the vice postulator for the cause of canonization of Sr. Faustina. Bob wanted him to come with them to Poland, where he was convinced the family would receive a miracle (which they did! It became the miracle for Sr. Faustina's beatification).

In 1981, the evening before they left for Poland, Bob, Fr. Seraphim, and several others were praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet in the chapel that would one day become the National Shrine. They heard a woman praying along with them, but could see no one. After they finished the Chaplet, Bob asked Fr. Seraphim what they'd heard. Father Seraphim said it was Sr. Faustina, of course!



### 6 Look Up

Gaze upwards at the ceiling, and you will see portraits of the 11 patron saints of the Marian Fathers, as well as murals featuring the Marian Founder, St. Stanislaus Papczyński ("Apostolic Approval of the Marians") and Renovator, Bl. George Matulaitis ("Renovation of the Marian Fathers"). Across the ceiling, painted by Joseph Amato of Bridgeport, Connecticut, are graceful symbolic depictions of Mary, the Eucharist, and the miracles of Jesus, including the Rosary and a basket of loaves and fishes.

Above the Sanctuary is a grand pulpit accessed by a small door. It is no longer used.



### 7 Distinctive Stations

The 14 Stations of the Cross were handcrafted in Spain. Surrounding each scene are instruments of the Passion: spears, whips, the pillar, the Crown of Thorns, and a ladder.

### 5 Glorious Glass

There are 36 stained glass windows and two mosaics created by artist Fred Leuchs of Stockbridge, displaying images of Mary and the Apostles. Fourteen of these depict a Gospel scene that demonstrates the mercy of God. Leuchs, who also installed the windows, said this was not only his first professional commission but his most prized effort.



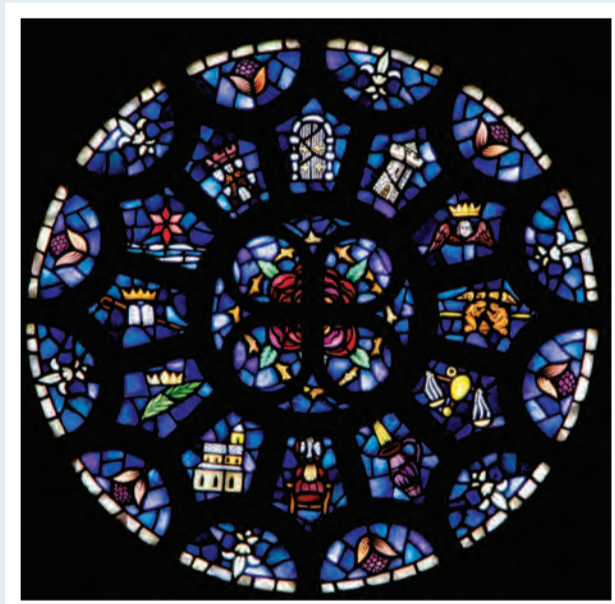
## 8 The Sanctuary

Now embraced by a new marble altar rail (see page 23), the sanctuary features an altar made of Vermont marble and accented by the emblem of the Sacred Heart. The statues of the 12 Apostles on either side of the tabernacle were hand-carved by Ferdinando Perathoner of northern Italy (who also carved the bas-relief of St. Faustina in the side chapel dedicated to her.)

Just above the Image of Jesus, the Divine Mercy, is a white Carrara marble statue of Mary, The Immaculate Conception. The mural above the statue of the Immaculate Conception depicts Our Lady being crowned by the Holy Trinity as Queen of Heaven and Earth.

## 10 Look back

Many pilgrims may not think to look up above the confessionals to the organ loft as they turn to exit the Shrine. That means you miss seeing some of the most spectacular artwork honoring the Blessed Mother in the entire Shrine. From the left, there's the image of Our Lady of Czestochowa. This is a copy of one of the most famous and beloved Marian icons in the world: the "Black Madonna" at the historic ancient monastery at Jasna Gora ("bright hill" or "mountain of light") in Poland.



The enormous and lovely rose window at the center is adorned with symbols of Our Lady, taken from the Litany of Loreto, and the Church's Liturgy. Why do we connect the Church, physical church buildings, and Our Blessed Mother? This traditional theology and veneration recognizes Our Lady's role as Daughter Zion, Mother of the Church (of both the Mystical Body and the physical Body of Christ), Mother of the Eucharist, Gate of Heaven, and House of God.

To the right of the organ loft, there's a reproduction of the famous image housed in Ostra Brama, the historic chapel in Vilnius perched above the "Gate of Dawn." This chapel was where the Divine Mercy Image was first publicly displayed 90 years ago, included in the Second Sunday of Easter Liturgy (the Feast of Mercy), and venerated, as Bl. Michael Sopoćko celebrated the Mass, preached on Divine Mercy, and St. Faustina was in the congregation (see *Diary*, 89, 413-422).

To learn more about the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy, its art, architecture, and history, see *The National Shrine of The Divine Mercy: A Pilgrimage in Photos* by Theresa Peloquin (Product code B66-NSDM). To order, visit [ShopMercy.org](http://ShopMercy.org) or call 1-800-462-7426. MH

## 9 Relics

To the left of the sanctuary is the statue of St. Stanislaus Papczyński, MIC, founder of the Marians, and a first-class relic. To the right of the sanctuary is the statue of xSt. John Paul II, the Great Mercy Pope, and a first class relic: blood drawn from the Holy Father during his final hospitalization in 2005.

The side chapel on the right displays a glass case containing additional relics of St. John Paul II. The Holy Father offered a *zucchetto* (white skull cap) to the National Shrine on June 2, 2000. It was worn by him in 1980. The Rosary beads were originally in the hands of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal. Pilgrims can venerate two first-class relics of St. Faustina along with two other saints' relics: Bl. Michael Sopoćko, the spiritual director of St. Faustina, and a first-class relic of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century French Visitation nun and mystic. She is depicted in a stained-glass window on the right of this chapel.

The side chapel on the left, dedicated to St. Joseph, contains a statue of Our Lady of Fatima, made in Fatima, where the Marian Fathers maintain a pastoral presence. Second-class relics of Fatima visionaries Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta Marto are encased in the kneeler for veneration. The motto of Bl. George Matulaitis is displayed on the left side of this chapel: "Conquer evil with good" (Rom 12:21). His first-class relic and a relic of St. Thérèse of Lisieux are encased in the kneelers for veneration. On the left wall is a bas-relief honoring the Marian Martyrs of Rosica, Bl. Anthony Leszczewicz and Bl. George Kaszyra.





Visitors to the National Shrine will find many improvements to mark its 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, made possible by generous donations from Marian Helpers to last year's Urgent Appeal.

Inside the Shrine chapel, a magnificent altar rail (above) carved in Italy from white Carrara and brown Onice Ambra marble surrounds the sanctuary. It was installed by King Richard's Liturgical Design & Contracting and blessed by Fr. Matthew Tomeny, MIC, rector of the Shrine, on Feb. 15, the feast of Bl. Michael Sopoćko, priest confessor of St. Faustina.

"The new altar rail matches the altars and remnants of the previous altar rail in the Shrine," explains Fr. Matthew. "In the 1970s the altar rail was removed as the Marians needed to make more room in the sanctuary for the new altar used for Mass facing the people and a more substantial wooden ambo. In 2023, our Marian Provincial Council unanimously approved moving forward with a project to restore the altar rail."

## Sacred threshold

By embracing the sanctuary, where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated, the altar rail is not a separation but a connection, Fr. Matthew notes. "It is the sacred threshold where the laity are invited to encounter God with the Com-

munion of Saints at the distribution of Holy Communion, kneeling in humble adoration to receive the true Bread of Heaven, just as the saints and angels worship the Lamb of God (Rev 4:10) at the marriage banquet of Heaven."

In addition to promoting reverence for the Holy Eucharist, the altar rail, sometimes called "The People's Altar," is also practical.

"It facilitates not only a more reverent distribution of Holy Communion, but also a more efficient way," Fr. Matthew says. "Whether the communicant is standing or kneeling, it is quicker for the priest to keep moving to distribute to the next person who is prayerfully waiting to receive their heavenly food from their spiritual father, representing Christ."

## Renovations

Other improvements to the National Shrine include renovations to Memorial Hall, the downstairs space for gatherings and the overflow Mass crowd, and the Welcome Center next door, where pilgrims can learn more about Divine Mercy and the many devotional areas on the Eden Hill campus.

*To learn more about the National Shrine and plan your pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year of Hope, visit [ShrineofDivineMercy.org](http://ShrineofDivineMercy.org).*

MH

# Time to calibrate your ‘GPS’

By Kevin Wilson

When was the last time you calibrated the GPS in your car or on your cellphone? I always plan a road trip to destinations like the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy by accessing MapQuest or Google directions. I like to be aware of where I am going before I start and not blindly follow an automated voice.

Although I was never a Boy Scout, I observe their motto to be prepared. When traveling you do not know when the unexpected may take place, and you should at least know whether you are traveling North, South, East or West. Have you experienced a bad connection when the GPS does not work, or is not updated in advance of your arrival and sends you to an inaccessible country road bridge under repair?

## A different kind

Let’s look at a different kind of GPS, what I like to call the “God Propelled Substance,” which I am in the early stages of incorporating into my own life. By substance I mean our “heart.” As St. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Gal 4: 4-7)

Folks, the table has been set and we have been invited; now is the time for us to sit and partake. Give Jesus, the Divine Mercy, permission to enter your heart and guide you, based on your soul rather than your brain.

The saints knew where to acquire reliable guidance — especially the young ones! For example, there is much spiritual wisdom to be gained from St. Gemma Galgani (1878-1903), the Italian mystic whose feast day (Apr. 11) we recently celebrated. Her guardian angel was not just a silent protector but an active participant in her life. She was enlightened through her angel’s instruction about preparation for her judgment day with God, which came at a young age (25).

A primary behavior in becoming closer to God is to speak less, listen more; do not offer an opinion unless you are asked. Her angel summarized this as a habit integral to achieving humility which is critical to become closer to God.

Another message from St. Gemma’s angel reminds us to pray for those in Purgatory and our deceased loved ones. A charity that does not cost you a dime, just your time. Remember that the next time you realize that you are current on your responses to Facebook, emails, and texts!

## Our newest saint

Another young saint will be our newest: Bl. Carlo Acutis (1991-2006).

He also spoke to his guardian angel about aiding him with day-to-day life. He was a toddler when the internet became public, and at a young age appreciated the opportunities of worldwide access.

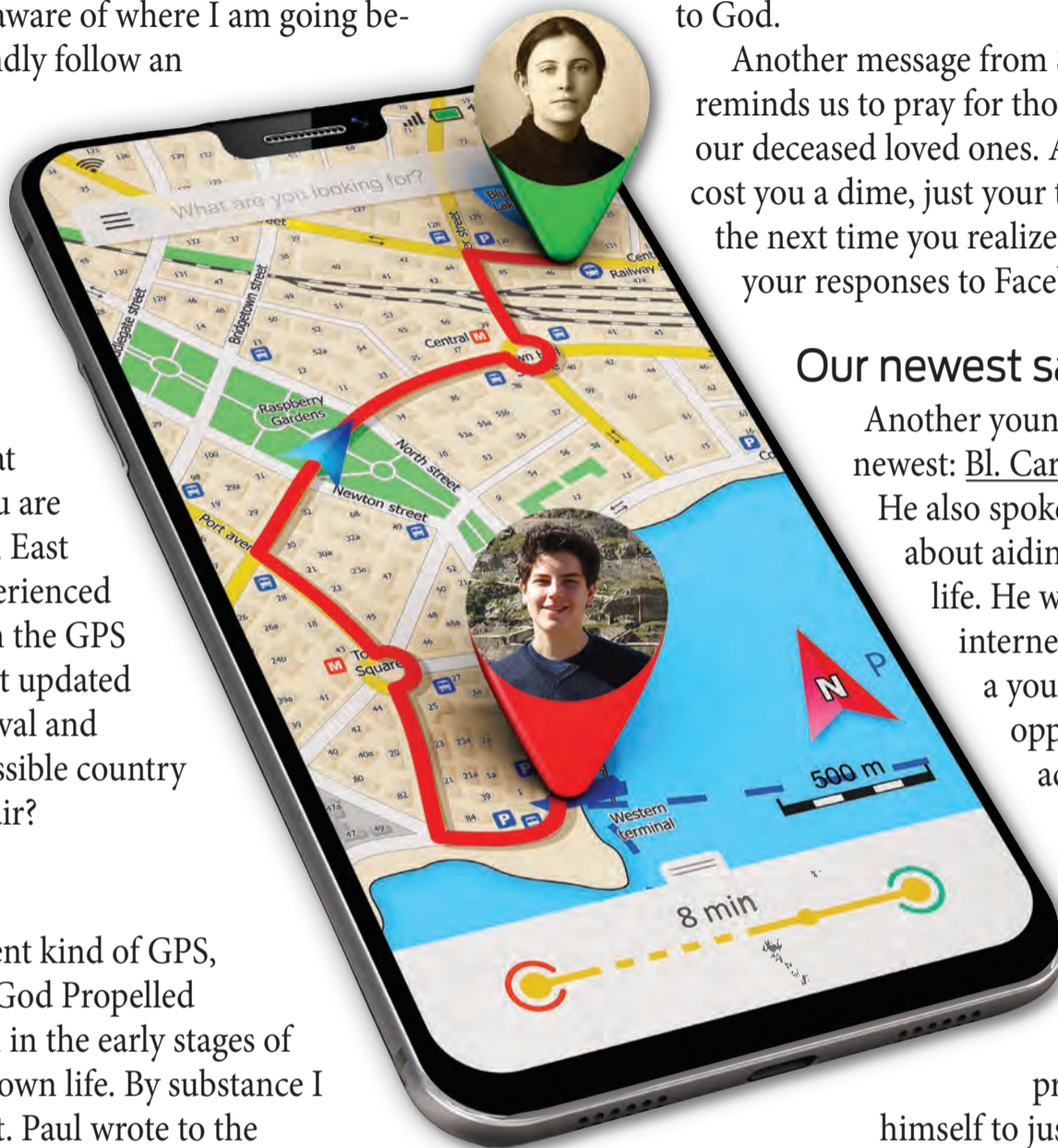
Even at age 15, Carlo was perceptive enough to understand the immediate access to sin at your fingertips. He proceeded to discipline

himself to just one hour of video games a week in order to maintain his primary reason for living, a relationship with God. Incredible wisdom from a teenage boy!

During this Jubilee Year of Hope and beyond, may all of us calibrate our own “God Propelled Substance” and allow Jesus to enter our heart after receiving the Eucharist. By allowing Jesus into our hearts, we are not acting like the innkeepers on that magnificent night in Bethlehem, but rather preparing ourselves to dine with Him in Heaven.

Saint Gemma Galgani and Bl. Carlo Acutis, please pray for us!

Kevin Wilson is the author of The Saint I Knew! Exciting “Encounters” with Holiness, featuring Bl. Carlo Acutis and published by Marian Press (code: B66-MKST), available now on [ShopMercy.org](http://ShopMercy.org).



MH



Hanging on the wall of Michael's Restaurant in Stockbridge, is a print of "The New American Lafrance Is Here (Firehouse)" by Norman Rockwell (1971), featuring Br. Ken Galisa, MIC, leaning out the upstairs window to the right.

# ARTFUL FRIENDSHIP

## Norman Rockwell and the Marians

By Dr. Joe McAleer

Chances are, if you lived in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, between 1953 and 1978, you were immortalized on canvas by the great American painter and illustrator, Norman Rockwell (1894-1978). The Marian Fathers on Eden Hill were no exception, and became good friends with Rockwell who lived just down the hill in town.

## Models and photographs

Rockwell's style was to invite men, women, and children to his studio above Main Street and pose them in costumes, arranging the scene with props. He would then take photographs, and compose his painting from these shots. He would also wander Main Street and take candid photos of passersby.

"He tried to include a lot of different people from different walks of life," recalls Br. Ken Galisa, MIC, who was born and raised in Stockbridge. "Lots of people I knew were in his paintings, including my brother, who posed as a newborn baby."

Brother Ken is the organist and cantor for the National Shrine, his music and voice known to millions from the daily livestreamed Mass. He, too, was featured in a Rockwell painting. In 1971, he was 17 and selling ads for his high school yearbook on Main Street when, unbeknownst to him, Rockwell took his picture.

### 'You're famous!'

"I was wearing a white shirt, red vest, and dark pants, and must have caught his eye," Br. Ken recalls. "Next thing I knew, my chemistry teacher, Mrs. Day, said to me, 'You're famous! You're in one of his paintings.'"

Look carefully at Rockwell's 1971 painting "The New American Lafrance Is Here (Firehouse)," and the young man hanging out the upstairs window of the house next-door, overly-excited by the arrival of a shiny new fire truck, is Br. Ken.

"That house next door at the time was a shop with living quarters above," he notes. "I've never been in there."

A print of the painting hangs in Michael's Restaurant, across the street from the old fire house. "I always ask for the table under the picture," he says. "It's a happy memory."

Brother Ken's father owned the grocery store on Main Street (today the Main Street Café), below Norman's studio with the large picture window. "He would come down before the store opened and show my father sketches and ask his opinion," Br. Ken recalls. "They were good friends. You would often see him riding his bicycle down Main Street."

## All-American Mom

Hope Ponsart Hansen, donor gifts officer for the Marians, grew up two miles from the National Shrine. Her mother, Claire Williams, now 96, posed for a series of Massachusetts Mutual Insurance ads in the 1950s.

"She was always the all-American Mom," Hope says.

"Rockwell was very particular about what his models should wear. My mother was so excited when she bought a special yellow dress, and hoped he would like it. He did. And then when she saw the finished picture it was black-and-white!"

Hope's father, who served as selectman for Stockbridge for nearly 20 years, and Rockwell were good friends. He also posed for the artist several times, as did Hope's brother and neighbors. "Every time I look at a Rockwell picture I see people I knew growing up," she says, "and it makes me smile."

### Marian connections

Rockwell's connections to the Marian Fathers abound. His studio on Main Street was rented in the 1950s from Antonio Guerrieri, who was building the Shrine chapel up on Eden Hill. "On several occasions Mr. Rockwell visited us here to see how the work was progressing," *Marian Helpers Bulletin* reported. "He was a modest man, richly gifted by God, who poured out the finest aspirations of his soul into his paintings."

Ironically, Rockwell's last painting, left unfinished on his easel, was of John Sergeant (1710-1749), the first missionary to the Native Americans, instructing Chief Konkapot in the Mission House, his home that once stood on Eden Hill.

Some correspondence between Rockwell and the Marian Fathers survives in the archives of the Norman Rockwell Museum. On February 10, 1959, Fr. Martin Rzeszutek, MIC (d. 2019), who had private drawing lessons from Rockwell, complimented him on a recent television appearance. "I'm sure that all the residents of Stockbridge would agree — we are proud to have you as our 'neighbor,'" he wrote. "It is my fervent prayer that God grant you many more years of life"

Continued on page 28

### MARIAN BROTHERS AND PRIESTS VISIT FAMED ARTIST

In November our Brothers and Priests received an invitation from Norman Rockwell, one of America's greatest artists, to visit his studio in downtown Stockbridge. According to the Brothers and Fathers, it was a delightful visit. What has deeply impressed them was Mr. Rockwell's lively wit, his humility and pleasant personality, as well as his uncanny talent for painting realistic pictures. God bless him for his kind invitation, and we are most proud to have him as our neighbor and resident in Stockbridge.



**Norman Rockwell and Marians**

The Marians visit Norman Rockwell's studio in Nov. 1959, as featured in *Marian Helpers Bulletin*.



Credit: Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), illustration for *Look*, December 29, 1970, pp. 18-9. Oil on canvas. Norman Rockwell Museum Collection; NRM.org, Norman Rockwell Art Collection Trust, NRACT.1973.075. © Licensed by Norman Rockwell Family Agency. All rights reserved.

The three figures at the front of the procession in the 1970 painting “Uneasy Christmas in the Birthplace of Peace (Christmas Even in Bethlehem)” are Marians.

so that you might continue to inspire and entertain others by means of your paintings.”

Father Martin enclosed a view of the nearly-completed Shrine chapel. “You and your family have a standing invitation to visit with us,” he wrote. “And the view from atop Eden Hill overlooking the Berkshires is majestic.”

## Fundraising

The Marian Fathers joined Rockwell’s efforts to support

the town of Stockbridge as a good neighbor. In 1968, they assisted in fundraising for the Old Corner House, home to the Stockbridge Historical Society and the precursor of the first Norman Rockwell Museum. Rockwell suggested producing 1,000 prints of his famous “Freedom of Worship” painting, making use of the “very fine color reproduction process up at Marian Fathers.” Rockwell signed these, and the Marians sold them for two dollars apiece.

The Marians also donated an original engraving by



Giovanni Batista Piranesi to the Corner House, which Rockwell acknowledged as “very generous of you. We shall certainly put a card under it, saying it is a gift from The Marian Fathers.”

On April 1, 1969, Rockwell responded to a request to appraise a painting given to the Marians. “Right now I am in a squeeze,” he wrote. “I am painting a picture of the Astronaut Moon Landing and there is an inexorable due date and, until I finish the picture, I had better not see anybody because there is a lot of work on it.”

## Christmas in Bethlehem

The greatest Rockwell claim to fame for the Marian Fathers is the painting “Uneasy Christmas in the Birthplace of Christ (Christmas Eve in Bethlehem),” which was published in *Look* magazine on Dec. 29, 1970. Rockwell had spent the previous December in the Holy Land, having decided to paint a Christmas scene. The Basilica of the Nativity was chosen, built above the spot where Jesus was born.

“On Christmas Eve, from the roof of a Bethlehem hotel, he gathered impressions for his painting and directed photography,” according to the Norman Rockwell Museum. “He was particularly impressed by the ‘sumptuous’ presentation of the high priests, cardinals, and bishops as they proceeded to the Basilica. ‘It is indeed a tremendous spectacle and, although I am not a religious man, I was greatly impressed,’ he said.”

Back in Stockbridge, Rockwell did not have to go far for models and costumes. *Marian Helpers Bulletin* in 1987 told the story.

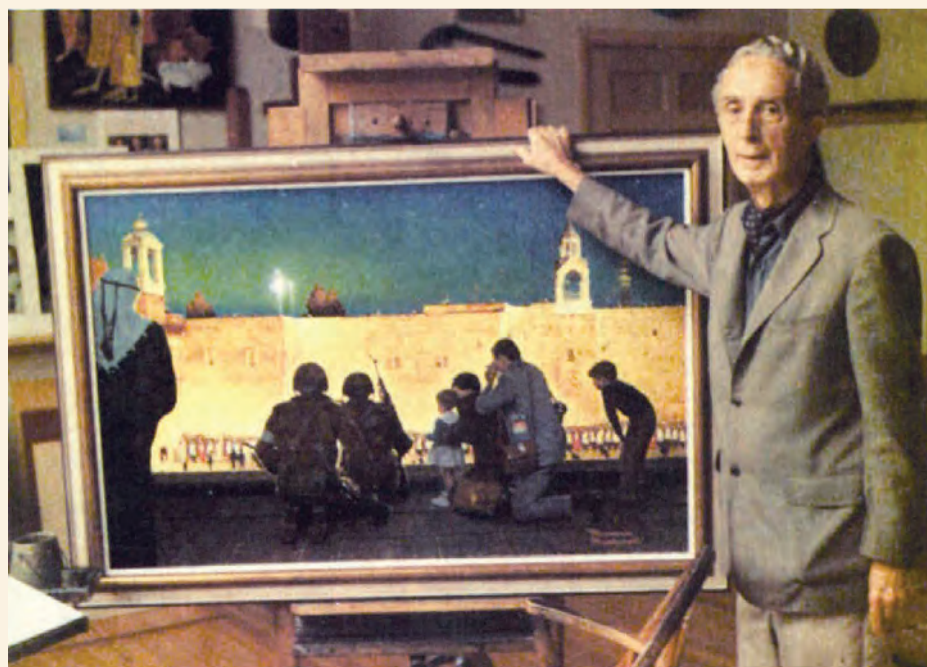
“Norman Rockwell made it a rule never to fake anything, always to use if possible authentic props and costumes. He just came up to our monastery here on Eden Hill and asked us to help him with vestments worn by prelates and clergy.”

Three Marians agreed to come to his studio and pose in clerical attire as a bishop, priest, and cross bearer, as leaders of the procession.

“When the painting was done, Mr. Rockwell called us for a final check to see if any corrections needed to be made,” continued *Marian Helpers Bulletin*. “That’s when this photo (below) was taken.” Rockwell also gifted a signed print to the Marians.

The painting, *Marian Helpers Bulletin* concluded, “reflects the uneasy ‘peace on Earth’ which still eludes mankind as evidenced by the presence of armed soldiers.”

*The Norman Rockwell Museum is located at 9 Glendale Road in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, a short drive from the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy. For more information, visit [NRM.org](http://NRM.org)*



# SMART GIVING TIP

Act now to save on 2025 taxes!

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# REWARDING VIRTUE

**T**im Hohmann strives to run his company with Christ-centered principles with a focus on their best asset, the employee: “We’re trying to be a little different,” he says. “We strive to treat our people like billion-dollar assets, because without them, the company would not be the success it has been.”

Tim is the founder of Automation Direct in Cumming, Georgia, an industrial controls business launched in 1994, which catalogs more than 40,000 products and has established a strong presence throughout North America. Passionate about the Catholic faith and the Divine Mercy message, Tim says he proudly displays the Divine Mercy Image “in my office, home, and on my iPhone home page. I am always glad to show it.”

## Respect and kindness

Tim fosters a culture where every employee feels valued, and where exhibiting respect and kindness toward one another are paramount in attaining the company goal.

“The chances of success — achieving vision — are significantly enhanced if we follow the Creator’s all-knowing Divine Supernatural wisdom to design the operation of business, reward virtuous behavior — and penalize non-virtuous behavior — versus following worldly principles,” says Tim.

The building blocks of success begin with the implementation of a four-wall “sandbox” framework. The first wall is comprised of the “business vision, which is inherently virtuous and inherently servant leadership.” The second wall contains the business strategy, “which has been consistent throughout our history and it is very virtuous, serving others first.”

The third wall lays out an established set of core values, “basically the Ten Commandments in a business setting,” and the fourth wall completes the framework with a profit equation, which feeds the “vision by funding our strategy. We also



The Divine Mercy Image has place of pride in Tim Hohmann’s home.

expect folks to use their talents and spend our treasure and time wisely.”

## Virtuous behavior

Automation Direct utilizes a system of electronic report cards every six weeks for peer and leadership reviews to ensure the sandbox framework is working effectively.

“The report card has several questions that are like company ‘beatitudes.’ A good score gets you a 4% of your salary bonus for the period, measured every six weeks and paid every quarter,” Tim explains. “This system rewards virtuous behavior!”

After 30 years in business, Tim believes these Christ-driven methods for operations and employee apprecia-

tion will continue to cultivate a successful company and culture for years to come. As one who understands the complexities and needs to operate a thriving business, he recognizes the Marian Fathers’ needs to carry out the mission God has entrusted to them and is motivated to assist with generous contributions toward a new monastery.

## Spiritual ROI

“Simple math requires more Marian priests to spread the message worldwide. This requires proper facilities, staff, and equipment, which requires funding,” he notes. “It has always been God’s money. I am just a steward of His money in this small moment of time. The Marians will invest in super high spiritual return-on-investment activities!”

If you have not yet contributed to the campaign and would like to join us, or would like to make another gift, please visit [TogetherforChrist.org](http://TogetherforChrist.org).

Contact our Mission Advancement Team at 1-800-671-2020; [helpers@Marian.org](mailto:helpers@Marian.org); or Association of Marian Helpers, Stockbridge, MA 01263. Visit [Giving.Marian.org](http://Giving.Marian.org) to learn more.



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2026

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### Family finds new jobs

I wanted to share my family's story for Ven. Casimir Wyszynski. My son, daughter, and son-in-law were all looking for new jobs. I began praying for Ven. Casimir's intercession. Within a few months, my son-in-law found a good job working for the state with good benefits, which was such a blessing for the newlyweds; my son found a good job in his field; and my daughter found a teaching job at our local Catholic school. The most amazing thing that happened, however, was that even though I was not looking for a new job, I ended up getting a teaching job at the same school as my daughter, coming back to my original plan from years ago of being a teacher. God certainly works in unusual ways, and the last few months have been full of blessings! I am grateful for Ven. Casimir's intercession.

— LL, email

### A job she loves

After receiving *Marian Helper* and reading about all the graces received through the intercession of Ven. Casimir, I began praying for his intercession for a job for my daughter. She had finished her degree and was having a difficult time finding a good job. Such a blessing that she is now working at a full-time job that she loves and can also walk to! Thank you, Ven. Casimir!

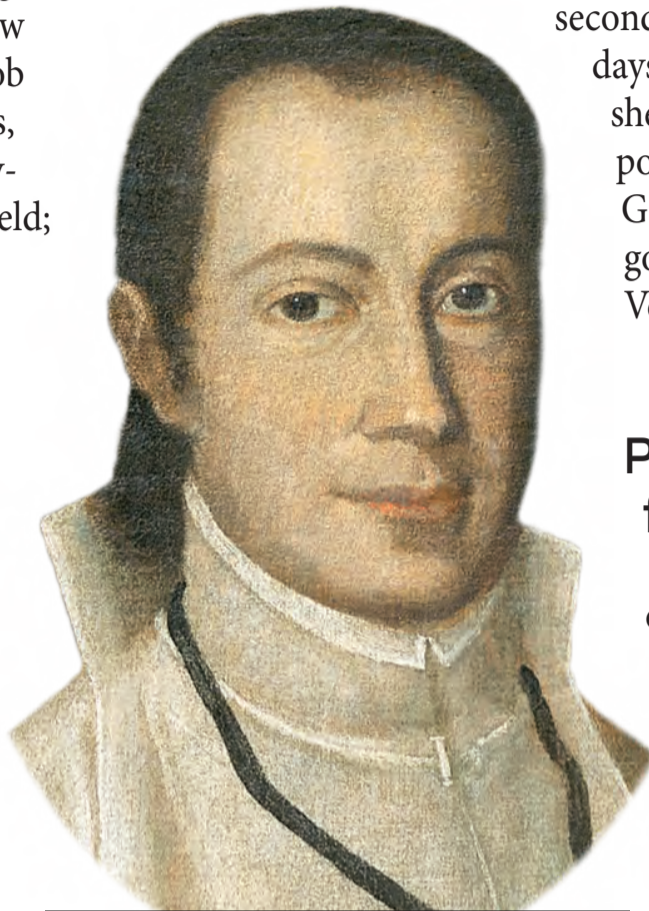
— JL, Saskatchewan, Canada

### Daughter starts work soon

My daughter had been in multiple interviews seeking a paralegal position and never got called for a second

interview. She was losing confidence in herself. I remembered an intercession prayer to Ven. Casimir I had seen in *Marian Helper*. I prayed a novena to him. During the novena, my daughter told me she was called to a second interview with the attorneys. A few days later, she called me excitedly to tell me she had received an email offering her the position. I truly believe that praying to God through Ven. Casimir's intercession got her the job! Thank you God and Ven. Casimir!

— CDT, email



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

### Prayers answered for daughter

My daughter found herself in need of a new job after 20 years with her employer. I began praying to Ven. Casimir for his intercession. My daughter was invited to interview for a job, which had just become available through retirement, on the day she contacted them. She has now been working for several months. She loves her new job — what she does, all the people she works with, the whole environment. She even has a shorter commute. I feel my prayers have been answered. Thank you for your intercession, Ven. Casimir!

— SH, email

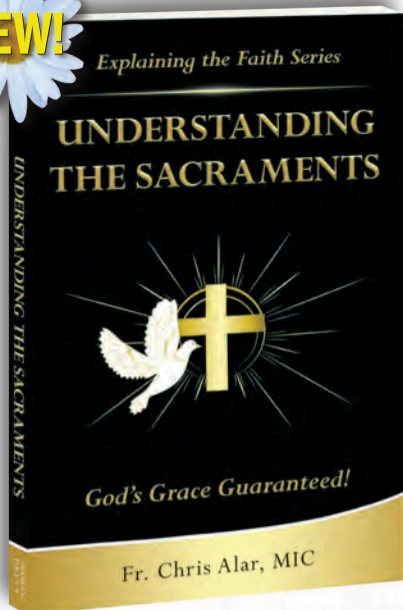
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For a Venerable Casimir prayer card (B66-BCWP), call toll free 1-800-462-7426. If you have received graces through his intercession, please write: Br. Andrew Maczyński, MIC, Vice Postulator of the Marian Causes of Canonization, 2 Prospect Hill Road, Stockbridge, MA, 01263. Email: [graces@Marian.org](mailto:graces@Marian.org)

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

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

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



# New from Marian Press

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Why is the Catholic Church different from any other church? It has the seven Sacraments in their fullness — not just symbols, but God's guaranteed grace. They are Biblical, instituted by Christ and entrusted to His Church. In the Sacraments, it is Christ Who acts and communicates His grace! In this latest entry in his *Explaining the Faith* series of books, Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, answers such questions as: Why do we baptize infants? Where is Confession in the Bible? Is my marriage valid? And many more! Paperback, 172 pages. B66-UNDB \$16.95

## Pamphlet: 'Toward the Heights!'

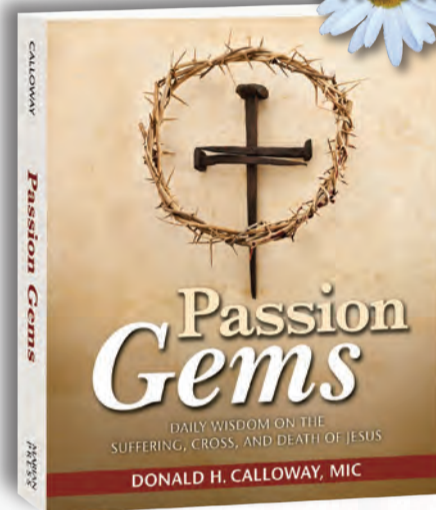
When Pier Giorgio Frassati (1901-1925) died, his family was stunned to meet the thousands of people, recipients of his love and mercy, who came to mourn him. Called "Man of the Beatitudes" by St. John Paul II, Pier Giorgio Frassati lived a life characterized by love of God and neighbor. In this pamphlet and prayer card, the Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain, archbishop emeritus of the Archdiocese of Seattle, Washington, and one of the world's leading experts on the soon to be saint, shares his devotion and scholarship. B66-PIELT

PRAYER CARD: B66-PIEPC



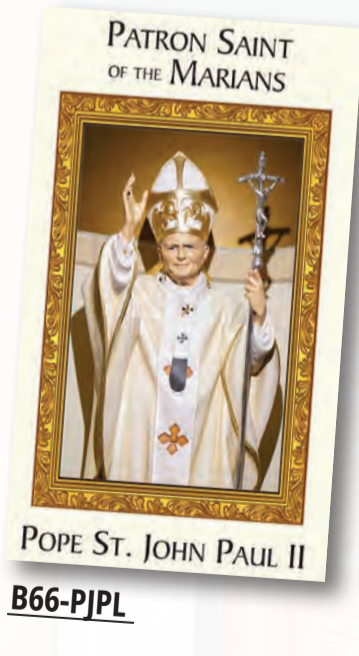
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# Christmas Clearance

See page 32  
for even more  
savings!



**LED Swirl Holy Family with Arch**  
This beautiful piece will make a wonderful addition to your holiday décor or a great gift for someone. It features a beautiful arched design with carved details and illuminated globe featuring the Holy Family. LED lights shine brightly as the glitter swirls. Measures 12" tall. USB powered or takes 3 AA batteries (not included).

**B66-RCHF** ~~\$98.95~~ **\$66.95**



**10" Bethlehem Stable Statue**

This beautifully-detailed, full-color figure features Mary and Joseph in the stable adoring the Baby Jesus in the manger. Will make a wonderful addition to any Christmas decor. Made of stone resin and measures 10" tall.

**B66-STBL** ~~\$73.95~~ **\$39.95**

**O Holy Night Holy Family Snow Globe**

This LED swirl snow globe features the Holy Family in the center surrounded by continuously swirling glitter. Bottom reads, "O holy night, the stars are brightly shining," surrounded by stars. Measures 7" tall. USB powered or takes 3 AA batteries (not included).

**B66-SGLO** ~~\$62.95~~ **\$29.95**



**LED Swirl Holy Family Bronze Lantern**

This swirl Holy Family LED lantern is the perfect Christmas decorative piece. It depicts Joseph, Mary, and infant Jesus in a lighted lantern which swirls with confetti glitter. Measures 9 1/2" tall. USB powered or takes 3 AA batteries (not included).

**B66-BZLT** ~~\$54.95~~ **\$29.95**



**Remembering the Christmas Story Nativity Set**

This Nativity set includes Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the Three Kings, an angel, donkey, sheep, camel, cow, and stable. Made of cast metal with silver enamel finish. Figures range in height from approximately 1 1/2" to 3 3/4" tall. Stable measures 8.5" wide x 6.25" tall. Comes gift-boxed.

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**Peace Nativity Figure**

Dress up an entryway table, mantle, or dining table with this gold-toned Nativity tabletop accessory. Warm ivory colored figures and animals surround the cradle of Christ. A message of "Peace" for the season. Measures 5 3/4" tall and 12 1/4" long.

**B66-PNFR** ~~\$62.95~~ **\$39.95**

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Postage costs may vary for online orders.

From the  
VAULTS



**O**n March 20, 1996, the Administrative Committee of the U.S. Catholic bishops, by unanimous vote, bestowed national designation on the Shrine of The Divine Mercy, which had been in existence since 1960.

In his application to the U.S. bishops, Shrine rector Fr. Ladislaus “Walter” Pelczynski, MIC, was asked to justify the elevation to a National Shrine. “The shrine,” he wrote, “is the first sacred place dedicated to God under that title in the Western Hemisphere. For the longest time, it was the only place of worship under that title in the United States, making known the now widely spread Message of The Divine Mercy, which, according to the related revelations, is to prepare the world for the Lord’s return.

“By its national designation,” he continued, “the shrine will be able to attract wider attention to the medicine that Our Lord offers for all the ailments of this 20<sup>th</sup> century — the Gospel position of unbounded trust in God and active love of neighbor — the essence of the Divine Mercy Message and Devotion handed on by Bl. Faustina; and to the unfathomable Divine Mercy which needs to be made known to the world in every possible manner as well as invoked continuously upon it.” MH



# First Vows

Vocations to the Marian Fathers are thriving, thanks to your prayers and generosity!

On March 30, 2025, Br. Austin, MIC, took his first vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in the chapel of the Franciscan Sisters of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother in Toronto, Ohio, presided over by the Provincial Superior, the Very Rev. Chris Alar, MIC.

Brother Austin, 24, entered the Marians in 2023. His immediate family, Marian priests and brothers, and a large circle of friends were present to see him receive the white habit, a first for the U.S. province, which has decided that the white habit would now be bestowed at first vows, not final vows. The white habit, worn by the Marian Founder, St. Stanislaus Papczyński (1631-1701), is an external sign of religious consecration and a witness to the world of the Immaculate Conception.

Congratulations, Br. Austin! Please pray for him and all our seminarians.

## Attend a retreat

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

### The next retreats:

Aug. 29-31  
Oct. 3-5  
Nov. 28-30  
Dec. 12-14

## Learn more

**Email:** [vocations@Marian.org](mailto:vocations@Marian.org)

**Visit:** [Marian.org/vocations](http://Marian.org/vocations)

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

**Marian Fathers of the  
Immaculate Conception**

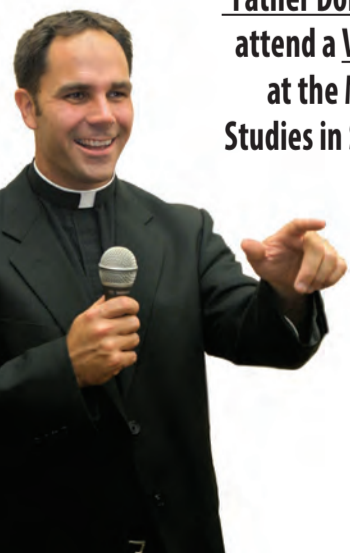
**350 Belleview Boulevard  
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## Support

### Want to help our seminarians?

We have more than 20 men preparing for religious life and the priesthood.

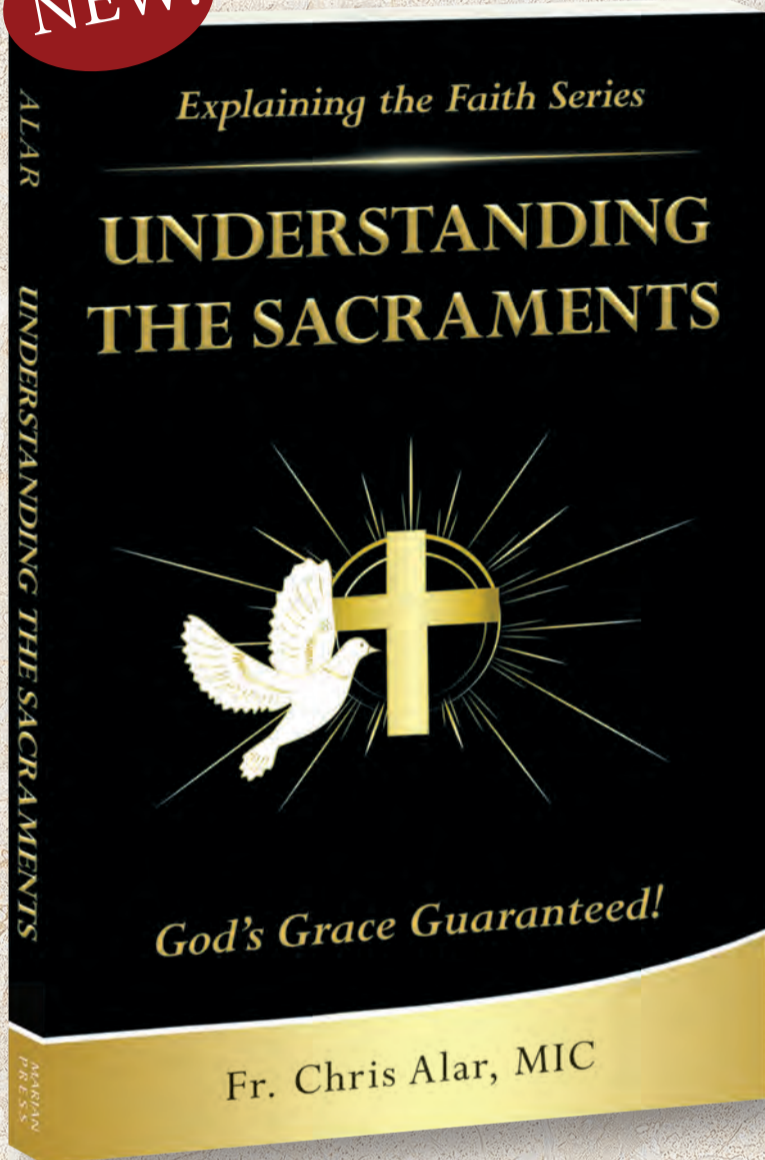
To donate, visit [marian.org/give/seminarians](http://marian.org/give/seminarians) or call 1-800-462-7426.



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# UNDERSTANDING THE SACRAMENTS

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Why is the Catholic Church different from any other church? It has the seven Sacraments in their fullness — not just symbols, but God's guaranteed grace. They are Biblical, instituted by Christ and entrusted to His Church. In the Sacraments, it is Christ Who acts and communicates His grace! In this latest entry in his *Explaining the Faith* series of books, Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, answers such questions as: Why do we baptize infants? Where is Confession in the Bible? Is my marriage valid? And many more! Paperback, 180 pages. **B66-UNDB \$16.95**

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