

Marian Helper

Inspiration and news from the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception

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SIDE BY SIDE WITH ST. JOSEPH

This Christmas,
may Christ be born anew

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Wish your loved ones a blessed Christmas with our exclusive cards. They'll be remembered in the three Masses on Dec. 25, at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy.



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WITH ST. JOSEPH

In these hard times, we should make like Jesus and Mary at the first Christmas. We should go to St. Joseph, our spiritual father.

6 Mercy, she wrote

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10 After the election

No matter who wins, we've got work — and works of mercy — to do.

14 Called home to the Church

From OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) to OCD (St. Therese of Lisieux, a member of the Order of Discalced Carmelites), Zachary Winter has had quite a pilgrimage.

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24 We can put a face to them

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AMH DIRECTOR/PUBLISHER:

Fr. Chris Alar, MIC — "Father Joseph, MIC"

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Felix Carroll

DESIGNER: Andrew Leeco

WRITERS, ASSISTANT EDITORS: Chris Sparks, Marc Massery, and Terry Peloquin

AMH GENERAL PROMOTER:

Br. Andrew R. Maczynski, MIC

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WHO WE ARE



Marian Helpers Center

Stockbridge, Massachusetts
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Marian Helpers.
1-800-462-7426

National Shrine of The Divine Mercy

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



Mercy Apostolates

Learn about our
lay ministries.
marian.org/ministries
1-866-895-3236

Evangelization Team

Invite the Marians
to speak at your parish.
(413) 298-1349
parishmissions@marian.org

Hearts Afire: Parish-based Programs (HAPP®)

AllHeartsAfire.org
1-844-551-3755

Intercessory Prayerline

Send us your
prayer intentions.
1-800-804-3823
marian.org/prayerline

Websites

marian.org
TheDivineMercy.org
ShopMercy.org



Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception

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

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

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

Association of Marian Helpers — Join us!

Established in 1944, the Association of Marian Helpers is a spiritual benefit society that prayerfully and financially supports the priests and brothers of the Congregation of Marian Fathers.

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

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



You Tube



Visit marian.org/social

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT GOD'S MISSION THROUGH US

- **Deepen your commitment of prayer** and support by joining one of our three spiritually nourishing prayer clubs: marian.org/clubs
- **Support a particular ministry:** marian.org/give
- **Create a memorial or tribute:** MemorialsOnEdenHill.org
- **Arrange a special gift** of stock, a gift through your will or trust, or a charitable gift annuity: marian.org/PlannedGiving

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

When making your will ...

A sample form of bequest to the Marians is:

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

*Thank you
for your
support*



HOPE IN A TIME OF COVID

This year has been full of burdens I would not have wanted, and yet it's also brought blessings beyond anything I'd expected.

I've had to cancel my missions. Traveling for evangelization has been largely stopped by the different restrictions due to the pandemic. Here at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy we welcomed a fraction of the pilgrims we'd see in an ordinary year.

And yet my Marian brothers and I reached more people from Eden Hill than ever before.

How? Through our livestreams on social media and TheDivineMercy.org. Our daily Masses, Rosaries, 3 p.m. Hour of Great Mercy devotions, and our weekly talks and special presentations have reached millions of people across six different continents.

It's been a blessing beyond anything I could have asked for that our audience would have grown so much, and it's all thanks to our Marian Helpers, those in Heaven and Purgatory as well as you all on earth.

It's thanks to the prayers, good works, and persevering fidelity of people like you that we're able to bring the Good News of Jesus, the Divine Mercy Incarnate, to the world. It's thanks to you that Mary Immaculate is better known, loved, and honored. It's thanks to you that we've been able to invite so many more people to intercede for the Holy Souls in Purgatory, and to serve the Church where the need is greatest. It's thanks to you that we've been able to upgrade our video equipment, filming studios, and prepare the Shrine to continue to be a beacon

of Divine Mercy to people across the world.

We'll be doing even more in days to come, including launching a new "Ask a Marian" video series, starting on Dec. 10. There will be a new video publicly available every Thursday. If you sign up at AskAMarian.org to receive

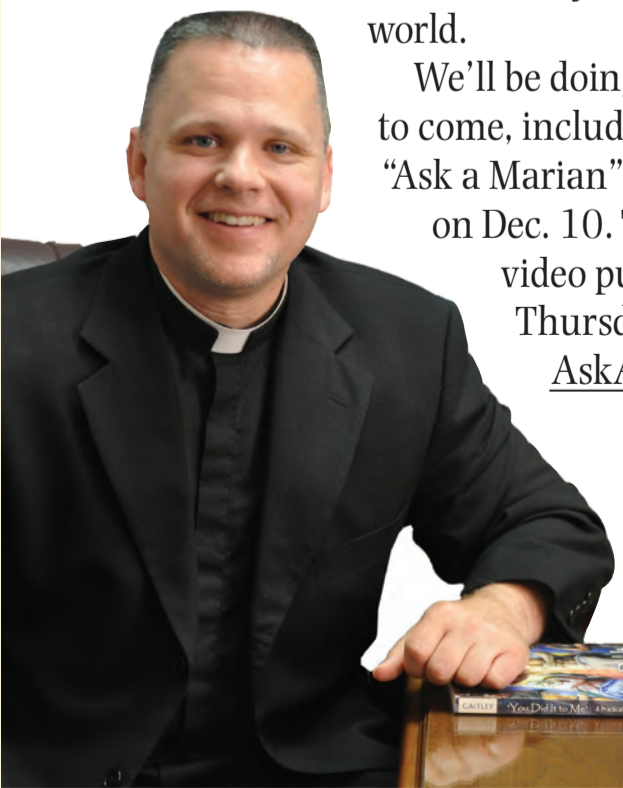
the weekly video via email, you will also get a video on Tuesdays and special feast days. My brother Marians and I will be taking your questions and offering answers, all in the hope of helping grow your faith and encourage your love of neighbor, especially of your brethren in the Church.

After all, they will know we are Christians by our love, right? So our service to God and neighbor in love and mercy needs to result in creating community. We need to be inviting people into our lives and our parishes, reaching out however we can — by Zoom calls and social media, by picking up the phone or sending an email — and thereby drawing more and more people into the Church's life and love. We need to be dedicated to the New Evangelization more than ever before, for the technology opens up all nations to our ministry, and God calls us to welcome the stranger.

We need to be inviting the lapsed and the faithless into the full practice of the Catholic faith. We need to be reaching out to our separated brethren, Protestant and Orthodox, keeping open the lines of communication so that one day they may come home to Christ's Church, built on the Rock of the Petrine ministry. We need to invite faithful Catholics to join the Association of Marian Helpers and take an active role in spreading Divine Mercy, devotion to the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, and prayer for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. Invite them to visit MICprayers.org to sign up. (It takes less than 20 seconds.)

Together, let's continue to give in to the Father's love for us so that we may give that love to others and help to renew our communities, our Church, and our world.

Fr. Joseph, MIC



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

FATHER JOSEPH'S MAILBOX

Here are just a few of the letters we've recently received:

How my troubles fade

I just want to thank you for all you do. I tune in as often as I can to livestreams. I have purchased the "Explaining the Faith" DVD. In fact, I purchased extras to give to family members.

Whenever I am feeling anxious or depressed, I find a livestream or a rerun of a livestream, I watch the DVD, or something from TheDivineMercy.org, and it really does help me. I regain my trust and confidence in the Lord, and my troubles fade.

I now pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet and the Rosary. Thank you for all you do. I have become a Marian Helper and also send a monthly donation. Thank you for helping me. God bless each and every one of you.

— Roxanne Dachelet, email

'Fresh breath of truth'

Via livestream, I am with you at 3 p.m. every day to say the Divine Mercy Chaplet and at 5 p.m. for the Holy Rosary. Also, as often as I can, I'm watching the daily 9 a.m. Mass. The Marian priests are a fresh breath of truth. God bless you.

I can certainly see why you have such an influx of seminarians: God's chosen ones.

— Roberta Torzewski, email

A positive side to the pandemic

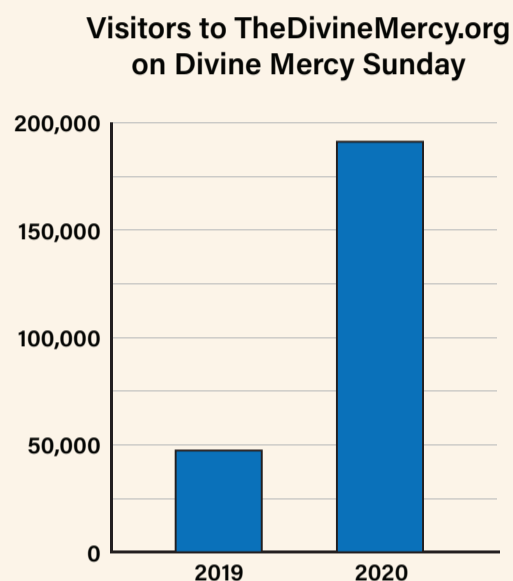
It sounds almost strange to say it, but since the pandemic and your uptick in internet outreach, I have grown so much in my faith and the understanding of it. I have become a Marian Helper. I have joined you almost daily for your livestream Divine Mercy Chaplet, Sunday Masses, and look with anticipation to Fr. Chris Alar's "Explaining the Faith" livestream talks. I feel I've learned more in the past couple months than I have in years. It has allowed me to share your words with my family and friends so they can benefit as well, and we are getting into great discussions.

It's been wonderful. I just needed you to know how much of a positive impact you're having. I feel all of the Marian Fathers are so dedicated. It never feels like you're "going through the motions." You are so passion-

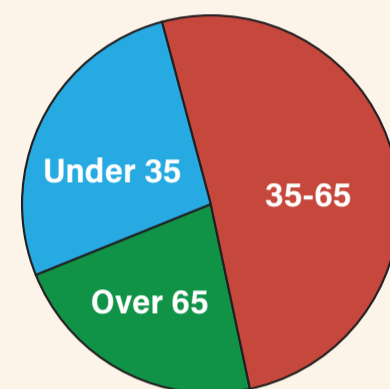
ate and caring about every thought, every word. Please know how much we can all feel and appreciate that. Thank you for all you do!

— Kristen Sadler, email

Where in the world are we? Everywhere.



Ages of Visitors to TheDivineMercy.org



[@DivineMercy](https://www.youtube.com/@DivineMercy)
YouTube Channel

Total subscribers: 76,558

In September of 2020:

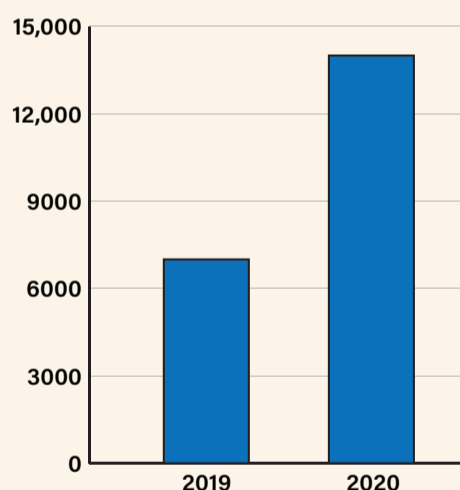
New subscribers: 15,028
Video views: 1.9 million
Likes: 59,690
Comments: 59,459
Shared videos: 50,603

[@DivineMercyOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/DivineMercyOfficial)
Facebook Page

Page likes:
4.1 million

Users viewing videos
in September 2020:
1.82 million

Daily Visitors to TheDivineMercy.org



Thanks to the internet and your generous help, we are staying connected with many of our friends and reaching more and more souls through our website and social media. We took a snapshot of the reach of our online evangelization in September.

It's been a blast

I'm so honored and thrilled to be a part of the Marian Helpers. Because of my having to self-quarantine with my heart condition, these past months have allowed me

to spend a whole lot more time, one-on-one, learning from the Marians.

Boy, I feel like my faith has been on a rocket ship these past months. I can't thank Fr. Chris Alar enough!

— *Colleen Crane, email*

'In awe'

I want to thank Fr. Chris for teaching so much about Catholicism. He has changed my life. I am a widow and watch daily in awe!

— *Mary Geissler, email*

Thanks for bringing God back to us

COVID-19 has altered our lives so much that I don't know what's normal anymore. But one very positive thing for sure has been the opportunity to better understand our Catholic faith and to give God more of our time.

I have lost interest in our favorite TV shows. Our TV is basically always on YouTube for TheDivineMercy.org. We watch all your livestreams, if possible. If not, we watch the replay. Thank you to all of you Marian Fathers for your great efforts in bringing God back to us.

— *Carmencita Limosnero, email*

Keep the wisdom coming

Watching Fr. Chris Alar's videos that explain the faith has changed my life and given me hope. I am writing you because I would appreciate if you could include my son, George, in your prayers for substance abuse, and his friends.

May God bless you always, and keep you in love of Him and give you His wisdom, so you can share it with the rest of us. I will keep you in my prayers.

— *A.H., email*

Got news or views to share? We'd love to hear from you. Email us at editorial@marian.org.

IN BRIEF

Farewell to two beloved Marian Helpers

We extend our prayers for the souls of two Marian Helpers who died this summer: **Stanley Debkowski**, 73, and **Tim Chichester**, 77.

Stanley, who died on June 23, was a Polish native who settled in Housatonic, Massachusetts. He worked as a school custodian and was a gregarious presence at the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy, where he volunteered for years. He leaves his wife, Mary; his children, Stanley Jr. and Elizabeth; and six grandchildren. He was predeceased by his son Richard.

Tim, who died on Aug. 15, resided in nearby Austerlitz, New York. He held a master's degree in nuclear physics and marine engineering. He served as a United States Merchant Marine. He worked for New York Telephone Company before opening his own businesses. He is survived by his wife, Cathy (a retired Marian employee); his children, Ezekiel, Sarah (both of whom work for the Marians), the Rev. Zachariah, Jeremiah, and Luke; and seven grandchildren.

Tim penned the following poem:

A Warrior's Prayer

A simple soldier, battlefield born,
I sigh
"Boldness, Courage, Tenacity"
Then I pray:

Jesus, I trust in You
To place my footsteps
When I do not know
Where to go.

Jesus, I trust in You
To place the words upon my lips
When I do not know
The words to sow.

Jesus, I trust in You
To place my eyes upon the truth
When they stray
Amidst the fray.

Jesus, I trust in You
To place Your peace upon my soul
When at the edge of battle's fear,
In terror I do veer.

Jesus, I trust in You,
And with angels
By my side
In Your peace I will abide.

Car talk

The Marian Fathers are looking for some more reliable cars or vans, so we can spend less time and money on repairs and more time doing our mission. Do you have a second car or van that you no longer need? Would you consider giving it to us?

Your gift would help us keep moving, and you will receive a tax deduction! Please call Ellen at 413-298-1380.

MH

MERCY, SHE WROTE

The unstated reason behind St. Faustina's first Chaplet of Divine Mercy



Father Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, served as vice-postulator of the cause for the canonization of Sr. Faustina.

Eighty-five years ago, from Sept. 13-14, 1935, the words of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy were revealed to St. Maria Faustina Kowalska and recorded in her Diary (entries 745 and 746).

Why did our Lord give her this prayer? And what promises did He extend to those who pray it?

Father Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, who served as vice-postulator of the cause for the canonization of Sr. Faustina, has a surprising answer for you.

An unnamed place

In her *Diary*, 474, St. Faustina records seeing an angel sent to exact God's wrath. She wrote:

When I saw this sign of divine wrath which was about to strike the earth, and in particular a certain place, which for good reasons I cannot name ...

Why couldn't St. Faustina use the name of the place?

According to Fr. Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, "When she wrote her first notebook, which she later burned, she had been putting places and names in. When she had to rewrite it, her confessor and spiritual director Fr. Michael Sopocko told her to leave those names out."

The *Diary* quotation continues:

I began to implore the Angel to hold off for a few moments, and the world would do penance. But my plea was a mere nothing in the face of the divine anger.

"Now," says Fr. Seraphim, "people wonder what just stirred up this wrath of God. And we have to understand 'wrath' correctly, as His total opposition to evil of every kind."

At this point, St. Faustina says, she felt in her soul the power of Jesus' grace:

I found myself pleading with God for the world with

words heard interiorly.

As I was praying in this manner, I saw the Angel's helplessness: He could not carry out the just punishment which was rightly due for sins. Never before had I prayed with such inner power as I did then.

What was the punishment supposed to be for? Father Seraphim says that Divine Mercy evangelizers Joan and David Maroney (see sidebar) discovered that in the early 1930s, Warsaw was a center for abortions. "So, we believe it to be the reason there was supposed to be chastisement on the city."

Father Seraphim has other support for this deduction.

"Saint Faustina writes in other places that she had experiences three times and she would get terrible pains within her. They were so severe that she lost consciousness at times," he said.

Her doctors could not figure out what could be bothering her, and no medication eased her suffering (see *Diary*, 1276).

"The Lord then helped her to understand [the purpose of] her sufferings: to make reparation to the Heavenly Father for sins of abortion," Fr. Seraphim said. "When Fr. Sopocko went through her *Diary*, he asked her the reason for the chastisement, and she said, 'For the massacre of infants not yet born — the most grievous crime of all.'"

In subsequent revelations, the Lord made it clear that the Chaplet was not meant just for St. Faustina's use, but for the whole world. The *Diary* records promises attached to its recitation, most notably for the dying:

At the hour of their death, I defend as My own glory every soul that will say this chaplet; or when others say it for a dying person, the pardon is the same.

When this chaplet is said by the bedside of a dying person, God's anger is placated, unfathomable mercy envelops the soul. (811)

When they say this Chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the Merciful Savior. (1541)

For her part, St. Faustina continued to pray the Chaplet almost constantly, offering it especially for the dying.

MH

— Terry Peloquin

The Power of the Chaplet



"I can share a funny story," said Robert Stackpole, STD, director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy, an apostolate of the Marian Fathers. "In my first few years of work with the Marians back in 1997-2000, I started praying the Chaplet for people I knew

who were seriously ill — and most of them died!

"My wife started calling me 'the Grim Reaper of the Chaplet' and pleaded with me never to say the Chaplet for her. But afterwards I reflected: 'Was this a failure for the Chaplet? Or was this my own failure of faith as a prayer-intercessor?'

"No, I think our Lord just knew that He wanted several people to come home to Him, and He used me as the prayerful instrument to make it happen. I had asked Him sincerely in prayer to use me for the sake of His merciful love. I just never figured, to begin with at least, that is how He would do it!"



'God's presence right there'

Since 2001, Joan and Dave Maroney, the husband-and-wife team known as Mother of Mercy Messengers (MOMM), an apostolate of the Marian Fathers, have been traveling to give Divine Mercy presentations at parishes and schools.

Within the first couple years of their ministry, Dave noticed something about all the people who shared their Chaplet stories with them.

"I said, 'I bet we've heard a thousand miraculous stories about the Chaplet and praying for those who are in their last moments. And everybody said their sister or their mother or whoever it was, was just put

at ease, and they knew that God was with them. The Chaplet takes those moments that can oftentimes be filled with doubt, fear, and anxiety, and it puts God's presence right there in their midst and takes away all their anxiety. They know that their loved one is being enfolded in the arms of Jesus at their passing from this life."

Joan agrees. "It's not only about their experience years ago when someone was dying. It's that experience right there when they tell the story. We always will get chills, goosebumps. You can see the peace and the joy in their faces. And the confidence in their face that they truly did experience something marvelous and godly. That's what moves me."

What surprises those who attend MOMM presentations?

Joan answers, "People tell us they've been involved with Divine Mercy for a gazillion years and never knew the connection to when St. Faustina received the Chaplet and how it withholds punishment for all our sins but in particular for the sin of abortion. It continues to be the greatest plague that the world is facing right now. That's a very important thing for people to know: the power of the Chaplet to fight against the most grievous sin of all."

The Chaplet during a pandemic



Stirred by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Marie Romagnano, a trauma and catastrophic injury nurse, founded what is now Healthcare Professionals for Divine Mercy, an apostolate of the Marian Fathers.

"Our entire ministry is centered around the Divine Mercy message and devotion and in particular the Divine Mercy Chaplet," says Marie. "We can pray for the dying, whether we pray before we go to work, when we know that our patients are critically ill, or after. But it is a powerful, practical application. I think it's especially important that people are very aware that when there is a disaster — like 9/11 — we actually could save souls by praying the Divine Mercy Chaplet."

Marie says the Chaplet is a great encouragement to the nurses, the doctors, and all members of a healthcare team, especially now during the pandemic. "They see literally hundreds of people dying every month. If you have five to 10 people in one day die, that's just a

horrific distress."

Marie continues, "I want to say to all those who have lost a loved one during these many tragedies that there's no time limit with God. We can keep praying the Chaplet, and it's a constant source of hope and consolation."

These prayers are more urgently needed during the days of coronavirus. Marie explains, "Normally we would be calling the priest to administer the Sacraments. But, because of the pandemic, a priest or pastoral care worker is not allowed to go into the unit.

"If the healthcare professional is losing a patient — or many patients, like in the pandemic — at least they know that they've done all they can do physically for them and then again all they can do spiritually by praying the Chaplet."

Promoting the Chaplet among the laity



Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy (EADM), also an apostolate of the Marian Fathers, was formed to support spiritual formation for the laity and encourage works of mercy.

"Promoting the Chaplet — praying it especially for the sick and the dying and pro-life causes — has been a big part of our work," says EADM founder

Bryan Thatcher, MD. The apostolate has received a papal blessing for each of these ministries.

EADM follows in St. Faustina's love for the dying. "We send the blessing out to churches and chapels that will pray for the sick and the dying. We have well over 1,000 churches and chapels all over, praying during Adoration."

Praying for the sick and for pro-life causes ties in together, Dr. Thatcher says. "Being a physician, I think of all the dying patients I used to take care of. People dying in my arms sometimes.

"People say to me, 'Our loved ones in nursing homes are at a very high risk, and their friends or family members cannot even enter the facilities to be at their bedside as they die. What can we do? It is heartbreaking that I cannot be with my loved one!' I tell them to pray! Pray the Holy Rosary and the Chaplet, and realize that you are doing a powerful act of mercy. Find comfort that Jesus, Our Lady, and a host of angels will be there at the bedside of your loved one."

MH

OUT OF THE BOAT — AND ONTO THE PLANE

During the 15 years that I have served on the General Council of the Marian Fathers here in Rome, I have come back to the United States every August to make my annual retreat, see my family, and have a medical checkup.

This year, I had serious doubts about coming because of COVID. However, since my parents had died last year, my two sisters encouraged me to come so that we could be together to remember them in prayer. So I found my courage and made my plane reservations.

It was a strange experience to take an international flight with only a handful of people. I had to do a two-week isolation when I arrived in the U.S. and then another when I arrived back in Rome.

How does one get through these quarantines? As a religious, I have lived my life on a schedule for the last 34 years. So even on vacations and isolations, I find ways of keeping a schedule of Mass, prayer, work, exercise, meals, spiritual reading, rest, and recreation.

I try to make a Holy Hour daily before the Blessed Sacrament. I stuck with this practice during my isolations through watching streaming video from Eucharistic Adoration chapels.

I have had the practice of trying to walk 10,000 steps a day for my health. I did my best to try to maintain this regimen, even when I only had a limited space in which to do it. I found that it was good for my physical and mental health.

I actually enjoyed the solitude. It gave me a chance to reflect and to draw closer to the Lord. After my isolation in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, I was blessed to spend some days with our community there and to participate in ceremonies in which three young men entered the novitiate; three professed their first vows; several renewed their temporary profession of vows; one professed his final vows; and another was ordained to the priesthood.

What a joy to participate in these Masses and ceremonies!

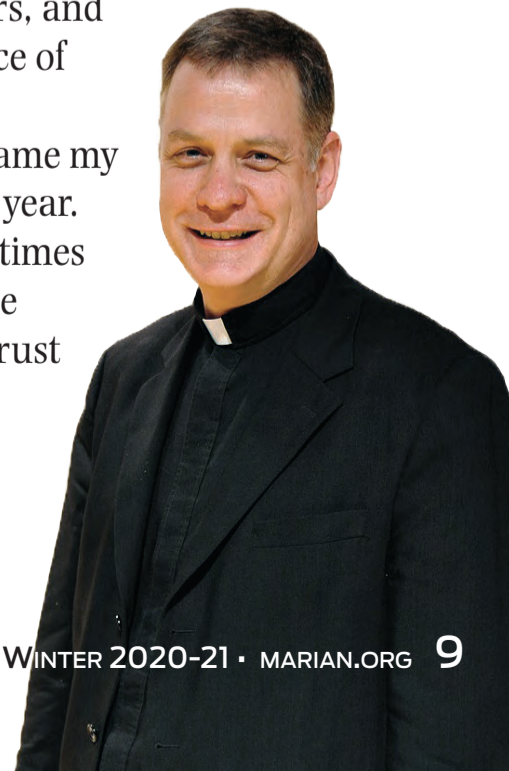
In the past, when my parents had come to those special gatherings, my mother would often say, “I felt like I was in Heaven!” I felt the same thing this year. God pours out special graces during these moments of commitment. The Holy Spirit is at work, and Heaven and earth meet during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

My sister Ann Marie and her friend Belinda made a pilgrimage to Stockbridge in August, and they participated in the first Mass of our new priest, Fr. David Smith, MIC. Both were extremely moved by the experience. We then drove back to our native Staten Island together where I was able to get in my medical checkups. I will turn 60 this year, and I thank God for the good health that He continues to give me in order to do my work.

In New York, I visited my two brothers and their young families. Ann and I then drove to Florida to see our sister, Clare. We had been together there last year in November when my mother died.

My last several vacations had always involved taking care of my ailing parents. This time it was different since they had now gone home to the Lord. I celebrated Mass each day for my sisters, and we felt the spiritual presence of our parents.

I am so glad that I overcame my fear and made the trip this year. Jesus is always close. Sometimes He asks us to step out of the boat, like St. Peter, and to trust in Him!



Father Joe Roesch, MIC, is the vicar general of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception. He lives in Rome.



After the election

Here are our responsibilities

*Put no trust in princes,
in children of Adam powerless to save.
Who breathing his last, returns to the earth;
that day all his planning comes to nothing.*
(Ps 146:3-4)

By Chris Sparks

In a year like no other, we've endured a campaign season and an election like no other.

The campaign season has now concluded. The election has occurred. These days after the election are, from my distance of a few weeks beforehand, uniquely unpredictable.

But no matter who has won or lost the various races across the country, some things will not change. No matter the outcome, we do know a few things for certain:

1. We do know that God will still be God on the day after the election.
2. We do know that the prayer “Jesus, I trust in You” will be as true and necessary as ever, and that our sufferings should be offered to God to cooperate in the salvation of the world.
3. We do know that Christians will still be called to love our neighbors on the day after the election, and that we will still need to be characterized by the fruits of the Holy Spirit, by “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).
4. We know that the law of love of God and neighbor in imitation of Jesus and all the saints and angels, especially of Mary and Joseph, will remain our law as Christians.
5. We know for certain that no matter who wins or loses, the Beatitudes will continue to be as binding as ever on our conduct and our attitudes toward one another (see Mt 5:1-10).
6. We know that we are saved by Jesus Christ, not by a politician, a party platform, or an election result.
7. We know that faith, hope, and love remain, and the greatest of these is love (see 1 Cor 13:13).

It’s easy to forget these truths in the midst of the seemingly endless controversies of American politics.

It’s easy to fall to the temptation to believe that with one heroic struggle, we can manage to end the reign of evil on earth and inaugurate the reign of all that is good.

It’s easy to imagine that each election, each vote, each Supreme Court ruling is the ultimate expression of goodness or evil.

And yet, God willing, there will be another election, another vote, another Supreme Court ruling. No one generation has ever made a full and final decision for good or evil. That choice must be made in each and every generation, in each and every human heart, and reaffirmed from moment to moment. No politician, no political system, and no election will complete that struggle, but only Jesus Christ at His Second Coming.

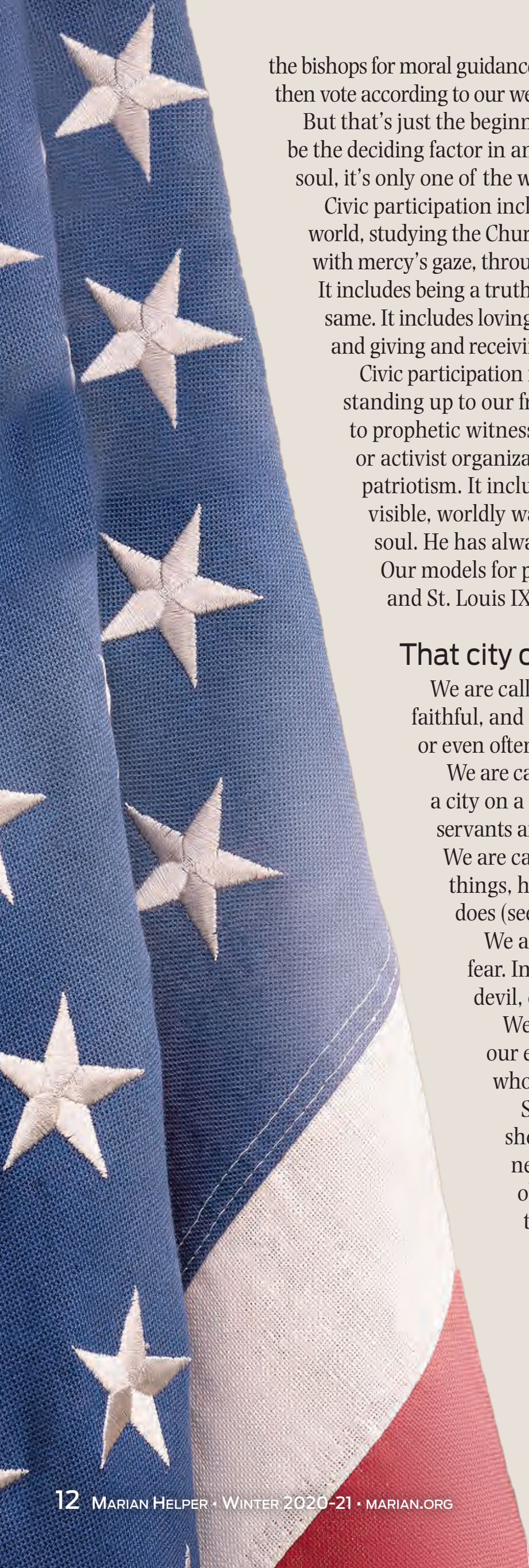
Divine Mercy is the limit on evil, as St. John Paul II taught, not our own efforts or earthly solutions.

Nation, community, and soul

Our choice for the truth, for love, for fidelity matters immensely because that will help determine the destiny of our soul. But whether or not our labors bear a rich harvest on this earth is ultimately in God’s hands.

“I am not called to be successful. I am called to be faithful,” said St. Teresa of Calcutta.

That’s true of all of us, especially when it comes to politics, especially in a democratic republic. Our civic responsibilities include voting, and that’s an important action, one we should take seriously. We should study the issues, study the Church’s social teaching, look to



the bishops for moral guidance, listen to informed commentary on the issues and candidates, and then vote according to our well-formed conscience.

But that's just the beginning of our participation. Our single vote is almost never going to be the deciding factor in an election, and important though that vote is for the state of our soul, it's only one of the ways we make a difference in our communities.

Civic participation includes things like being informed about what's going on in the world, studying the Church's teaching on faith and morals, and then looking at everything with mercy's gaze, through the eyes of Jesus. Civic participation includes volunteering. It includes being a truthful, moral person, and expecting the people around us to be the same. It includes loving our families and neighbors, maintaining healthy relationships, and giving and receiving time, care, and good will.

Civic participation includes not just opposing our ideological adversaries, but also standing up to our friends when they are wrong. We Catholics have a special call to prophetic witness to the Gospel by challenging our preferred party, politician, or activist organization whenever they violate standards of truth, goodness, or patriotism. It includes being faithful, even if that means we're not successful in a visible, worldly way. The devil often offers power and wealth in exchange for our soul. He has always loved to make that offer. He made that offer to Jesus Himself. Our models for political participation ought to be people like St. Thomas More and St. Louis IX, not Machiavelli, Mussolini, or Marx.

That city on a hill

We are called to be faithful, not successful — faithful as Mother Teresa was faithful, and so successful as Mother Teresa was successful. She did not always or even often get her own way, but she got God's way.

We are called to be light to the nations, salt of the earth, a people set apart, a city on a hill. We are called to be Catholic Christians first and foremost, servants and brothers of God Almighty before we are partisans or citizens. We are called to be the sort of people who bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things because that is what love does (see 1 Cor 13:7).

We are called to prefer peace to violence, and love to hate, and trust to fear. Indeed, fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, not fear of the devil, or of the other party, or of the person we didn't want to see win.

We have to remember that Christians are required by Jesus to love our enemies (see Mt 5:43-48); to pray for those brothers and sisters whom we oppose, not to desire their destruction.

So after this election, our fundamental orientation to Jesus Christ should be unchanged. Our fundamental attitude toward our neighbors should still be one of generous love. We still have the obligation to love our country, honor the public authorities, and to speak the truth as best we understand it, in obedience to the Church and to our well-formed conscience.

Those choices *between* elections

After an election, we have to keep in mind that our duties remain, as do our rights. We need to work to ensure that laws are just, that people are treated according to their intrinsic dignity, and that our society is just and merciful.

We need to know that in a country where the power to govern resides with the people, the choices we make between elections can be just as important as those we make during an election.

We have an obligation to seek our news from sources that tell the truth. We have an obligation to make sure we speak and share the truth. We have an obligation to always remember and respect the dignity of the other side because no matter what, they are our brethren, also made in the image and likeness of God, also having intrinsic dignity, and also beloved by Jesus.

In light of all of this, here are a few concrete recommendations for the days ahead.

1. Trust in Jesus to save us all, not in politicians, earthly power, or wealth. Do not make idols of earthly realities.
2. If you haven't already made it a habit, start praying a daily Rosary for peace in the world, in obedience to Our Lady of Fatima. The sort of peace she will bring is the peace of a rightly ordered society, of pure hearts and true Christian love.
3. Pray for your enemies! Forgive them their trespasses, because God will not forgive you if you don't (see *Catechism*, 2838-2845). The Divine Mercy Chaplet is an especially good prayer to offer for your enemies, as well as for those with whom you merely disagree. The more wrong — or even *evil* — their beliefs, policies, actions, or statements are, the more urgently you should be praying for them!
4. Study the truth. You can't stand for truth and promote the common good if you haven't properly informed your conscience. Prioritize reading Scripture and the *Catechism*. Other excellent sources include the papal social encyclicals, the *Compendium of Catholic Social Teaching*, and the *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*.
5. December 8 is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Under this title, Our Lady is the Patroness both of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception and of the United States of America. Ask her for help for our country, and for every need and intention. Invite her into your home through religious art, praying the Rosary as a family, Marian consecration, or other approved forms of devotion. Make the First Saturdays of reparation.

No matter what has happened, is happening, or will happen, remember our slogan: Jesus, I trust in You!

Mary, Immaculate Conception and Mother of Mercy, pray for us!

Saint Joseph, Universal Patron of the Church and Terror of Demons, pray for us!

Saint Faustina, Secretary and Apostle of Divine Mercy, pray for us!

Saint Stanislaus Papczynski, Founder of the Marian Fathers, pray for us!

And may God bless the United States of America. MH



PHOTO BY
KATHLEEN ERVIN

Zachary Winter, shown here on Sept. 19, at the Church of the Assumption in Nashville, on the day he officially entered the Catholic Church.

A CONVERSION, IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Zachary Winter of Nashville, Tennessee, is no stranger to suffering. Beginning at around age 12, he experienced debilitating symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder. As if that weren't a struggle enough, growing up, he was frequently bullied on account of his autism.

"My disposition is very gentle," he said. "I was never someone who fought back."

Eventually, Zachary would find consolation through his faith in Jesus Christ, his love for the Blessed Mother, and by becoming a member of the Association of Marian Helpers. But it took him many years to find a spiritual home.

He was raised nominally Protestant, but he never paid much attention in Sunday school. At around age 18, he was drawn to learn more about Christianity when he discovered that "The Lord of the Rings" film trilogy was based on books written by a Catholic author, J.R.R. Tolkien.

"Through my research of Catholicism, I stumbled across the Shroud of Turin and that became my autistic obsession," Zachary said. "I studied everything about it, and I concluded that God is real."

He then joined a local Orthodox church, where he

was baptized, upon which “I felt like a huge weight was lifted off me,” he said.

Unfortunately, even with Zachary’s growing faith, his obsessive-compulsive disorder continued to torture him. “After my conversion, I started getting a constant bombardment of the most evil thoughts. It was terrible. It just debilitated me. I got to the point where I couldn’t even drive a car.”

He found consolation in the Gospels. “The Wedding at Cana, how Christ listened to His Mother, it made me want to cry out to the *Theotokos* for help,” he said. “When I did, I felt deep in my soul that she was with me.”

After more than a decade of debilitating anxiety, Zachary concluded he needed to tackle his obsessive-compulsive disorder head on. “Long story short, through cognitive behavioral therapy and exposure therapy, I recognized that when it comes to thoughts and fear, the only way to defeat it is to face it. I got through all my compulsions. I have zero OCD to this day.”

Despite years of intense suffering, Zachary remained faithful to the Lord, in large part because of the writings of some Roman Catholic saints. “I came across the *Story of a Soul* by St. Thérèse of Lisieux,” he said. “I identified with her severe oversensitive nature and her scrupulosity. She was the first saint I had ever read whom I connected with 100 percent. I started praying to St. Thérèse, even though the Orthodox church I belonged to was critical of this. But I started implementing her Little Way in my life.”

Despite Zachary’s mental and spiritual progress, about two years ago he experienced a loss that brought him to the brink of despair. “Never in my life have I felt like taking my own life. But sometimes it would hit me that I just wanted my life to be over. So, I started reaching out to anyone I could,” he said.

This led Zachary to email a prayer request to the Marian Fathers’ prayer line. Zachary had discovered the Marian Fathers through a talk on YouTube about the Shroud of Turin given by Fr. Chris Alar, MIC.

“After I sent in my prayer request, I got an email saying that I was now a Marian Helper. In one sense, I thought it was awesome because I love the Mother of God so much. In another sense, I thought it was kind of strange that I was allowed to be a Marian Helper because I said in my prayer request that I was Orthodox. Then I saw the video about Marian Helpers and what it means. In it, [Fr. Chris] talks about all the graces that you can receive by being a Marian Helper, that you’re remembered daily in their Masses.”

Then something amazing happened. “Just a few days after receiving this email, the despair that I had been going through for years just totally went away! The feeling of not wanting to live just vanished. The love I had experienced on and off throughout the years was now in my heart all the time.”

‘The despair that I had been going through for years just totally went away! The feeling of not wanting to live just vanished. The love I had experienced on and off throughout the years was now in my heart all the time.’

— Zachary Winter

Zachary started tuning in to the Marian Fathers’ daily livestreamed Masses and attending Mass at a local Roman Catholic church in Nashville. “For the first time, I kind of felt like I was at home there,” he said. Soon, he began the process of entering the Catholic Church, and officially entered on Sept. 19. “I know it’s [Mary’s] hand guiding me along into the fold of St. Peter. The fact that it is through your encouragement that I’m becoming Catholic demonstrates the Virgin Mother’s care in my life. You all are literally called ‘the Marians’!”

Amidst his conversion, Zachary also discovered the cherished writings of yet another saint: St. Faustina. “The message of Divine Mercy itself, to a heart like mine, is so consoling. I used to see God as a harsh judge. But St. Faustina’s spirit and message helped me not to look at God that way. I learned that suffering is a gift as well. ... Sin wounds each of us so incredibly deeply, both our own sins and other people’s sins committed against us. Modern man needs the message of God’s loving mercy, because each and every one of us has missed the mark in one way or another as a result of the times in which we live. I’m humbled by this mercy, and it brings much gratitude into my heart.”

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SIDE BY SIDE WITH ST. JOSEPH

This Christmas, may Christ be born anew



In the chill of the high desert, standing vigilant by a manger, likely still bewildered but certainly at peace, this is the man we can turn to now for help. Because, yes, let's agree on this point: We need his help.

God the Father turned to him for help.

Mary, the Mother of God, did, too.

As we look toward Christmas in a most tumultuous year, we, too, can turn for help to St. Joseph — as our role model and as our powerful intercessor in Heaven.

The saint who rises to the occasion, a counterweight of composure in a world beset with worry, reminds us that God designed the universe to operate under the logic of love.

Like the Magi who, after an arduous journey, came upon the manger, we can stand side by side with St. Joseph. We can adore the Christ Child born into the world vulnerable, our Savior who relies upon our attentiveness and tender care.

Side by side with St. Joseph, we can prepare to transform and be transformed, to change the world by first reordering our own priorities.

We have so much to learn from the quiet hero of Christmas, St. Joseph, a model instrument of God's mercy in a troubled world.



A plan overturned

Before he became renowned as the Patron of the Universal Church, the Terror of Demons, the Pillar of Family Life, the Protector of the Church, and all the other well-earned titles, Joseph was simply an unknown carpenter, well-grounded in faith, his head filled with earthly dreams that would soon be supplanted.

You know the story: a marriage that began in bewilderment and progressed through days of fear and flight.

With his courtship of Mary, the future must have looked certain and steady. But then after the Annunciation — that Mary would conceive the Son of God — St. Joseph's role grew astonishingly complicated.

An angel came to him in a dream bearing heavenly tidings: that Mary had conceived the Child through the Holy Spirit and that this Child would save God's people from their sins and lead them to eternal life.

In other words, Joseph was given the knowledge that God had chosen *him* to be the faithful provider for — and watchful defender of — Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, thus fulfilling an essential mission in the plan of salvation.

With a servant's heart, Joseph would rise to the challenge. Soon, he and his pregnant wife were on the move, to Bethlehem first, where God Almighty

would enter the world Incarnate, precious in the arms of Mary and Joseph.

Then, based on yet another dream — that the Christ Child's life was in danger — Joseph packed up his young family and fled with them to Egypt, a foreign land where they likely knew no one. But they remained faithful to God and faithful to each other as they awaited word they could finally return to Nazareth, where Joseph would spend his days devoted to caring for his spouse and raising his Son.

You see where I'm going with all this. If nothing else, 2020 has taught us that we never know what the future holds.

No matter what madness and gladness the world threw at Joseph, he acted in faith.

Amazingly, Scripture doesn't record any words of Joseph. Rather, we read of a man who — first — listened attentively. As Pope St. John Paul II said, "He is great in faith, not because he speaks his own words, but above all because he listened to the words of the Living God."

We, too, can listen to the words of the Living God — through daily reading of Scripture and Catholic mystical writings such as the *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*. God will speak to us when we make a concerted effort to strengthen our daily prayer life.

What would St. Joseph do?

Here's something else we can do: We can tread upon this earth asking ourselves, "What would St. Joseph do?"

Indeed, what would St. Joseph do in a time of pandemic, in a time of political unrest, in a time of uncertainty, mistrust, and moral disarray?

He would tender his fears, frustrations, and struggles to God. With courage and self-discipline, he would see beyond his own disappointments and serve as a joyful beacon of God's truth and love.

He would well know that in this life there is a great deal we will *never* understand. Yet, we can have faith that, as St. Paul said, "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God" (Rom 8:28).

What would St. Joseph do?

He would make the hard and good choice to bring Christ into the world.

This is precisely what we are called to do as well. But how?

Three ways: By keeping God's Commandments; by humble service in our communities, particularly for those in greatest need; and through intercessory prayer for the wellbeing of others.

Indeed, in prayer, we can confidently turn to St. Joseph himself, who proved a powerful intercessor for our common spiritual soulmate, St. Faustina. In her *Diary*, entry 1203, we learn four important things:

- that St. Joseph urged her "to have a constant devotion to him";
- that he wanted her to recite the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be, and Memorare to St. Joseph once every day;
- that he was supporting her work to make Christ's mercy known to the world; and
- that he promised her special help and protection.

From Heaven, St. Joseph plays a pivotal role.

Recall that amidst the horrors of World War I, on Oct. 13, 1917, St. Joseph famously appeared in the final and most dramatic of Our Lady's six apparitions in Fatima, Portugal.

One of the visionaries, Lucia, would later describe what she saw that day: "St. Joseph with the Child Jesus and Our Lady robed in white with a blue mantle, beside the sun. St. Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared to bless the world, for they traced the Sign of the Cross with their hands."

What are we to make of this?

First, that the Christ Child Himself chose sanctuary in the arms of St. Joseph. And second, that in times of chaos and instability, Joseph remains a cool-headed spiritual father intimately engaged in the work of salvation.



Visit [ShopMercy.org](https://www.shopmercy.org) to order a canvas print of St. Joseph, Terror of Demons. (Product code: [B48-WC10GW](#))

A Christmas invitation

As 2020 comes to a close, God is calling us to bring hope into the world.

We are invited to stand side by side with St. Joseph by the manger — to gaze upon the Christ Child and ask for the grace to be steadfast in our duties on behalf of the Kingdom of God.

Like the Guardian of the Holy Family himself, we can gain the wisdom to recognize God's call and the fortitude to bear unexpected troubles.

Like St. Joseph, we can serve the Lord with hearts full of selfless love.

Like St. Joseph, we can act in this world with humility, obedience to the Holy Spirit, and awareness of our poverty and utter dependence on God as we dedicate our lives to bringing ourselves and others to Heaven.

This Christmas, we can bind our hearts to the glorious consequence of St. Joseph's self-sacrifice: the Christ Child born into the world, a fragile thing enfolded in the strength of our faith.

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— Felix Carroll

‘Something is up’

(And it has to do with St. Joseph)

Against the backdrop of a worldwide pandemic, crisis in the Church, political and economic uncertainty, and cultural upheaval, something extraordinary is underway, and it has to do with St. Joseph.

Marriages renewed. Men answering the call to lead more virtuous lives. Young people discerning religious vocations. Families consecrating themselves to St. Joseph. Nine bishops in the United States declaring a “Year of St. Joseph” in their dioceses, and one bishop in England.

All of these things have been inspired by one book: *Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father*, published by Marian Press last December.

“It’s incredible. It’s just been off the charts,” said the book’s author, Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC. “My phone has been pinging every day, all day, for months.”

Released on the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being declared Patron of the Universal Church, *Consecration to St. Joseph* has sold nearly 150,000 copies in the United States, making it one of the fastest selling Marian Press books of the last decade. It has routinely been in Amazon’s top 10 list of Catholic books. A streaming audiobook launch this summer has been a major success.

Sales have been strong in the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand, as well. The book is available in Spanish. It will soon be available in



Modeled on St. Louis de Montfort’s *Preparation for Total Consecration*, Fr. Donald Calloway’s *Consecration to St. Joseph* has inspired a worldwide movement of consecration to Jesus through Mary and St. Joseph. To order *Consecration to St. Joseph*, visit ConsecrationToStJoseph.org or call 1-800-462-7426.

“The whole Church is now coming around to St. Joseph,” said Fr. Donald. “I never anticipated the book being this big, but at a time when families are under attack, marriages are falling apart, when people have turned away from God, when there’s so much anxiety and fear, we really do need St. Joseph. We need his protection. Now is the time of St. Joseph.”

German, French, Slovakian, Polish, and Croatian.

Father Donald sees the Holy Spirit at work in all of this.

“Something is up,” he said. “Since 1870, when Pope Pius IX declared St. Joseph the Patron of the Universal Church — telling the world to turn to Joseph as our loving father, our spiritual father — there has been so much momentum, and now it’s reaching a crescendo.”

Indeed, something is up. In 1879, St. Joseph appeared in Knock, Ireland. In 1889, Pope Leo XIII issued the Church’s first encyclical on St. Joseph. In 1909, Pope St. Pius X approved the Litany of St. Joseph. In 1917, St. Joseph appeared in Fatima holding the Christ Child. In 1962, Pope St. John XXIII added St. Joseph’s name to the first Eucharistic prayer, known as the Roman Canon. In 2013, Pope Francis added St. Joseph into Eucharistic prayers II, III, and IV.

Publication of *Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father* easily belongs on this list of monumental events in the history of devotion to St. Joseph.

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In April 1521, Martin Luther appeared before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Imperial Diet of Worms where he was asked to recant his criticisms against Church teaching. He refused.

Luther's legacy and Christian unity

How both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation got it wrong

By Dr. Robert Stackpole

History books resound with Martin Luther's famous words uttered 500 years ago in his closing statement to the Diet of Worms (an ecclesiastical and imperial council called to examine his teachings). He said:

Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason — I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other — my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. [And some witnesses say he added these words at the end:] Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.

Thus, the Reformation was born. And the historical results were rapid and predictable.

What Martin Luther was saying in 1521, in effect, was, "The highest authority for me in discerning what God has

revealed through Holy Scripture is my own reason, my own private judgment. I cannot fully trust anything else: not a papal decree, nor an ecumenical council. I cannot even defer to any traditional interpretation of Scripture by the saints and Fathers. So, unless someone can show me, to my own satisfaction, that I am wrong, by presenting me with biblical reasons that I find convincing, I cannot and will not admit that I am wrong."

Since every Protestant reader of Holy Scripture was now his own highest authority for interpreting it, the Reformation movement itself gradually shattered into a plethora of competing denominations, each one clutching its own interpretation of God's Word. Right now there are an estimated 154 distinct streams of Protestantism, and roughly 20,000 Protestant denominations in the world. In short, Luther's declaration was the death knell for global Christian unity.

The Pope's prerogatives

In response, the Roman Catholic Church, from the time of the Reformation until Vatican II, increasingly reinforced Church unity by emphasizing centralized papal authority. This became known as the “Ultramontane” doctrine. The Catholic Church was now held to be essentially a pyramid of obedience in everything, with the Pope at the top.

Consider all the ways in which the Pope has been recognized as the Church's highest authority.

For example, the papacy alone ultimately has the authority to decide which books should be included in Holy Scripture and which devout Christians should be considered Fathers and saints of the Church. The Holy See alone ultimately decides which general councils of the Church were truly authoritative ecumenical councils. He ultimately ratifies — and by his own authority can alter — the creeds of the Church that were written by those ecumenical councils (e.g. when the Holy See added the contentious words “and the Son” to the final paragraph of the Nicene Creed, an act that contributed to the tragic schism between Orthodox East and Catholic West).

The papacy can write its own creed for the universal Church as well, which all Catholic Christians are duty-bound to accept and believe (e.g. when Pope Pius IV penned the Tridentine Creed at the time of the Reformation, and when Pope Paul VI wrote “The Credo of the People of God” in 1968 after Vatican II). It is the Holy Father who ultimately appoints the bishops of the Church, and he can remove them at will.

The Pope on his own also can authoritatively and infallibly define that a particular doctrine has been revealed by God and is necessary to be believed by all the faithful (as when the papacy defined *ex cathedra* the truth of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary) — and such papal declarations are held to be true and irreformable of themselves and do not need to be received and ratified by the college of bishops for us to know them to be true.

Indeed, according to the First Vatican Council in 1870, the papacy has “the absolute fullness, of ... supreme power ... ordinary and immediate both over all and each of the

churches, and over all and each of the pastors and faithful.”

What's wrong with this picture?

Today, 500 years after the Reformation, all too often all sides in the controversies straining the unity of the Church simply assume the papal monarchy paradigm without question.

Some Catholics today express concern that Pope Francis is now using his papal authority to impose on the Church doctrines and social teachings that they see as incompatible with the traditional Catholic faith. Others are frustrated that Pope Francis has not gone farther and utilized his supreme authority much more boldly to amend traditional Church teaching and practice. Both sides hang on his every word, waiting to see what he will say and do next.

Many on both sides of this debate accept that the papal monarchy ultimately can and should decide all of these issues for us. If only we can get the right *kind* of pope at the helm, to impose all the things that *we* approve of, and forbid all the things that *we* don't!

Something is clearly wrong here.

For one thing, not much evidence can be found in the New Testament for a vision of the Body of Christ with a monarchical

earthly leader. Scripture clearly shows us that Peter was meant to be the rock, universal shepherd, and key-bearing Vicar of Christ (see Mt 16:17-19 and Jn 21:15-19), to serve and help secure the unity in truth of the universal Church. But there's not a single instance in the New Testament of Peter exercising authority over the other apostles or all the faithful like a supreme monarch. What we see is Petrine *leadership*, not Petrine *lordship*.

Similarly, in the early Church the continuing Petrine ministry in the See of Rome was widely held to be the visible “head” of the universal Body of Christ: a generally trustworthy touchstone of orthodoxy, and a court of appeal on matters of doctrine and discipline that divided the bishops from one another. But the ancient Fathers and saints came to no consensus among themselves on precisely how that Petrine ministry should operate, and how far its authority should extend.

For example, in 449 AD, Pope St. Leo the Great issued his famous *Tome* in order to settle an early Christian

Scripture clearly shows that St. Peter was meant to be the rock and key-bearing Vicar of Christ to serve and help secure the unity in truth of the universal Church. But there's not a single instance in the New Testament of Peter exercising authority like a supreme monarch.

controversy regarding the doctrine of the Incarnation. But even though he thought that his action alone settled the matter, the bishops at the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451 felt it necessary to examine and discuss the document before receiving it as a true expression of the apostolic faith. In short, there was a consensus on Petrine primacy, but not on every aspect of its authority.

Let's define 'unity'

One of the fruits of ecumenical dialogue over the last half-century has been the rediscovery of the ancient Christian notion that the Body of Christ is not just a collection of autonomous individuals (who happen to agree with each other on their interpretation of Scripture), nor is it a centralized monarchy. Rather, the Catholic Church essentially is a "communion" (koinonia) of churches: Each Eucharistic community, as a living cell of the universal Body of Christ, participates in the life of the whole through shared sacramental bonds and a common faith.

The Petrine ministry is meant to play a key role in this universal koinonia. Unity with the Holy See is meant to be a sign and seal of the unity of the whole Body. But he alone does not define the faith for all (at least, not without most of the bishops behind him), nor does he simply impose his will on all his brother bishops (nor even necessarily appoint them all).

As in any living human body, the head cannot act on its own apart from the support and proper functioning of the rest of the body, nor can the whole body act without the agreement of its head. A healthy mind and body acts organically, with each member and organ performing its proper role.

Think of it this way: Jesus once said, "where two or three are gathered in My name, there is an argument."

Oops — that's not quite what He said, but it's all too true.

It's a miracle of the Holy Spirit even when a small group of sincere and thoughtful Christians (all of us sinners-not-yet-fully-cured, with a limited finite capacity to comprehend the infinite mystery of God) come to a common mind on all significant matters of faith and morals — even more so when a whole parish or a whole diocese can be of one mind.

It's the most amazing miracle of all when the bishops of the whole Church, together with the Bishop of Rome, by the Holy Spirit freely come to a common heart and mind about doctrines of faith and morals that need to be clarified, defined, and secured, to keep the whole Body of Christ in the unity of the truth, for the sake of its mission.

The Russian Orthodox refer to such miracles of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church as Sobornost: true, consensual unity in truth and love in the Body of Christ. It's manifest above all in the consensus of the Church Fathers and the saints, the Creeds and councils, most especially from the first Christian millennium (when Orthodox East and Catholic West were still united).

This historic, consensual Catholicism is a vast treasury of wisdom that does not depend on what the Pope said yesterday, or whether you find his latest public remarks helpful or not.

This Sacred Tradition (of which the Petrine ministry is called to be the principal custodian) is a wellspring of wisdom flowing deep in the heart of the Church, and ensuring that she remains, ever and always, one Body in Christ (Eph 4:4-6), and "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15).

MH

Robert Stackpole, STD, is an author and the director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy. He was an ordained Anglican pastor before becoming a Catholic in 1994.

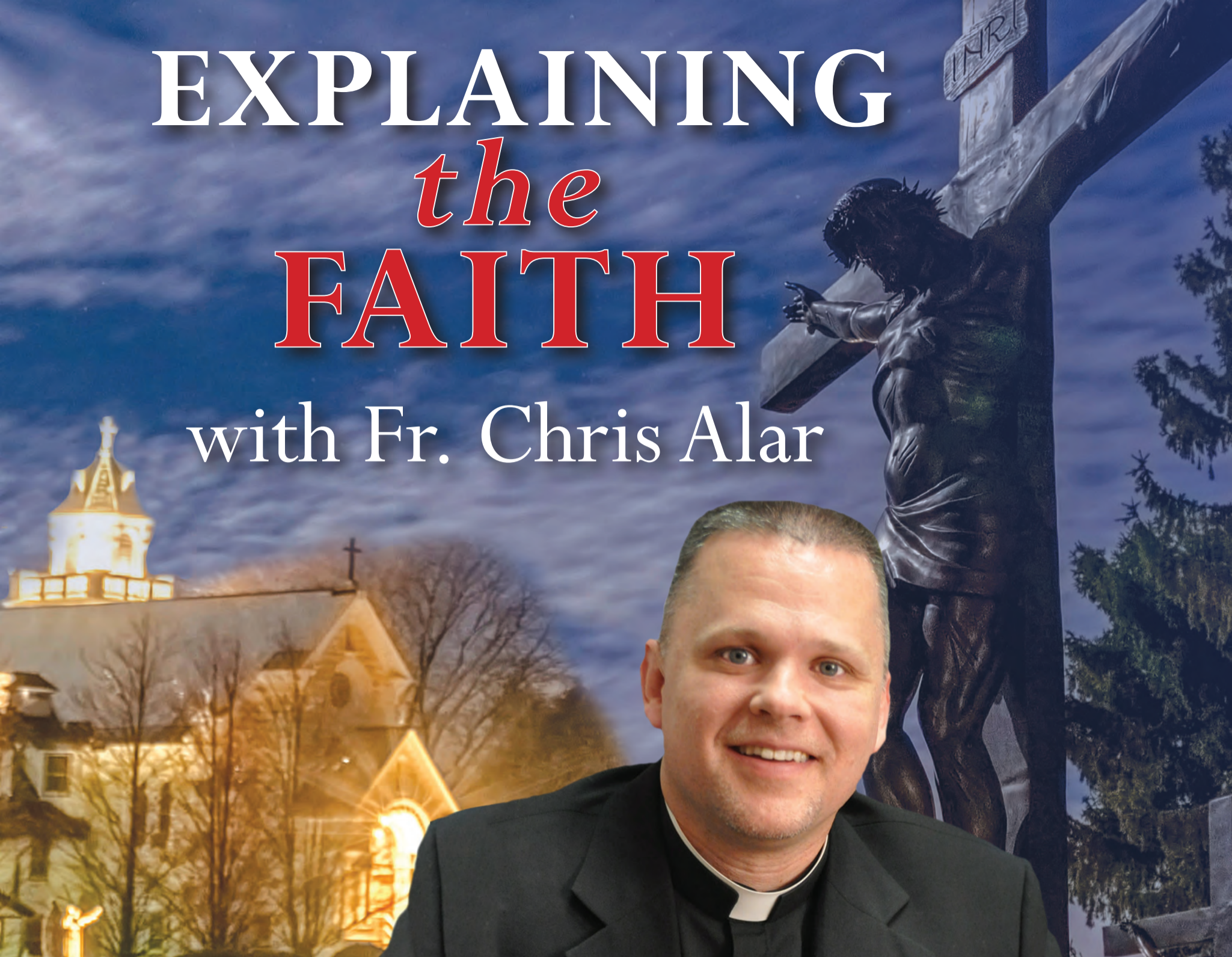
'That they may all be one'

Ecumenism, from the Greek word "*oikoumene*," meaning "the whole inhabited world," is the promotion of cooperation and unity among Christians. Jesus Christ founded one Church and, in the midst of His Passion, prayed, "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21). In fidelity to that, the Catholic Church takes part in an ecumenical movement seeking visible unity among the diversity of Christian churches and ecclesial communities. A divided Christianity is a scandal to the world, and the movement of the Holy Spirit calls for the restoration of unity. Underlying the Catholic Church's pursuit of ecumenism is the recognition that despite the separation, elements of the Church can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church. Thus, it can even be said that the Church's pursuit of ecumenism is another way of expressing her radical catholicity or universality. These elements are the imperfect realization of unity that already exists in Jesus Christ as part of the one Church of Christ. The unity of Christians is understood as the manifestation of their communion with God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Ecumenical dialogue, the search for full, visible unity, is thus essential to the Christian life.

— *From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*

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- How to Bring Loved Ones Back to the Church
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Visit TheDivineMercy.org/faith



PHOTO BY LAURA FUHRMAN ON UNSPLASH

The Holy Souls in Purgatory

We can put a face to them

They are calling to us, these fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters from throughout the ages.

They built nations. They built our roads, our town halls, schools, libraries, churches, and civic organizations.

They created medicines to cure deadly illnesses. They developed technologies that made life a little less cruel for the suffering.



They produced art — paintings, music, literature, films — that redirected our affections toward the anointed realms of truth, beauty, and goodness.

They leaned into the wheel, working routine jobs to feed their families.

They belly-laughed at finely told tales.

They shook with sorrow from heartbreak.

They lived around the corner. They lived on the far side of the world.

They held a cool cloth to the head of a loved one sick with fever.

They got their hands dirty in autumn to ensure daffodils in the spring.

They were once little children, born of love.

They had fears for the future.

At times, they were troubled by their own actions.

They sometimes questioned if God really exists.



PHOTO BY JF MARTIN ON UNSPLASH

They sought love.
They desired peace.
They craved community.
They stocked the shelves at the soup kitchen.
They shook the hand of a new immigrant.
They made a little wish before blowing out the candles.
They gave anonymously to good causes.
They sang their lungs out during long, lonely commutes.
They had many dreams.
They had many regrets.
They made others feel loved.
They always went to the parent-teacher nights, to the plays, to the ball games.
They always went to the wake.

Purgatory: It's only logical

Let's recall how we know Purgatory exists:

The existence of Purgatory logically follows from two facts: our imperfection on earth and our perfection in Heaven. Of the "Final Purification, or Purgatory," the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the

They always went to the funeral.

They sent kind notes.

They said a quiet, short prayer every time the sirens went by.

They died on a battlefield. They died in a hospital. They died at home. They died in a tragic accident. They died surrounded by loved ones. They died alone.

What they all share in common is this: They died in God's friendship. They may now be undergoing purification in Purgatory, and few pray for them.

They don't comprise some abstract reality. They don't reside "someplace else," far away and unknowable. They, indeed, remain near to us, but in a different state of being.

Many saints were given the gift to understand this — to see the departed souls as we, the living, clearly see one another.

The Founder of the Marian Fathers, St. Stanislaus Papczynski (1631-1701), had at least two intense experiences of Purgatory between 1673 and 1675. After one such experience, he told his confreres, "Pray, brethren, for the souls in Purgatory, for they suffer unbearably."

We are invited to a similar awareness — to understand that the dearly departed are not gone, but rather they're simply not visible in the same way as before. Those in Purgatory suffer continually with an intense burning of love and longing to be with God.

How many of them are there? Saint Maria Faustina (1905-1938), who had visions of Purgatory, described them as "a great crowd of suffering souls" (*Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*, 20).

The Church teaches that these souls cannot help themselves, that we must come to their aid.

Specifically, we the faithful can — and must — offer our sacrifices, prayers, Masses, corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and almsgiving for the release of the souls in Purgatory.

Like you and I do now, these souls once trod upon this land carrying with them the weight of the world.

They are calling to us.

MH

— Felix Carroll

punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith in Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The Tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire:

As for certain lesser faults, we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come. (1031)



MARIAN ARCHIVES

Even from an early age, St. Faustina (shown here with her family) had a great love for the poor. Her eldest sister, Josephine, is recorded to have shared, “When Helena [Faustina] was about 10 years old, she decided to obtain money for the poor. ... She dressed in rags and went around the village from house to house saying a prayer and asking for alms.” Jesus Himself would later appear to Faustina in much the same manner.

A ‘POOR’ DISGUISE

See and serve Jesus in others, especially the poor.

Catholic social teaching is one of the great treasures of the Church, and yet all too often, it’s neglected or overlooked entirely. In this issue of Marian Helper, we continue our exploration of the Church’s social teaching, this time focusing on the preferential option for the poor.

By Chris Sparks

For a while, St. Faustina Kowalska was the gatekeeper at one of her congregation’s convents. There, she experienced one of the most profound miracles of her life.

Her account begins matter-of-factly: “Jesus came to the main entrance today, under the guise of a poor young man” (*Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*, 1312).

Initially, like Mary Magdalene seeing the resurrected Jesus at the empty tomb, St. Faustina didn’t recognize Him. “This young man, emaciated, barefoot and bare-headed, and with his clothes in tatters, was frozen because the day was cold and rainy. He asked for some-

thing hot to eat.”

Saint Faustina had been serving the poor from the main entrance there for some time, distributing food and friendliness to all who came. “So I went to the kitchen, but found nothing there for the poor. But, after searching around for some time, I succeeded in finding some soup, which I reheated and into which I crumbled some bread, and I gave it to the poor young man, who ate it.”

Meditate on that for a moment. Saint Faustina, taking some of the many good things given to her congregation by Divine Providence, was unknowingly feeding the Divine Mercy some of those same gifts.

Then comes her epiphany. “As I was taking the bowl from him, he gave me to know that He was the Lord of heaven and earth. When I saw Him as He was, He vanished from my sight.” Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, St. Faustina shared food with Jesus, then saw Him truly, and He vanished.

“When I went back in and reflected on what had happened at the gate, I heard these words in my soul: ‘My daughter, the blessings of the poor who bless Me as they leave this gate have reached My ears. And your compassion, within the bounds of obedience, has pleased Me, and this is why I came down from My throne — to taste the fruits of your mercy.’”

Here, in the life of one of the great saints and mystics of the Church, we see Jesus explicitly demonstrating the truth of the warning given in Matthew 25:31-46, when Christ describes the judgment of the nations at the end of time. “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40).

Pope Benedict XVI summed up the consequences of this teaching on Feb. 21, 2008, in his address to the General Congregation of the Jesuits:

As I was able to reaffirm to the Latin American Bishops gathered at the Shrine of Aparecida, “the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us

with his poverty (cf. II Cor 8: 9).” It is therefore natural that those who truly want to be a companion of Jesus really share in his love for the poor. For us, the option for the poor is not ideological but is born from the Gospel. Situations of injustice and poverty in today’s world are numerous and tragic, and if it is necessary to seek to understand them and fight their structural causes, it is also necessary to penetrate to the very heart of man, to extirpate the deep roots of evil and sin that cut him off from God, without forgetting to meet people’s most urgent needs in the spirit of Christ’s charity.

That preferential option for the poor is indicated in Scripture and Tradition, in the teaching and example of Jesus Himself, who became poor, taking on the form of a slave (see Phil 2:7-8). It’s plainly taught in the social encyclicals, including Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (*On Capital and Labor*, 37) and St. John Paul II’s *Centesimus Annus* (*On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, 11).

Love Jesus, and love like Jesus. It will make all the difference in the world. MH

To read more about the works of mercy to which we are called and their indispensable role in saving our souls, look at ‘You Did It to Me’: A Practical Guide to Mercy in Action by Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC. Visit ShopMercy.org or call 1-800-462-7426. (Product code: B48-2ME)

May we learn from their example

The preferential option for the poor is plain to see in the lives and ministries of innumerable saints across the centuries, including:

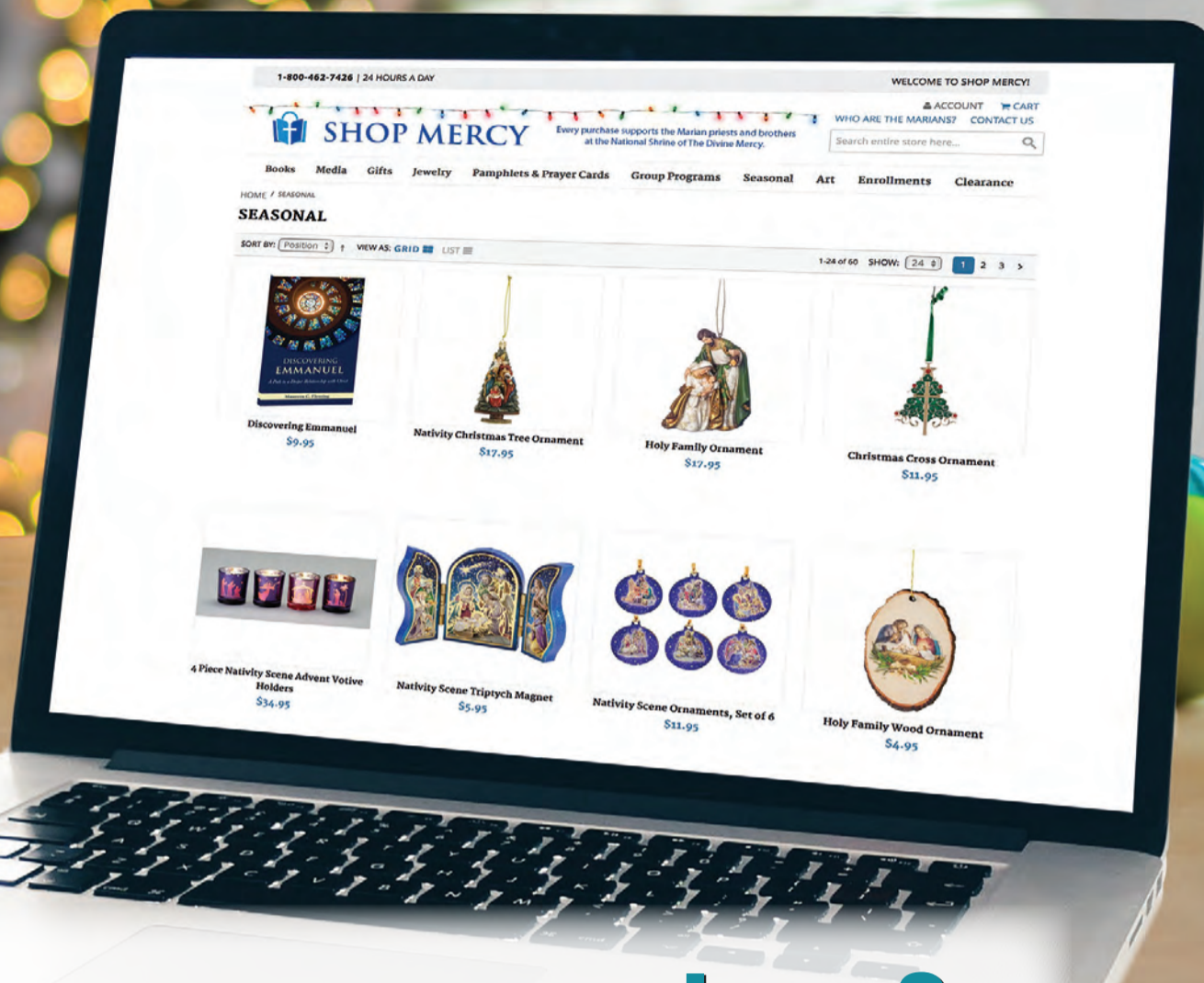
- Saint Lawrence of Rome, a deacon in the early Church during the Roman persecutions, who, when ordered to gather the treasures of the Church and bring them before the authorities, gave all the Church’s material possessions to the poor and brought the poor before the authorities, saying, “Here are the treasures of the Church.”
- Saint Francis of Assisi and his many spiritual sons, who abandoned ordinary life to be poor among the poor, to love God with Gospel abandon and so loved their neighbors as themselves;
- Saint Stanislaus Papczynski, whose abiding devotion to the Holy Souls in Purgatory stemmed from the insight that they are among the poorest of all, for they

can’t intercede for themselves or hasten their own release from Purgatory;

- Saint Vincent de Paul, whose love for the poor inspired a society behind endless works of mercy;
- Saint Katharine Drexel, the heiress who became a consecrated religious and spent her fortune on the education and salvation of the Black and Native American populations of the United States in a time where that attracted the wrath of the KKK;
- Mother Teresa of Calcutta and her Missionaries of Charity, in all their endless works of love and assistance to the least of our human brethren of all races and religions;
- Servant of God Dorothy Day in her Catholic Worker Movement, in which she and other like-minded Catholics embraced life with and for the poor;
- And so many others.

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Give from your IRA: Marian.org/QCD

Donate appreciated stocks: Marian.org/Stocks

Contact Ellen Miller at EMiller@marian.org or (413) 298-1380.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

Laura called recently to thank us for providing the FreeWill online tool for preparing your will. She was so grateful for it and enthusiastic about it that I asked her if I could share some of her thoughts with other Marian Helpers. If you are thinking about writing or updating your will, or you know someone else who may benefit from this tool, listen to what Laura has to say:

I needed to update my last will and testament, but because of the legal expense involved, I was procrastinating, unsure of where to turn for help. It was through a recent visit to the Marian Fathers website that I discovered the FreeWill tool. The timing was perfect because of the recent passing of my mother, followed by COVID-19 soon thereafter, both of which reminded me of the shortness of this temporal life.

So I believe it was Divine Providence that gave me the opportunity, at this moment in time, to use this trusted source. FreeWill turned out to be simple to use. It guided me each step of the way and zeroed in on the questions I needed to ask myself and reflect upon. It also gave me the option to record my wishes for a funeral Mass (music, readings, etc.).

Now that I have a valid will, I find peace in knowing that my children (now adults) will not have to make those decisions for me. I had experienced first-hand, with my own siblings, the need to make such decisions for a deceased parent, and I understand how difficult that can be. Out of a sense of profound gratitude, I was inspired to bequeath a donation to the Marian Fathers in support of their efforts to spread the Divine Mercy message.

Relating to this, I'm very thankful that the Marian Fathers offer Mass enrollments for the deceased (and the living), so I have enrolled myself, along with all of my immediate family members, in their beautiful perpetual Mass enrollments. In addition, I have given other enrollments to extended family, friends, and acquaintances,



Laura, shown here with her children (who are now grown).

some of whom are non-Catholics.

Many have expressed gratitude for the comfort and consolation this has given them. I believe this simple gesture can also be a way to share the Divine Mercy message with someone who is suffering and struggling, by reminding them of God's closeness, or possibly planting seeds that may bear fruit in the future. I know there are times when I myself need to be reminded of God's infinite mercy. The Divine Mercy gift shop on their website also has much to offer and has been of great spiritual benefit for myself and others.

I hope this testimonial might encourage others to consider all that is available to them through the ministries of the Marian Fathers. I am so grateful to them and to God for these opportunities. When asked if I would share my story, I was nervous, because it required me to step out of my comfort zone. Yet, I believe I was being urged on by the Holy Spirit to tell others about it.

Our Lord said He wants the whole world to know about His mercy, and I feel an obligation to do my part in that mission. Just as Jesus wanted Sr. Faustina to write it down, it seemed like, at this time, He was asking me also to write it down. Jesus, I trust in You!

Visit marian.org/will if you want to check out the free online tool for writing or updating your will.

As always, if you have questions or ideas about the mission and work of the Marian Fathers or how to arrange a gift, don't hesitate to call or email me.



Ellen Miller is director for Special Gifts. Contact her at helpers@marian.org; (413) 298-1380; or Association of Marian Helpers, Stockbridge, MA 01263. Visit marian.org/PlannedGiving to learn more.

Coming Dec. 10th

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GRACES RECEIVED

Granddaughter becomes sober

I have been praying for a very long time (along with my family) for my 22-year-old granddaughter's healing. She was suffering from an addiction to alcohol and maybe drugs, was unemployed, and had lost her faith.

When I received the *Marian Helper* with the article on Graces Received through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Casimir Wyszynski, I began my daily prayers for his intercession.

I am so very pleased to share that, unbeknownst to us, on Ash Wednesday she began her healing! She did not know we were praying, and we did not know she had taken her last drink, but I can say with joy she is sober, has found a job, and is seeking God.

I will continue to pray these prayers as they have led to such a profound healing for my precious granddaughter, and I am so very thankful for all of the graces received.

— JM, Tacoma, Washington

Son gets into PhD program

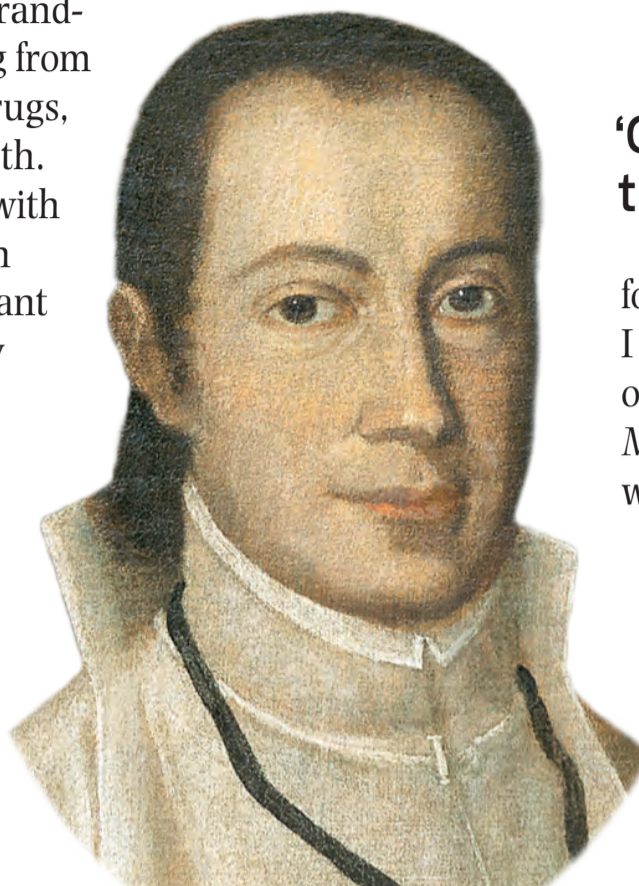
I wanted to share with you a special grace that my son received through the intercession of Venerable Servant of God Casimir Wyszynski.

My son had been applying to several universities for a graduate school position to get a PhD in physics. He had not been successful for months. I had been praying for God's divine will in this matter and through the intercession of Venerable Servant of God Casimir Wyszynski. Just a few weeks before his college graduation, he was notified that he was accepted to one of the universities of his

choice with a full scholarship. Thank you, Blessed Lord, and Venerable Servant of God Casimir Wyszynski!

— RMS

North Royalton, Ohio



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

'God led me to read this magazine'

During the pandemic I was looking for comfort and peace. Like many others, I was getting very depressed and full of anxiety. I read the Summer issue of *Marian Helper* from front to back and was especially drawn to the accounts of graces received through the intercession of Venerable Casimir.

My son was laid off from his job due to the pandemic and was not sure he would be returning to work. After I prayed to Venerable Casimir, not only did my son receive other calls for employment, but he was called back to his old job. I am most grateful and will continue to pray to Venerable Casimir regarding a move to be near my daughter and granddaughter.

I truly believe God led me to read this magazine. I felt more relaxed and at peace after doing so. Thank you

with all my heart.

— KB, email

For a Venerable Casimir prayer card (B48-BCWP), call toll free 1-800-462-7426. If you have received graces through his intercession, please write: Br. Andrew Maczynski, MIC, Vice Postulator of the Marian Causes of Canonization, Stockbridge, MA 01263. Email: graces@marian.org

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

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

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

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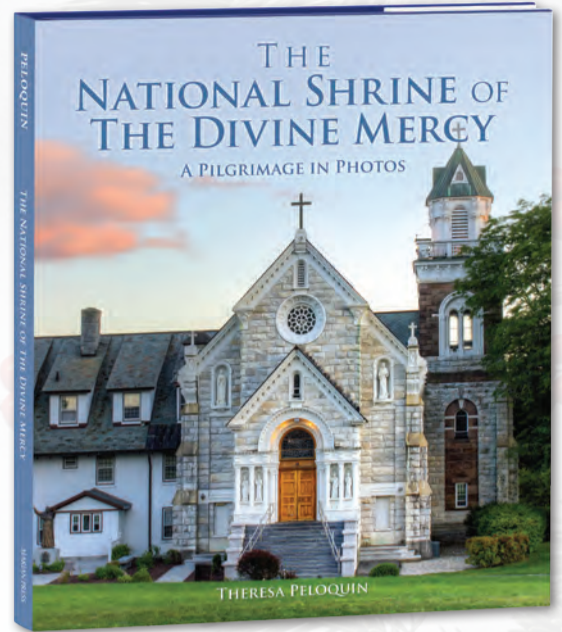
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The Marians of the Immaculate Conception 2021 Wall Calendar

The Marians of the Immaculate Conception bring you this exclusive 2021 calendar, featuring beautiful artwork and inspirational quotes for each month of the year. Calendar includes "How to Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy." **B48-CAL21**
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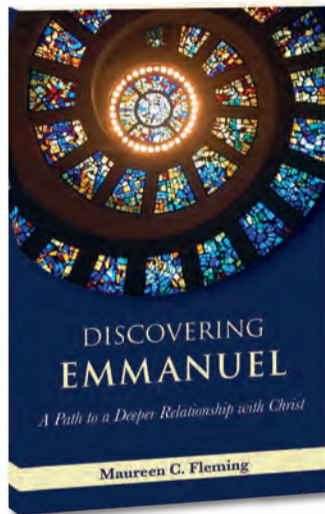


The National Shrine of The Divine Mercy: A Pilgrimage in Photos

The breathtaking grounds of Eden Hill in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, have long been appreciated as a sign of God's mercy in Creation. If you already have come to this holy place, here are images to remind you of your pilgrimage. If you are only able to be here in spirit, let these photos speak to your heart, giving you an appreciation for all the Lord has done for His Church through Eden Hill, the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, and the National Shrine of The Divine Mercy. Hardcover, 129 pages. **B48-NSDM** \$24.95

Discovering Emmanuel

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Divine Mercy Blanket

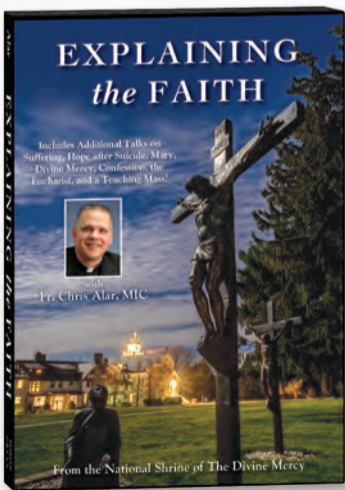
This woven tapestry blanket would make a great gift or a stunning addition to any home décor. Perfect as a throw or wall hanging,



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Postage costs may vary for online orders.

From the
VAULTS



Look what our archivist has unearthed.

The man in the middle (wearing the pectoral cross) is Blessed George Matulaitis, MIC (1871-1927), known affectionately by the Marian Fathers as “Father Renovator.” The arrow points to a young priest — none other than Blessed Michael Sopocko (1888-1975).

So what’s going on here? Catholic history in the making.

The photo was taken sometime between 1918-1925 when Blessed George served as Archbishop of Vilnius. Blessed Sopocko, a priest of Vilnius, had been serving in Warsaw as a chaplain for the Polish military when Blessed George called him to return to Vilnius. That’s when things got very interesting. Back in Vilnius, Blessed Sopocko met St. Faustina Kowalska and became her spiritual director during her stay in that city from 1933-1936.

In her *Diary*, St. Faustina wrote of Blessed Sopocko: “O my Jesus, You see how very grateful I am to Father Sopocko, who has advanced Your work so much. That soul, so humble, has had to endure all the storms. He has not allowed himself to become discouraged by adversities, but has faithfully responded to the call of God” (1586).

Our Lord said of Blessed Sopocko: “He is a priest after My own Heart; Through him it pleased Me to proclaim the worship of My mercy” (*Diary*, 1256).

It was Blessed Sopocko who told St. Faustina to keep a diary. He was instrumental in getting the Divine Mercy Image painted and publicly displayed. He also gave key Divine Mercy material to Fr. Joseph Jarzebowksi, MIC, who then brought it to the Marian Fathers in the United States to be spread throughout the world.

As for Blessed George, without him, the Marian Fathers would probably not exist to this day. He secretly entered the Marians during the Bolshevik regime in Lithuania when Catholic religious had been banned and the Marians were down to only one member.

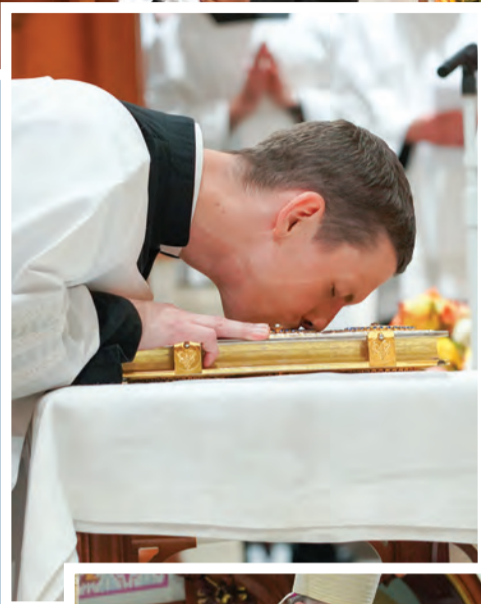
In one of the many quotable passages of his 368-page *Journal*, Blessed George wrote, “If I may ask, Lord, let me be but a dishrag in Your Church, a rag used to wipe up messes and then thrown away into some dark corner. I want to be used up and worn out in the same way so that your house may be a little cleaner and brighter. And afterwards, let me be thrown away like a dirty, worn-out dishrag.”

That remains a rallying cry today for the Marian Fathers and Marian Helpers who, together, work to bring God’s mercy to the world.

MH



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the
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— *Blessed George Matulaitis*
Renovator of the Marian Fathers
(1871-1927)

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