



The PILGRIM

Vol. 11 No. 1 Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)

January 2000

Our Lady's MESSAGE of 12/25/99 via Marija Pavlovic Lunetti and the Franciscans at Medjugorje

Dear Children! This is the time of grace. Little children, today in a special way with little Jesus, whom I hold in my embrace, I am giving you the possibility to decide for peace. Through your 'yes' for peace and your decision for God, a new possibility for peace is opened. Only in this way, little children, this century will be for you a time of peace and well-being. Therefore, put little newborn Jesus in the first place in your life and He will lead you on the way of salvation. Thank you for having responded to my call.

Father Slavko Barbaric's REFLECTION begins on page 23

A PRAYER

Most Sacred and Adorable Heart of Jesus, we consecrate ourselves to Thee in this Jubilee Year of Grace. We belong to Thee. You keep us in Your Heart most Sacred. In blessing and protecting us all, You make our homes a shrine, a stable, of Thy love and Thy most precious grace.

Strengthen the bond of love between all family members. Aid us in all steps needed for reconciliation of unresolved problems. Let no stone be unturned to restore loving relationships to those now broken. Heal friendships that have separated us from being one with Your Love. Show us that affection unites us all together. Help us to bear one another's burdens in unselfishness, harmony, and peace. Keep us always near to the heart of Thy Blessed Mother, and to Your Divine Will. AMEN

(Kathleen prays from the heart to guide each issue.)

CAMDEN DIOCESE VOCATION OFFICE

The Vocation Office periodically sponsors a program entitled "OPT TO SERVE". This program is a one week LIVE IN ministry experience for young adults (college age and older). An OPT Program was held during the Christmas Vacation Holiday over January 2-7, 2000. This program offers single young men and women the opportunity to experience a life style that includes ministry, prayer and community.

For information, and registration call Father. Joseph Szolack, Director of Vocations at 856-756-7900 EXT. 5266, or FAX at 856-338-0766, or E-mail at beapriest@camdendiocese.org.

"The PILGRIM" for January 2000 is dedicated to "Our Lady of Abundance." The Table of Contents or "IN THIS ISSUE . . ." block is on page 3.

EPIPHANY HOUSE - MARIAN CENTER

Work continues on the new addition to *Epiphany House* which will house the headquarters of the ***Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)***. All of us are elated with each step toward completion. The electric, phone and computer wires are in and the heating and air conditioning ducts are being completed. The pavers around three sides of the addition are installed. The back porch connecting the house and the new addition is almost completed. The wallboard in going in and the sprinkler system is going in as we go to press.

Please pray for and support this huge undertaking. We hope to be moving some things into the building by the end of *January*, but probably will not operate from there until after the **2000 PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE**.

LANDSCAPE / GARDEN WORKERS NEEDED

If you do landscaping or put in irrigation systems, we would appreciate your donated help. The front yard had to host a new septic system, so was dug up quite badly.

We have a beautiful donated statue of ***Our Lady of Lourdes*** waiting to be erected in a Marian Grotto we plan to erect. If you are a helper of ***Saint Francis***, and could help us plan, garden and landscape the new **PFMC** yard for ***Our Lady***, she would be quite happy, and so would we. We are looking for "**Bill**" (we met him at the **1999 PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE** and misplaced his card) or anyone else with experience in laying out our combined Rosary Garden, Stations of the Cross and Marian Grotto. We need to complete the heavy equipment work and reset the major pieces of landscaping before laying the irrigation pipes.

NEEDED -POWER WASH AND STAIN

Is there someone who could reinforce the front porch deck, power wash it and protectively coat it?

STRONG ARMS and BACKS / MOVERS NEEDED

We need strong arms and backs to help us move into the new building – we'd like to get about 20 people for 1 - 2 days. We hope we can schedule this in late *January 2000*. Ladies, please ask your spouse, male friends, etc. if they will sign up to help us move.

EPIPHANY BLESSING

The **Epiphany House** at **61 Cooper Road** and the new addition will be blessed by **Father William Ashley** with the **Epiphany Blessing** on the feast of the **Epiphany**. If you are interested in being present for this special blessing please call us at 856-768-9228 for directions and times.

The dedication of the property and buildings will be announced later, and will be followed by an open house. Please watch for this date, and join us in prayer, blessing, and celebration.

REGISTER NOW for YEAR 2000 RETREAT CONFERENCE and BOOK a ROOM at the HOTEL

MAKE YOUR HOTEL RESERVATIONS NOW BY CALLING 1-800-257-8262 or 856-428-2300. DON'T WAIT AND THEN NOT BE ABLE TO GET A ROOM. MANY HAD TO STAY IN OTHER HOTELS. WE ALREADY HAVE OVER 100 ROOMS FILLED FOR 2000. WE WILL HAVE OVERFLOW HOTELS AVAILABLE IF THE SHERATON FOUR POINTS IS FULL.

BOOK YOUR ROOM WITH THE HOTEL AND THE RETREAT CONFERENCE WITH US.

FILL IN YOUR REGISTRATION FORM AND SEND IT TO THE PFMC NOW TO ASSURE YOUR SEAT in the ASSEMBLY BALLROOM.

The (**PFMC**) is sponsoring its year **2000 RETREAT CONFERENCE** with the topic is **"DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME"** (1Cor11: 24 and 25) **"The HOLY MASS"** at the **Four Points Hotel** just west of the intersection of **New Jersey (NJ) Highway 70 (Marlton Pike)** and **Interstate Highway 295 (I-295)** in **Cherry Hill, NJ 08034**. The dates will be **February 25th, 26th and 27th**. Enclosed is a gold information sheet with registration form for you to send in now. Please use a separate registration form for each person attending the **2000 PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE**.

The Assembly Ballroom, as we plan to have it arranged,

will only seat about 700 people. Room reservations should continue to be made directly with the **Four Points** as indicated on the enclosed gold colored information sheet. Those who have made hotel reservations should fill out the registration form portion of the gold colored information sheet enclosed in this issue of **"The PILGRIM"** and send it in to the **PFMC** now.

For years now, the **PFMC** has been sponsoring this combination of **RETREAT** and **CONFERENCE**.

It is a **RETREAT** because **SILENCE** is emphasized throughout the hotel. We hope to have an early sell out of the hotel in 2000 so that **NO ONE** has an excuse to interrupt the **SILENCE**. We will have a beautiful Adoration Room and all the spiritual helps to a good **RETREAT** experience in one place. It is **CONFERENCE** because we have more than one speaker coordinated to develop a **CONFERENCE** single theme.

We have confirmation from **Father Bill McCarthy, M.Ss.A** of **"My Father's House"** in **Moodus CT**. Father teaches at the **Missionaries of the Holy Apostles** seminary in **Connecticut** and is a theologian. He has a beautiful charism to teach. His teachings, wit and spirituality captivate everyone who hears him. **Father William Ashley**, Director of **"Opus Mariae Mediatrix"** and the **Saint Jude Shrine** in **Berlin, NJ** will also speak. Father is very knowledgeable of the Latin Tridentine Rite. **Father Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J.**, is convicted in his teaching of the Holy Mass as the source of all graces in our Catholic Faith. **Please come. Father Michael Semana** from the **World of Hope Foundation** has said he will also return for his now famous Saturday night concert. He will assist with the youth portion of the Conference. Please pray for us as we plan this event.

Father DeGrandis will also do another **"Seminar and Workshop on Spiritual Warfare and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit"** from **February 28, 29 and March 1st 2000** (don't forget this a leap year!) We had **200** stay over last year, and this was a huge success. The fruits from this extension continue to grow. We hope that you will make plans to stay over this year and to bring a friend.

Many other beautiful priests will be there to hear confessions. We invite all priests to come, enjoy the **RETREAT CONFERENCE**, volunteer for some time in the beautiful reconciliation rooms that we make available and concelebrate Holy Mass. We will even arrange to pick up retired priests if they no longer drive their own vehicles. The **Sacrament of Reconciliation** is so vital to the success of the **RETREAT CONFERENCE** experience that we pray to have enough priests available.

If you have never had the experience of attending a **PFMC**

We recognize and accept that the final authority regarding the apparitions, locutions and related messages from **Our Lady** at, and to the recipients from, **Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina**, as well as all other private revelations, rests with the **Holy See of Rome**, to whose judgment we willingly submit. We vow total allegiance to our **One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church**, its **Magisterium (Cardinals, Bishops and Priests)** together with the **Holy Father, Pope John Paul II**.

RETREAT CONFERENCE events, do come this year. If you have come before, come again. The teachings on the Holy Mass will renew your every second of attending Mass and being a full participant in it.

We will have a full youth program again this year, and will divide the groups into two age groups. Please see the information and reservation form enclosed. Please fill in one registration form for each person attending. If you can pass out information sheets in your parish, please speak with your pastor about it and then call us so we can send you what you need. If you have a prayer group or can arrange a presentation to the parish, please let us know to send and we will set up something with you. See the last page for information on our presentations.

PETITIONS

All slips received with intentions on them are placed in a basket in our prayer room where they are prayed for daily. **THEY ARE THEN TAKEN TO THE SHRINES WITH US WHEN WE GO ON PILGRIMAGE.** This year they will be taken to Rome and left for our Holy Father to pray for. So you are remembered in your needs by the many prayers of all whom volunteer at the **PFMC** as well as those who pilgrimage with us

Enclosed also is a donation slip and envelope for you to use. We operate the **PFMC** and all of our programs **on donation only.** We ask you to remember us in a special way as you pay your bills. Please place the slip and envelope with your bills or in your checkbook..

A **monthly** effort to support issues of **The PILGRIM**, the new building for the headquarters of the **PFMC** and our work in the **PFMC** is greatly appreciated. We hate to beg, but the work for so many souls is important.

The **PFMC** is a **LAY CATHOLIC MINISTRY** that is **totally** dependent upon financial donations to keep it going. Every person working in the **PFMC** is a **volunteer** for Our Lady's work of converting souls to her Son, Jesus.

We want to thank all of you who have been faithfully supporting the **PFMC.** Your donations have meant that we have been able to touch so many people through "**The PILGRIM**," through retreats and conferences. We are grateful for every donation that helps us cover the printing and mailing of "**The PILGRIM**," the heat, water, insurance, and setting up of programs. We are excited with how Our Lady is guiding us to complete 1999 and for the year of 2000. **We cannot do it without you.**

WE DO NEED VOLUNTEERS - If you are interested in doing some typing, light bookkeeping, answering phones, working with books, working on conferences and retreats (we are now coordinating the *February 2000* RETREAT CONFERENCE) or "**The PILGRIM**," please call us at 856-768-9228 and give us your phone number and name. **We need regular help and help once a month – whatever**

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you can give.

Thank you and God bless you,

Kathleen and Staff

HELP for the 2000 PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE in FEBRUARY

Is Mary calling you to help with a beautiful conference-retreat on the Holy Mass? If you are interested in helping us with the *February 2000 PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE*, and/or the **Father DeGrandis** extension, please contact **Kathleen** immediately. We need people to be in charge of ordering books and religious articles, pricing them, and being in charge of the bookstore during the conference. It is a great responsibility, and we know that there are those out there who have gone to our **RETREAT CONFERENCES**, have gifts of organization,

and would be willing to help.

We also need help in the **Hospitality** area for the speakers, and in the **Registration** areas. Please contact **Kathleen** or **Dotty** immediately

Men are needed to help us pack up books the day before the conference, and set them up in the ballroom the evening before. We will probably rent vehicles for the moving. After the RETREAT CONFERENCE we will need men to help repack and to empty the boxes into the new **PFMC** storage room. Men will also be need to help set up the heavier decorations in the main ballroom.

Will you be willing to help with decorations and flowers? We need your creativity and hands.

Do you like working with the youth? We have a wonderful team that will present the Youth track again this year. We'd like to have more help with a big brother / sister sponsor during their program.

We are accepting volunteer music ministry for the **Father Robert DeGrandis** extension for *February 28, 29 and March 1, 2000*. If you play guitar and/or keyboard, please contact **Kathleen**.

There is something for everyone. Please look at your gifts and pitch in this year to make this program on the "**HOLY MASS – DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME**" the very best and most blest.

Call **Kathleen** or **Dotty** at 856-768-9228 *Monday through Friday, 10 AM-5PM*.

19th ANNIVERSARY in MEDJUGORJE, JUBILEE BLESSING for the FOUR DOORS in ROME and PORTIUNCULA JUBILEE BLESSING in ASSISI

Departing from **Newark** this beautiful pilgrimage departs **June 20, 2000** and returns on **June 30, 2000**. We have confirmed air seats, housing, and religious house in **Rome**. Flying **Alitalia**, you will arrive Rome in the morning of **June 21, 2000**. Your flight will continue on to **Split, Croatia** and a 3 hour bus tour to **Medjugorje** where you will be housed in the homes of the villagers. An English speaking guide will take you to **Apparition Hill, Cross Mountain**, to visit the visionaries, and to help provide you a full and rich time in Medjugorje. You will attend English, and Croatian Masses, and fully participate in the **19th Anniversary** since the first apparition.

On **June 26th** you will depart from **Split** on **Croatian Air** to **Rome** where you will be housed at a Catholic Religious House called "**Mondo Migliore**". You will have a fully escorted 4 days in Rome including a ½ day guided tour of the Vatican Museum including entrance fee; tickets to Papal Audience (subject to his holiness availability); ½ day tour of Christian Rome and blessing at the 4 doors of the major Basilicas; and a visit to the Catacombs including the

entrance fee. It also includes a full escorted day in Assisi , with bus transfers.

Included in the **\$2499** requested donation is total air from **Newark** to **Split** and return, taxes, **Medjugorje housing** for 5 nights and 4 nights **Religious House in Rome**, full day escorted excursion to **Assisi**, English speaking tour escort in **Medjugorje** and **Rome**, all transfers to and from Mondo Migliore and to and from airport, all breakfasts and suppers throughout.

We have 30 seats booked, and **Father Michael Culkin** will be our Spiritual Director. **Terry Bright, OCDS (Discalced Carmelite)** will be the Coordinator. This requested donation is exceptionally priced, and it is important for you to know that we have confirmation of the air seats and the housing. Many are booking for the Anniversary and the Jubilee, but yet do not have confirmed seats. Please if you are looking at another pilgrimage, protect yourself and ask for written confirmation.

A **deposit of \$350** is required **now (\$250 is non refundable)**. Please see itinerary on pink application form. **Mail your application to Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center, 129 Deerfield Avenue, Marlton, New Jersey 08053-7103. Call Terry Bright for information at 717-569-6330. Or Kathleen at 856-768-9228.**

PILGRIMAGE to the SHRINES of ITALY with FATHER JIM SAUCHELLI – JOIN US!

Our **November, 1999** pilgrimage was rescheduled to depart from **Philadelphia** on **May 1, 2000**, with **Father Jim Sauchelli** as our Spiritual Director. **Father Jim** has traveled with us many times, and we have had wonderful spiritual experiences under his watchful eye.

This 14 day pilgrimage to the **East of Italy Shrines** is a once in a lifetime experience. With a convenient departure from **Philadelphia via London**, we land in **Verona, Italy**. Our hotels are 3 and 4 star hotels, all with private baths, and convenient locations to all of our places of travel. The total requested donation including all air, transfers by a lovely motorcoach, escort and guides, all entrance fees in appropriate places, hotels, portorage of 1 bag, and all of your breakfasts and suppers every day is **\$2699 plus \$60 taxes**.

Our schedule follows:

May 1-2, 2000 Monday-Tuesday: Departing at 6:20 PM from **PHILADELPHIA, PA** on **British Airways** via **LONDON Heathrow / Gatwick** into **VERONA, ITALY**

May 2-4, Tuesday-Thursday: Bus to **Hotel Ritz** in **ABANO TERME**, a very quaint town full of shops, fountains and parks. On the first afternoon, rest and become accustomed to the time change. On **Wednesday** enjoy a full day excursion to **VENICE**, which is visited by water taxi and then on foot through cobblestone streets and

over canals. See the magnificent **Piazza San Marco**, celebrate Holy Mass in **Saint Mark's** and visit the **Doge's Palace**. Spend free time on a gondola ride, visiting the island churches or shopping in the lovely **VENETIAN** lace or glass stores.

May 4, Thursday-Friday: Bus to **PADUA** for a tour of the **Basilica of Saint Anthony** and the **Scrovegni Chapel**, where **Giotto** painted 38 scenes of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Free time in **PADUA**. Bus to **Hotel Biondi** in **MONTECATINI**.

May 5-8, Friday-Monday: Bus to **ASSISI** and walk to the **Hotel Dei Priori** inside the old walled city on the main piazza, a short walk from the Basilica of **Saint Clare**. Walking tour of the city and the **Basilica of Saint Francis**. Take a day trip to **TODI**, a quaint medieval town near **ASSISI**. Visit **CASCIA** home of **Saint Rita's** incorrupt body and a Eucharistic Miracle. Visit the **Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels** with an opportunity to receive the **Portiuncula Indulgence** and **Jubilee Blessing**.

May 8-9, Monday-Tuesday: Bus to see the Eucharistic Miracle in **LANCIANO** and the **Cave of Saint Michael the Archangel** in **MONTE SAN ANGELO** (entrance fee not included). Bus to **Hotel Manfredonia**, a 4 star hotel on the **Gulf of MANFREDONIA** off the **Adriatic Sea** (with private beach and pool).

May 9-14, Tuesday: Bus to **SAN GIOVANI ROTUNDO** for morning on the **GARGANO**. Visit the church and rectory where **Blessed Padre Pio** lived and received the stigmata with Holy Mass at the tomb of **Blessed Padre Pio**. Free time to pray or go to Confession. Bus to **Hotel Contilia** in **ROME** for 5 nights until **Sunday** morning.

May 10-14, Wednesday - Saturday: **Papal Audience** (dependent upon health and availability of **His Holiness, Pope John Paul II**). Christian tour of **ROME** including **Vatican Museum** and **Sistine Chapel**; tour of the **Vatican** and **Saint Peter's Basilica**, the **Pieta**, with an opportunity to receive the **Jubilee Blessing** and **Indulgence** by passing through the doors of the **four Major Basilicas**; the **Holy Steps**; ½ day excursion to one of the sites of **Catacombs** outside the walls of ancient **ROME**.

May 13, Saturday –Morning tour by bus to **NETTUNO** on the ocean near **ANZIO**. Visit the **Basilica of Saint Maria Goretti**, her home and where she died. Enroute back to **ROME**, stop for a visit to **CASTEL GONDOLFO**, the summer home of the popes.

May 14, Sunday: Flight leaves **ROME** airport at 11:15 AM to **LONDON**, depart **LONDON** at 4 PM scheduled to arrive **PHILADELPHIA, PA** at 6:55 PM.

Return home physically exhausted but spiritually refreshed and invigorated with experiences within the **Body of Christ** and memories that will be moments of special graces.

Seat and hotel reservations without names and deposits will be lost beginning 60 days prior to this **PSI**.

PLEASE MAKE RESERVATIONS and DEPOSITS EARLY!

AIRLINE DEADLINES for PILGRIMAGES

PLEASE DO NOT WAIT TO MAKE UP YOUR MIND ON A PILGRIMAGE. If you want to go, send in your registration and deposit at least 60 days before the pilgrimage departs

All of the airlines have become very strict with their deadlines for names when holding group accommodations. The requirement of 60 days notice for holding a seat with a name is absolutely required. If we do not have sufficient registrations and deposits we must make the financial commitment or our seat availability is adjusted. It is at that time that we are often left with not enough seats.

If there is an emergency, everything will be done to obtain as much of a refund as possible. Don't miss a pilgrimage opportunity just because you are unsure. Call us and send in your reservation form with deposit as soon as you can.

PILGRIMAGE or "GOING UP to the LORD"

Praised be Jesus and Mary! Blessings, peace, and a warm greeting to all of you children of God under *Mary's Mantle*! Every day at the end of the English Mass in Medjugorje I always close the blessing of religious articles with these words, "And may all who both give and receive theses articles be so strengthened in faith that they finish their pilgrimage before the throne of God and hear these wonderful words" **"Come ye blessed of my Father! Take possession of that kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundation of the world! (Matt 25:34)** In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!"

When we will hear those words, our pilgrimage on earth will have been a success! Jesus tells us that He Himself,

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the King, will welcome us “into the holy city, the new Jerusalem come down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And a loud voice from the throne of God will cry out, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men! He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them.” He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away. It is done! **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end... He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son”** (cf. Rev 21: 2-7).

This is God’s plan for us, for all mankind. This is the true human destiny of every man, woman and child. This is how our pilgrimage is supposed to end--to enter in as one of **“those blessed who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb...to rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready”** (cf Rev 19:7-9)

From the earliest pages of the bible, God continuously taught His people that He is holy and therefore His people have to be holy. **“Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy.”**(Lev 19:2). Sin had to be repented and repaired by sacrifices. The prophets of old continuously reminded Israel, **“And you shall be my people, and I will be your God”** (Jer 30:22). The Temple in Jerusalem was the place God chose for that. There were the altar, the sacrifices, and the priests who offered them for the sins of God’s people. There was the dwelling of God – **“the house of the LORD”** (2 Ki 20:8). There God wanted to embrace His people purified of sin. There God and Man would abide in mutual love and fidelity as a prefiguring of the eternal wedding of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem. So it was to the temple in Jerusalem that the people had come with their sins, to be forgiven through repentance of heart through sacrifices.

Therefore, the God of Israel established three pilgrimage feasts that we come to know as Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. His command was that **“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose; at the feast of unleavened bread, at the feast of weeks and the feast of booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed”** (Deut 16:16). When the temple was destroyed in 586 BC Ezra and Nehemiah were the prophetic voices calling for a new period of restoration, conversion and reconstruction. **“Whoever is among you of all His people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel--he is the God who is in Jerusalem...**

Then rose up the heads of the fathers’ houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, everyone whose spirit God had stirred to go up to rebuild the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:3-5).

Thus Jesus, Mary and Joseph as good Jews were all pilgrims according to the Mosaic law Jesus was presented in the Temple and found in the Temple. He attended the pilgrimage feasts there, the most decisive being the last Passover at which He died and rose for our salvation. But now He himself is our Temple. **“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up...”** But He spoke of the temple of His Body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that He had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken: (**John 2: 19, 21-22**). By our union with Him, as the person-place in whom we encounter and abide with God the Father behind the veil of His Flesh, we will be able to see, know and return to the Father that He came to show us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The temple of Jerusalem was again destroyed by the Romans in 72 AD, but this Jewish law of pilgrimage teaches us that the essence and real meaning of pilgrimage goes on. This truth remains forever valid. No one can escape it. It is the human destiny and purpose of our existence. Each one of us must still “appear before the Lord.”

Although our Catholic faith never teaches us that we must make a physical journey to Jerusalem or any other place on earth, the dynamic reality of our pilgrim existence on earth inexorably moves us forward to that awesome encounter with the LORD God Father of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. It is why the Church teaches us to pray to Our Lady in the Hail Holy Queen, “and after this our exile, show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. Oh clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.” In Hebrews, we read this of Abraham, our father in faith and all the other great pilgrim fathers with him: **“These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.”** People who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a holy city (**Heb 11: 13-16**).

EVERY PILGRIMAGE, THEREFORE, IS AN EXPRESSION OF THIS LONGING FOR OUR HEAVENLY HOME. EACH PILGRIMAGE IS ESSENTIALLY ORIENTED TOWARD IT, WHETHER THE TRAVEL IS TO A HOLY PLACE TO OBTAIN SOME SPIRITUAL BENEFIT, TO VENERATE A SACRED OBJECT OR RELIGIOUS

RELIC, TO BE IN THE PRESENCE OF A HOLY PERSON, TO DO PENANCE, OR TO OFFER THANKSGIVING IN RETURN FOR GRACES AND FAVORS RECEIVED.

The approaching third millennium is a very special time of pilgrimage. Our Holy Father wrote his special apostolic letter *The Jubilee of the Year 2000 (Tertio Millennio Adveniente)* in 1994 to set out the plan of preparation for the whole church. He designated these last three years of 1997, 1998, 1999 as specially dedicated to Our Lord Jesus Christ, The Holy Spirit and finally God the Father, because with Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Pilgrim People of God will return to the Father.

Millions of Christians will be going to Rome and to the Holy Land from now through the year 2000 and beyond. A special plenary indulgence is granted to those who go to Jerusalem and Rome. Pope John Paul II has even designated to Jerusalem ahead of Rome. He himself wants to carry out a unique and historic Papal pilgrimage from Iraq through the Holy Land on to Mount Sinai.

May your every past and future pilgrimage blend together as one great merciful grace to lead you to the heavenly Jerusalem and the marriage of the Lamb. It is a transforming union with the eternal and triune God that will never end. As pilgrim people we are all called to live our lives in the spirit of the final words of the bible, "The spirit and the bride say, 'Come...Come, Lord Jesus!'"

Amen!

("MARY'S MANTLE", Summer Issue, 1997)

BROTHER SLEEPY-HEAD

"We have weak points where we suffer greater attack and fall. And so we become very disappointed, especially when we are following the path of faith. What can we do in order to overcome these weak points where the devil attacks us most?"

This was the question put to Don Gabriele Amorth, who replied as follows;

There was a very humble monk in the monastery. He was kind and good, but he said he was always very sleepy. His superiors and fellow monks, however, claimed he was an idler. When the bell rang at night for the monks to get up and go and recite Matins, he either arrived late or did not arrive at all.

Each time the superior scolded him, and once he even made him kneel down in the middle of the refectory...The other monks had nicknamed him "Brother Sleepy-head". He had tried all sorts of solutions. He had even found a system for making a series of alarm clocks ring, one after the other, but without the desired effect. The first few times it worked well and he had arrived punctually for Matins. But then with one hand he switched off all the alarm clocks, still drowsy and then...went back to sleep.

Then he contrived another device: an iron bar which, connected to the alarm clock would fall on his legs if he did not get up. The first morning when the alarm clock went off, he was so afraid of the iron bar that he woke up immediately and arrived punctually. The second morning he was not so quick, he reached Matins on time but was limping because the iron bar had fallen on his legs. But by the third morning he had already found a remedy; as the alarm clock went off, he quickly pulled up his legs and went back to sleep all curled up like a hedgehog.

Then he invented another system: he connected a bucket of water to the alarm clock which, if he did not get up, was emptied over his head. The first morning it worked well, but then, half asleep, he managed to push the bucket away with his hand which then spilled into the floor...and he went back to sleep.

Then one fine day he died. He came before Jesus trembling all over thinking that Jesus would point His finger at him and say: "Brother Sleepy-head, so you think you'll go to Paradise?" Instead Jesus went up to him joyfully, embraced him and kissed him: "Oh, my dearest friend, you are my favorite".

Brother Sleepy-head said: "But, Lord, you are mistaken, you must be confusing me with someone else! I am Brother Sleepy-head!"

Jesus said: "I know, I know".

"But I never got to Matins on time!"

"I know, but you never resigned yourself to that defect. You always fought it in the most ingenious of ways! Come, come with me into Paradise"

A NOVENA TO OUR LADY

Day 1. Holy Child Mary of the royal house of David, Queen of the Angels,

Mother of grace and love, I greet you with all my heart, Obtain for me that I may love the Lord faithfully during all the days of my life.

Obtain for me, too, a great devotion towards you, who are the first creature of God's love. Hail Mary.

Day 2. O heavenly Child Mary who like a pure dove was born immaculate and beautiful, my soul rejoices, true prodigy of the wisdom of God.

Oh! Do help me to preserve the angelic virtue of purity at the cost of any sacrifice. Hail Mary.

Day 3. Hail, lovely and holy Child, spiritual garden of delight, where on the day of the Incarnation, the tree of life was planted; assist me to avoid the poisonous fruit of vanity and pleasures of the world.

Help me to engraft into my soul the thoughts, feelings and virtues of Your divine Son. Hail Mary.

Day 4. Hail, admirable Child Mary, closed garden, open only to the heavenly Spouse.

O Lily of paradise, make me love the humble and hidden life; let the heavenly Spouse find the gate of my heart always open to the loving calls of His graces and inspirations.

Hail Mary

Day 5. Holy Child Mary, mystical dawn, happy gate of heaven, You are my trust and hope,

O powerful Advocate, from your little cradle, stretch out your

hand, support me in the path of life. Make me serve God with ardour and constancy until death, and so reach an eternal crown.

Hail Mary.

LET US PRAY (said after each Hail Mary each day)

O sweet Child Mary who being destined to be the Mother, of God, has also become our beloved Queen and Mother, for the numberless graces you have obtained for us, listen to my humble prayer.

All my hope is upon you, in all the needs which surround me.

O holy Child, by the merits and privileges which have only been given to you, be merciful to me.

Show that the source of the spiritual treasure you give out is inexhaustible.

For the profusion of graces Almighty God has given you, O heavenly Child, grant my prayer and I will praise your goodness forever. Amen

I plan to pray this little novena starting on a Saturday as a small gift for Mary.

PRESS BULLETIN 132 - December 15,1999

THE JUBILEE CHRISTMAS

"According to the flesh, there is only one single Mother of Christ, but according to faith we all give birth to Christ." (Saint Ambrose)

While interpreting Luke's Gospel for his faithful, Saint Ambrose thus honors Jesus' Mother Mary. Her bodily maternity of the Son of God was already a preordained part of her life, but it continues with maternity of the entire Church in which the person of Christ desires to be totally incarnated. Ambrose therefore does not allow for losing time. He his gaze and the gaze of the Church to that which follows - to birth Christ into the world.

The Jubilee Christmas and the Jubilee 2000 first of all charge us with that as our task and therefore deserve our attention in external celebrations, but still more in acquiring the capacity to birth Christ to this generation. Are in a position to restore the youthfulness of giving birth to our weary Church by our own faith life? The Jubilee is the historical opportunity of this Christian generation: In ourselves and in our vicinity once again to establish a place for the Lord.

It is in this sense that from our heart we wish to all our readers and pilgrims a Blessed Christmas and Noble Born Jubilee!

The PILGRIM

Father Ivan Landeka

CROATIAN PRESIDENT FRANJO TUDJMAN DIES

On Friday December 10, 1999 Dr. Franjo Tudjman, the President of Croatia, died. We report the news about President Tudjman's death to the friends of Medjugorje because of his ties and interest in the events at Medjugorje. During his Presidency he visited the Shrine of the Queen of Peace three times. On more than one occasion he also expressed thanks to the Medjugorje pilgrims for helping unselfishly during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. We commend our deceased President and the Croatian people to your prayers.

NUMBER OF COMMUNIONS AND CONCELEBRANTS

In the month of November at the shrine of the Queen of Peace in Medjugorje 50,000 Holy Communion were distributed and at the holy masses there were 1,085 concelebrations by priests from home and abroad, that is, 36 per day.

During November the most numerous groups were from: United States, Germany, France, Australia, Hungary, Austria, Vietnam, Poland, Canada, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, Italy, Korea, Haiti, Lebanon, Republic of South Africa, Portugal, Letonia, the Philippines and, of course, Croatia.

SEMINAR FOR VICTIMS OF THE HOMELAND WAR

From December 2nd to 5th a seminar was held in Medjugorje for the victims of the homeland war (widows and parents of the deceased, missing in action and captured Croat defenders). The theme of the meeting was based on the words of Saint Paul: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?"

At the conclusion of the seminar this Joint Declaration of the participants was adopted:

"In these difficult times for the Croatian people and state, Medjugorje all the while has been a signpost for where and how to go further. Many have right in this difficult, but simultaneously gracious time, found comfort and strength in Mary's patronage. And this seminar was one step toward helping everyone, in the light of Jesus' gospel messages and the messages that Mary gives here, to look together according to that light for new ways, ways of hope against every hope. In this seminar, as always, we thought about those dearest to us and sought to conform our thoughts to those of Jesus and Mary, being aware that only with Jesus and Mary can we be Christians in the third millennium."

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Director: fra Miljenko Stojic.**

PRESS BULLETIN 131 - December 1,1999

VISITS - STATEMENTS OF BISHOPS

In Press Bulletin #129 we wrote about the visit of bishops

that were in Medjugorje at the end of October. In this number we bring you their impressions.

After spending several days in Medjugorje Msgr. Stanislaus Lukumwena from Congo among other things also said this: "The first morning as soon as I came, I went to pray on the Hill of Apparitions. That impressed me very much, because I encountered many people who were concentrated and devoutly praying. An important experience was also the evening prayer program at which there were many people. The many people from different countries and various languages, who prayed together gave me a profound and inexpressible feeling of joy. I am here on a private visit, and therefore officially I accept the position of the Church, but a personal experience is still something else. I can personally say that it is clear to me that all this that is happening here, and especially the great number of people, cannot not be interpreted in any other way than a special intervention of God. Therefore, regarding the authenticity of the apparitions - we should leave that judgment to those persons in the Church are also called to that. I personally am praying that the moment of recognition come as soon as possible. Our Lady has always told us to pray for peace. The world today is divided. There is neither peace nor love. I recommend everyone to try to pray humbly with all their might that peace come as soon as possible to all people. I would recommend to all communities that do not have vocations to come here and pray in this spirit that is alive here and they will certainly have vocations. To all of you who are living here I wish to say that you should continue to work in the spirit of Saint Francis: dedicated and humbly, as you are already doing. Keep on hoping, because the time of recognition will come and everyone will be happy."

Msgr. Jose de Jesus Nunez Vilorio, bishop of Guyana in Venezuela came with a group of pilgrims and stayed himself as a pilgrim in Medjugorje from October 24 - 28, 1999. He said the following about his impressions:

"After these days spent in Medjugorje I have very positive impressions. It is clear to me that in this place there is something very strong and supernatural. Without this supernaturality these events could never hold out to such an extent and spread like this throughout the whole world. I know that all the more people are coming from the whole world and that many pray here and are converted. This is a great supernatural reality of which the facts themselves speak. The visionaries simply convey that which Our Lady tell them and that is what the Bible calls for: peace, conversion, prayer, fast and the faithful accept it and continue living accordingly. When I listened to one of the visionaries I saw that some pilgrims are concerned also with questions of curiosity, but the visionary answered very simply: she can only say what Our Lady tells her, and they have to ask a priest the other things. My impression is very positive about everything that is happening here. I especially like the evening program, rosary and mass and adoration.

This is the real way of conversion.

The only thing I can say as a brother is that you who work here need to be patient with the people who come here. They come from far away, many things they don't know and, as much as possible, you always have to listen to them patiently and help them. To the visionaries, priests and pilgrims I would recommend to accept Mary who today is helping us in a special way to come to Christ, and He is the only Mediator and Savior. To her Jesus said from the cross: "Behold your son, but to the disciple He said: "Behold your Mother! I am convinced that is the reason of the apparitions that is giving Mary the right and from which comes the duty that she appear and help us and our job is to accept her. What is being announced here is the essence of the Gospel, therefore we have to accept it. Therefore, the renewal of life according to the Gospel is at work. The spirit of devotion and fervor that is seen here will truly serve the new evangelization. I commend myself especially to your prayers, also all priests and the whole world, and I myself promise to pray for all of you."

In the second last week of October Msgr. Emilio L. Bataclan, a bishop from the Philippines made a private visit to Medjugorje. Before leaving Medjugorje he also said this:

"I believe that Our Lady is appearing here. She is the Mother and she cares for us. I believe that she is always with her children, especially when they have to suffer, when they have so many problems. I have no difficulties believing that Our Lady is here because, above all, the "sensus fidelium" [sense of the faithful] says that Mary is here, and also my priestly and pastoral experience through a full 25 years, and now also that of being a bishop helps recognize the special signs that Mary is present here and that she is caring for her children. I would like to say to everyone: Mary is the Mother who loves and truly has to come to this world. She comes and says what we have to do, because she cares for us. I hope that the world will open its heart and soul to this good Mother. Let us pray mercy for all people to open their hearts. Let us pray for each other. May God bless you all."

PRAYER PROGRAM CHANGE OF SCHEDULE

We announce to all pilgrim groups and individuals who come on pilgrimage to Medjugorje that since September 13th the daily evening program in church lasts from 5 PM to 8 PM (5 PM Rosary, 6 PM Holy Mass, blessing prayers and the third part of the rosary).

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is on Wednesday and Saturday from 9 PM - 10 PM and on Thursday immediately after the evening mass. Adoration and prayer before the Crucifix is every Friday in the church after the evening mass. Every Sunday at 2 PM the Peace Rosary is prayed on Apparition Hill and every Friday the Way of the Cross on Cross Mountain at the same time. Confessions are heard every evening at least one hour before the prayer program starts. With the change from summer time the evening program in church does not change. Only the hour

for prayer hour on the mountains changes.

All masses for different language groups take in the morning on the basis of previous reservation.

All announcements in connection with the prayer program in the shrine of the Queen of Peace in Medjugorje as well as other announcements can be obtained from the information office at 00387-88-651-988 from 9 AM till 5 PM. We request all organizers of pilgrim groups upon their arrival in Medjugorje to inform their pilgrims about the possibility of obtaining needed information at the Information Office that is located in front of the parish house and not at the parish office.

The Editorial Staff

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ON THE FEAST OF THE HOLY THREE KINGS - HOW TO BE HAPPY

We all want to be happy.

We all seek happiness in a thousand different ways, but we forget to look for it in the only place it can be found.

Riches and glory and the goods of this life cannot guarantee happiness, nor can they save us from evils and sorrows. No friend can take from us the fear and danger of death.

God and God alone can give happiness in life and in death.

He is the best of Fathers, the dearest of Friends. He wishes to give us happiness and He solemnly promises to give it to all who are devoted to His Sacred Heart.

Read His promises.- Their meaning is clear.

Jesus promises clearly to help us in our difficulties, to console us in our sorrows, to bless our undertakings, to give everyone the helps and graces necessary for their positions in life.

He promises the mother, the husband, the doctor, the lawyer, the priest-everyone-the graces which are necessary for the perfect fulfillment of their individual duties.

What more could we ask?

(by Annette von Droste-Hulsoff (1797-1848) --Sacred Heart Leaflet)

LOVE AND PEACE GLORIA - A PRAYER

Dearest God,
Please never let me
Crowd my life
Full to the brim.
So like the keeper
Of Bethlehem's Inn,
I find I have
No room for Him.

Instead, let my heart's door
Be ever open,

ready to welcome

The newborn King.

Let me offer

The best I have

To Him

Who gives me everything.

(by-Rosalyn Hart Finch)

TWELVE REASONS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH FOR WANTING TO SPEND ONE HOUR EACH WEEK WITH JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

1. You are greatly needed! *"The Church and the world have great need for Eucharistic adoration."****

2. This is a personal invitation from Jesus to you! *"Jesus waits for us in this Sacrament of Love."****

3. Jesus is counting on you! *"Every member of the Church must be vigilant in seeing that this Sacrament shall be given back 'love for love'."****

4. Because your hour with Jesus will repair for the evils of the world, and bring about peace on earth, the Church says: *"Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Him . . . May our adoration never cease."****

5. Jesus wants you to do more than go to Mass on Sunday! *"Our communal worship at Mass must go together with our personal worship of Jesus in Eucharistic adoration in order that our love may be complete."****

6. Day and night Jesus dwells in the Blessed Sacrament because you are the most important person in the world to Him! *"Beneath the Sacred Host, Christ is contained, the Redeemer of the world."****

7. You grow spiritually with each moment you spend with Jesus! *"Our essential commitment in life is to grow spiritually in the climate of the Holy Eucharistic."****

8. The best time you spend on earth is with your Best Friend, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! *"How great is the value of converse with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, for there is nothing more consoling on earth, nothing more efficacious for advancing along the road to holiness!"****

9. Just as you can't be exposed to the sun without receiving its rays, neither can you come to Jesus exposed in the Blessed Sacrament without receiving the divine rays of His grace, His love, His peace. *"Christ is truly the Emmanuel, that is, 'God with us' day and night, He is in our midst. He dwells with us full of grace."****

10. If Jesus were actually visible in the Church, everyone would run to welcome Him. But He remains **hidden** in the Sacred Host, under the appearance of Bread, because He is calling us to faith. *"The Blessed Sacrament is the 'Living Heart' of each of our churches, and it is our very sweet duty to honor and adore in the Blessed Host which our eyes see, the Incarnate Word, Whom they cannot see."****

11. With transforming mercy, Jesus makes our heart one with His. *“Jesus teaches those who come to Him to be like Himself, gentle and humble of heart, and to seek not their own will, but the will of God.”***

12. If the Pope himself would give you a special invitation to visit him in the Vatican, this honor would be nothing in comparison to the honor and dignity that Jesus Himself bestows upon you with the invitation of spending one hour a week with Him in the Blessed Sacrament. *“The Divine Eucharist bestows upon the Christian people an incomparable dignity.”****

*Pope John Paul II, DOMINICAE CENAE

**Pope John Paul II, REDEEMER OF MAN

***Pope Paul VI, MYSTERIUM FIDEI

****Pope Paul IV, CREDO OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

(“MISSIONARIES OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT”,
Plattsburgh, NY)

ADORATION

Every creature, both spiritual and material, must give glory to the Creator. The whole material universe, the sun, moon, stars, and planets give honor and glory to the Creator by their existence. The same is true of the vegetative and animal kingdom. Man, made in the image and likeness of God, also must give Him honor and glory. Because of man’s intelligence and free will, however, he is able to adore God freely.

The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** teaches: “The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of praise by which the Church sings the glory of God in the name of all creation. This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ: He unites the faithful to His Person, to His praise and to His intercession, so that the sacrifice of praise to the Father is offered through Christ and with Him, to be accepted in Him.”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church #1361)

THE EUCHARIST and DIVINE MERCY

In the Eucharist, Jesus offers His Body and Blood for spiritual growth and grace to perform the duties of one’s station in life. Leading a sacramental life is essential for spiritual growth and development. Any discussion on Divine Mercy must include the Eucharist, as they are one and the same, i.e., Divine Mercy is Jesus, and Jesus is the Eucharist.

The Church teaches that at the moment of Consecration during the Mass, the bread and wine on the altar become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The opinion that Christ is present only in the elements as in a sign, or that Christ is received only spiritually, was condemned in 1551 by the Council of Trent. **“Truly, 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;**

he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (Jn. 6:53-54) After Consecration, the bread and wine cease to exist although the appearance remains; this change is called transubstantiation. While it is true that God is everywhere spiritually, the Eucharistic Presence of Christ, that is, Christ present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, is called the True Presence. The communicant who receives our Lord must be in a state of grace. In Scripture it is written, **“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the Body and Blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgement upon himself.” (Cor. 11:27-29)**

When discussing the True Presence, one can see from the 6th Chapter of John that even at the time of Christ there was much disagreement and discussion and many did not understand what he was saying. In **John 6:48-56**, He speaks about being the living bread which came down from Heaven, and that anyone who eats of this bread will live forever. And He added, **“for My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.”** However, in **verse 60**, it is written that many disciples, when they heard it, said, **“This is a hard thing; who can listen to it?”** In **verse 66** it is written, **“After this many of His disciples drew back and no longer went about with Him.”**

Blessed Faustina realized the great gift of the Eucharist and added to her name, Sister Faustina of the Blessed Sacrament. She wrote that the angels themselves envy us for receiving Holy Communion (and also for suffering). Our Lord wants us to receive Him in Him in Holy Communion frequently and visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament. He desires to lavish graces on us, but many remain indifferent. He told her that a feeble example of His love is like that of the most tender of mothers, when even her children spurn her love and no one can console her. His heart is full of love and mercy towards us, although many treat Him as a dead object.

The power of the Sacrament is that it restores us to God’s grace and allows us to join with Him in an ongoing intimate relationship. The Sacrament may provide much peace and contentment to the sinner who shows remorse and a contrite heart for his sins. As we are all part of the mystical body of the church, the Sacrament also reconciles us with the Church and revitalizes itself from the injury of one of its member.

Not only are we to receive Eucharist, we must also live the Eucharist. We are to let Jesus enter into every cell of our body and be expressions of His great love. We are to be icons of Mercy, radiating Love and Mercy out to others.

“You are the light of the world, a city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand giving light to all in the house. Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven.” (Matt. 5:14-16)

(“CENTER FOR PEACE” September, 1997)

AN UNHEARD VOICE

The day started out as any other. I awoke to the sound of my mother’s voice. She was singing as she walked around the room. What was she making? Something smelled awfully good. I yawned. As I moved around in my mother’s secure and cozy womb, I pondered what the day would bring. Nothing could prepare me for what was about to happen to me--or almost happen.

As Mommy ate her delicious meal, I became the most well-nourished baby in town! I was so comfortable and fulfilled, I put my thumb in my...mouth--I think that’s what you call it. Anyway, I settled down for a short nap. As I dozed, I heard the sound of classical music in the background. If I wasn’t so sleepy, I would have started dancing! I’m a pretty good dancer, you know, for being only four-months-after-conception old. Pretty good with my numbers, right? I guess I must take after Daddy. He can count to a million...at least. I hear him late at night; he likes to count sheep. I wonder what they are...maybe I’ll meet one some day.

I stretched as Mommy got dressed. “Where are we going today?” I asked. But, of course, she couldn’t hear me. Funny how I can hear her though, isn’t it? We walked out into the bitter-cold air and climbed carefully into the car. I relaxed as the heated air poured onto Mommy’s tummy, just right for me! After a long drive, we arrived at our destination. When we walked in...well, Mommy walked in, and I rode in, I noticed a strange smell. My stomach started to churn. (I guess my advanced vocabulary must have been inherited from Mom. She always uses fancy words.) I didn’t know where we were, but I had a creepy feeling in my bones. Mommy breathed deeply as she sat in a straight-backed chair. I jumped when they called my Mother’s name. “Where are we going?” I asked again. Once again, no one could hear me.

I could hear them, though. Mommy sounded worried. “My husband lost his job, and I never went to college...I don’t know what I should do about...” I giggled as Mommy patted her stomach. “That tickles my neck,” I whispered. Maybe there was nothing to worry about after all.

A strange voice abruptly replied, “Oh don’t worry. I have a solution to your ‘problem.’ An abortion is a simple procedure. It’s the only way, under your circumstances.”

Whatever abortion was, I didn’t like the sound of it. “But,” my Mommy replied, “isn’t there a living baby inside of

me?”

The strange voice spoke again, “Oh...that. No, um, that’s just a blob of tissue. Don’t worry about it.”

Mommy began to cry. “I’ve never had to make such a difficult decision,” she sobbed. Tears formed in my newly developed baby-blue eyes. What was making Mommy so sad? I didn’t know. I started to cry, not on purpose, but just out of instinct. I loved my Mommy, and if she was going to be sad, I would cry with her.

Then I got the hiccups. I tried to hold my breath, but it was not use. They just got worse and worse. Suddenly my Mommy jumped up. She was holding her stomach tightly, giving me a giant bear hug--my first hug, in fact. I felt so loved? As she walked back to the car, she told me, although I don’t think she knows I heard, “My baby, I love you so much. I promise to always take good care of you. For you are my precious gift from God.” Then she blew me a kiss. “Smack,” I gave a kiss back.

(by Colleen Faith Kissel, age 17, from “CELEBRATE LIFE” May-June 1997)

IF WE BUT REALIZED THE GIFT OF GOD!

All Catholics believe that Jesus is present in the Blessed Sacrament. And yet how many of us go to Mass Sunday after Sunday and not receive Him in Holy Communion! How many of us pass by the church, day after day, and do not stop to visit Him! Surely, we do not realize Who is in the Holy Eucharist!

We say “Who” is present, because the Holy Eucharist contains the Body and Blood, the Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. After the Consecration of the Mass, the Host is no longer bread. It has been changed! It is not SOMETHING, It is SOMEONE!

The Host contains a LIVING PERSON, a LOVING PERSON. The Host contains the same Jesus Christ who felt pain, heat, cold and contempt, and who suffered from the sting of ingratitude. The Host contains a Person who understands our difficulties because He Himself experienced many of them. The Host contains a Person who is so tender-hearted that on two occasions, as Holy Scripture tells us, He actually wept. The Host contains the same Jesus who sweat Blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He had a vision of all the sins of the entire world, our own personal sins, too, which caused Him untold mental and physical agony!

The Host contains the same divine Person who groaned and gasped for breath as sharp whips tore at His Flesh, ploughed deep furrows in His back, and caused Him to bleed profusely. The Host contains the same God whose head throbbed with pain when the soldiers placed on it a crown of thorns, pressed down the crown, struck it with sticks, and drove the thorns deeper and deeper into His sacred brow. The Host contains the same Savior whose eyes filled with tears, which overflowed and trickled

down His bruised and battered cheeks.

The Host contains the same Christ who wrestled with His heavy cross and fell under its great weight several times along the way to Calvary; the same Jesus who was spit upon, cursed, mocked; the same Jesus whose face turned a deathly white, who gasped for breath and moaned as sharp nails were driven through His hands and feet. The Host contains the same Christ who, as He hung dying on the cross, suffered the terrible agony of seeing His own people stand around the cross, mocking and cursing Him. The Host contains the Christ who while hanging on the cross scanned the centuries with His divine penetrating gaze and saw each one of us. His tender Heart pierced with sadness when He saw us sinning against Him, abandoning Him, and ignoring His Gift of the Holy Eucharist! The Host contains the same Jesus who suffered intensely in Soul and Body, and finally died of a broken Heart!

The Host contains the same Jesus who loves all mankind in general, but loves us, individually and personally, as if no other person existed in the world; the same Jesus who loves us now, and is continually thinking of us, and loving us with an infinite love.

No, the Host is no longer bread. It is a **LIVING PERSON, JESUS CHRIST, THE SECOND PERSON OF THE BLESSED TRINITY, GOD HIMSELF!**

If we ponder these truths, how can we be indifferent to the infinite love of Jesus for us in the Blessed Sacrament? How can we fail to receive Holy Communion often? How can we not want to visit Him often, even every day?

If we were convinced of these truths, the most precious moments of our lives would be the minutes we spend with Him in the Blessed Sacrament, the times when we receive Him into our hearts in Holy Communion. Truly, receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, and visiting Him in the tabernacle, will transform our lives! Jesus will give us the graces we need, and make us saints. We must ask Jesus in the Host to help us understand to appreciate what His being there really means!

(by Rev. Lawrence Browning, C.P. from "THE MARYFAITHFUL" Jan-Feb, 1989,.)

MOTHER OF MERCY

Our Blessed Lady told Saint Bridget that she was the Mother not only of the just and innocent, but also of sinners, provided they are willing to repent. O how prompt does a sinner (desirous of amendment, and who flies to her feet) find this good mother ready to embrace and help him, far more so than any earthly mother! Pope **Saint Gregory VII** wrote in this sense to the **Princess Matilda**, saying: "Resolve to sin no more, and I promise that undoubtedly thou wilt find Mary more ready to love thee than any earthly mother."

But whoever aspires to be a child of this great Mother must

first abandon sin, and then may hope to be accepted as such. **Richard of Saint Laurence** remarks, on the words of **Proverbs, up rose her children (Prov. 31:28)**, that the words "up rose" come first, and then the word "children," to show that no one can be a child of Mary without first endeavoring to rise from the fault into which he has fallen. For he who is in mortal sin is not worthy to be called the son of such a Mother.

Saint Peter Chrysologus says that he who acts in a different manner from Mary declares thereby that he will not be her son. "He who does not the works of his mother, abjures his lineage." Mary humble, and he proud; Mary pure, and he wicked; Mary full of love, and he hating his neighbor. He gives thereby proof that he is not, and will not be, the son of his holy Mother.

The sons of Mary, says **Richard of Saint Laurence**, are her imitators, and this chiefly in three things: in "chastity, liberality, and humility; and also in meekness, mercy, and such like."

Whilst disgusting her by a wicked life, who would dare even wish to be the child of Mary? A certain sinner once said to Mary, "Show thyself a mother"; but the Blessed Virgin replied, "Show thyself a son." Another invoked the divine Mother, calling her the Mother of Mercy, and she answered: "You sinners, when you want my help, call me Mother of mercy, and at the same time do not cease by your sins to make me a Mother of sorrows and anguish." **He is cursed of God, says Ecclesiasticus (3:18), that angereth his mother.** "That is Mary," says **Richard of Saint Laurence**. God curses those who by their wicked life, and still more by their obstinacy in sin, afflict this tender Mother.

I say, by their obstinacy; for if a sinner, though he may not as yet have given up his sin, endeavors to do so, and for this purpose seeks the help of Mary, this good Mother will not fail to assist him, and make him recover the grace of God. And this is precisely what **Saint Bridget** heard one day from the lips of Jesus Christ, Who, speaking to His Mother, said, "Thou assistest him who endeavors to return to God, and thy consolations are never wanting to anyone." So long, then, as a sinner is obstinate, Mary cannot love him.

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But if he (finding himself chained by some passion that keeps him a slave of hell) recommends himself to the Blessed Virgin, and implores her, with confidence and perseverance, to withdraw him from the state of sin, there can be no doubt but this good Mother will extend her powerful hand to him, will deliver him to a state of salvation.

The false teaching, that all prayers and works are performed in a state of sin are sins, was condemned as heretical by the sacred Council of Trent. Saint Bernard says that although prayer in the mouth of a sinner is devoid of beauty, as it is unaccompanied with charity, nevertheless it is useful, and obtains grace to abandon sin. For as **Saint Thomas Aquinas** teaches, the prayer of a sinner, though without merit, is an act that obtains the grace of forgiveness, since the power of impenetration [imploring] is founded not on the merits of him who asks, but on the divine goodness, and the merits and promises of Jesus Christ, Who has said, **Every one that asketh, receiveth (Luke 11:10).**

The same must be said of prayers offered to the divine Mother. "If he who prays," says Saint Anselm, "does not merit to be heard, the merits of the Mother, to whom he recommends himself, will intercede effectually."

Therefore, **Saint Bernard** exhorts all sinners to have recourse to Mary, invoking her with great confidence. For, though the sinner does not himself merit the graces which he asks, yet he receives them, because this Blessed Virgin asks and obtains them from God, on account of her own merits. These are his words, addressing a sinner: "Because thou wast unworthy to receive the grace thyself, it was given to Mary, in order that, through her, thou mightest receive all."

"If a mother," continues the same saint, "knew that her two sons bore a mortal enmity to each other, and that each plotted against the other's life, would she not exert herself to her utmost in order to reconcile them? This would be the duty of a good mother.

"And thus it is," the saint goes on to say, "that Mary acts. For she is the Mother of Jesus and of men. When she sees a sinner at enmity with Jesus Christ, she cannot endure it, and does all in her power to make peace between them.

"O happy Mary, thou art the Mother of the criminal, and the Mother of the Judge; and being the Mother of both, they are thy children, and thou canst not endure discords amongst them."

This most benign Lady only requires that the sinner should recommend himself to her, and purpose amendment. When Mary sees a sinner at her feet, imploring her mercy, she does not consider the crimes with which he is loaded, but the intention with which he comes. And if this is good, even should he have committed all possible sins, the most loving Mother embraces him, and does not disdain to heal the wounds of his soul. For she is not only the Mother of Mercy, but is so truly and indeed, and she shows herself

such by the love and tenderness with which she assists us all.

This is precisely what the Blessed Virgin herself said to Saint Bridget: "However much a man sins, I am ready immediately to receive him when he repents. Nor do I regard the number of his sins, but only the intention with which he comes: I do not disdain to anoint and heal his wounds; for I am called, and truly am, the Mother of mercy."

Mary is the Mother of sinners who wish to repent, and as a Mother, she cannot do otherwise than compassionate them. Nay more, she seems to feel the miseries of her poor children as if they were her own. When the Canaanite woman begged Our Lord to deliver her daughter from possession by the devil, she said, **Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David, my daughter of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. (Matt. 15:22.)** But since the daughter, and not the mother, was tormented, she would rather have said, "Lord, take compassion on my daughter," instead of on herself. But no, she said, "Have mercy on me," and she was right; for the suffering of children are felt by their mother as if they were her own.

And it is precisely thus, says **Richard of Saint Laurence**, that Mary prays to God when she recommends a sinner to Him who has recourse to her. She cries out for the sinful soul, "Have mercy on me!" "My Lord," she seems to say, "this poor soul that is in sin is my daughter, and therefore, pity not so much her as me, who am her Mother."

Would that all sinners had recourse to this sweet mother! For then certainly all would be pardoned by God.

"O Mary," exclaims **Saint Bonaventure** in rapturous astonishment, "thou embracest with maternal affection a sinner despised by the whole world, nor dost thou leave him until thou hast reconciled the poor creature with his Judge." Meaning that the sinner, whilst in the state of sin, is hated and loathed by all, even by inanimate creatures. Fire, air and earth would chastise him, and avenge the honor of their outraged Lord. But if this unhappy creature flies to Mary, will Mary reject him? Oh, no! Provided he goes to her for help, and in order to amend, she will embrace him with the affection of a mother, and will not let him go, until by powerful intercession, she has reconciled him with God, and reinstated him in grace.

In the **second book of Kings (14-5)**, we read that a wise woman of **Thecua** addressed **King David** in the following words: **My lord, I had two sons, and for my misfortune, one killed the other so that I have now lost one, and justice demands the other, the only one that is left; take compassion on a poor mother, and let me not be thus deprived of both.** David, moved with compassion towards the mother, declared that the delinquent should be set at liberty and restored to her. Mary seems to say the same thing when God is indignant

against a sinner who has recommended himself to her. "My God," she says, "I had two sons, Jesus and man. Man took the life of my Jesus on the Cross, and now Thy justice would condemn the guilty one. O Lord, my Jesus is already dead, have pity on me, and if I have lost the one, do not make me lose the other also."

Most certainly God will not condemn those sinners who have recourse to Mary, and for whom she prays, since he himself commended them to her as children. The devout Lanspergius supposes Our Lord speaking in the following terms: "I recommended all, but especially sinners, to Mary, as her children, and therefore, is she so diligent and so careful in the exercise of her office, that she allows none of those committed to her charge, and especially those who invoke her, to perish; but as far as she can, brings all to me."

"And who can ever tell," says the devout **Blosius**, "the goodness, the mercy, the compassion, the love, the benignity, the clemency, the fidelity, the benevolence, the charity, of this Virgin Mother towards men? It is such that no words can express it."

"Let us, then" says **Saint Bernard**, "cast ourselves at the feet of this good mother, and embracing them, let us not depart until she blesses us, and thus accepts us for her children."

And who can ever doubt the compassion of this Mother? Saint Bonaventure used to say: "Even should she take my life, I would still hope in her; and full of confidence, would desire to die before her image, and be certain of salvation."

And thus should each sinner address her when he has recourse to this compassionate Mother, he should say:

"My Lady and Mother, on account of my sins I deserve that thou shouldst reject me, and even that thou shouldst thyself chastise me according to my deserts. But shouldst thou reject me, or even take my life, I will still trust in thee, and hope with a firm hope that thou wilt save me. In thee is all my confidence. Only grant is all consolation of dying before thy picture, recommending myself to thy mercy. Then I am convinced that I shall be lost, but that I shall go and praise thee in heaven in company with so many of thy servants who left this world calling on thee for help, and have all been saved by thy powerful intercession."

(By Saint Alphonsus Maria de Ligouri)

OPPORTUNITY

Said yesterday to tomorrow;
"When I was young like you,
I, too, was fond of boasting
Of all I meant to do;
But while I fell a-dreaming
Along the pleasant way,
Before I scarcely knew it,
I found I was today!

"And as today, so quickly
My little course was run,

I had no time to finish
One-half the things begun.
Would I could try it over,
But I can ne'er go back;
A yesterday forever
I now must be, alack!

"And so, my good tomorrow,
If you would make a name
That history shall cherish
Upon the roll of fame
Be all prepared and ready
Your noblest part to play!
In those few fleeing hours
When you shall be 'today!'"

("THE MARYFAITHFUL", May/June, 1989)

ILLUSTRIOUS VIRGIN

O most illustrious Virgin and Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, who did worthily bear in thy sacred womb the very Creator of all things, whose most holy Body and Blood I have just received, vouchsafe to make intercession to Him in my behalf, that whatsoever I have omitted or committed in this unutterable Sacrament whether through ignorance, negligence or irreverence, may be graciously pardoned by thy dear Son in answer to thy most holy prayers.

AMEN

GOD'S WAY

God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission; I may never know it in this life, but shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between two persons.

God has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it—if I but keep His Commandments. Therefore, will I trust Him.

Whatever I do, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.

He does nothing in vain. He knows what he is about. He may take away my friends; He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate. make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about.

(by Cardinal Newman from "THE MARYFAITHFUL"
July-August, 1998)

SATAN WANTS US TO FEEL ABANDONED BY ABBA FATHER!

It seems to me that one of the greatest promises Jesus made

to us is, **“I will not leave you orphans! I will come to you...” (John 14:18)**

What a sad thing to be an orphan! No father or no mother or maybe left without either one! Such a feeling of loneliness or abandonment could arise from that. As if to say “God can’t really love me if he took away my father and mother!”

Jesus knows how sad it is to be an orphan and he doesn’t want that for us. He spoke so many times about His Father in Heaven. **“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.”(Jn 14: 20-21).** **“Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.”(Jn 14:23).**

Spiritual writers call this the doctrine of the Divine Indwelling! The soul that keeps God’s commandments, like a living tabernacle, actually has the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwelling within it! Jesus Himself said it!

So there is no chance to be left an orphan if we have the very Triune God dwelling within us. The Holy Spirit is that bond of unity, the one who proceeds between the Father and the Son as we say in the Creed.

The traditional *Tantum Ergo* we used to sing in Latin at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament mentioned the Holy Spirit as *“procedenti ab utroque”* – *“too the one proceeding from each one,”* and concluded that equal glory and honor is due to the One proceeding from the Father and the Son. Since He is the one proceeding from the Father and the Son, then He has to be the Spirit of unity between the Father and the Son. He bonds them together with such divine power, that no creature or created thing could ever separate them.

That is why Jesus had to give us His Holy Spirit. He wanted to keep us from being orphans. Satan wants to get between us and separate us from the Father and from Jesus! But Satan is only a created spirit, whereas the Holy Spirit is the infinite, almighty, and uncreated Spirit. There is simply no possible way a created spirit can overcome and defeat the divine uncreated Spirit.

Yet Satan is so proud and foolish that he actually tries to do just that. He brags and boasts as if to say, “When I am through with you, you’ll know that you are an orphan! You’ll know God doesn’t love you when I get at you! I’ll make you curse God! I’ll make you angry with God! Just wait till you get your prostate cancer! Just wait till you get your double mastectomy! Just wait till you have to carry that colostomy bag around! Just wait till your husband leaves you! Till your son commits suicide! Till you drop out of Pan Am 103! Till your house is blown away in a hurricane, or washed away in a hurricane, or washed away

in flood, or burnt in a California fire storm,...till...till...till...! Each of us can supply any misery of our own life story! The list is almost infinite – as multiple and varied as the woes and miseries of the human race. It is Satan’s biggest boast!

So if Jesus promised not to leave us orphans, then you can be absolutely sure that Satan will try to do the opposite! He wants to do all in his power to make us orphans! Sin, suffering, sickness, and death are all part of his arsenal. He is going to use them all on us – with his one boastful aim, “I’ll separate you from your Father! I’ll make you know you’re an orphan! I’ll make you know that God doesn’t love you and you have no Father in Heaven!”

How truly Saint Peter wrote about Satan, **“Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. (1Peter 5: 8-9)**

He even tried it on Jesus. Jesus had said, **“The Father and I are one” (Jn. 10:30)** and **“whoever sees me sees the one who sent me” (Jn 12:45)** So Satan even set out to make Jesus an orphan on the cross and to try to prove that he had no Father to love him. It was as if he wanted to taunt Jesus saying, “Ha, ha, you said God was your Father! If God is your Father then why did he let me put these nails in your hands and feet? Why did he let me crown you with thorns? And scourge you so you can count your bones? See! You have no Father. He doesn’t love you. What was He doing while I put these nails in your hands? Come down from that cross, you fraud! God doesn’t want you. He’s looking the other way! Don’t insult Him by calling him Father! He doesn’t even know You or care about You!”

But Jesus knew and believed that He and his Father are still one. The Holy Spirit of unity bonded Him together with His Father. Satan, the created spirit, could never separate Jesus from His Father. So Jesus defeated Satan by saying, **“Father, forgive them!...” (Lk 23:24).** **“Father! Into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46).** Jesus won the victory because Satan was defeated and failed to separate Jesus from His Father! The Holy Spirit with Jesus was of course, too strong for Satan, a mere creature, to overcome Him!

Now Jesus wants to show us the Father too! He wants us to **“...believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me. The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works” (Jn 14:10).** He wants us to be so bonded with Our Father that we too will always be able to assert and affirm Our Father as “Abba, Father” in any and every struggle with temptation, sin suffering, sickness, and death. He wants to give us His Spirit so we can pray just like He did.

“Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee: remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.” (Mk 14:36) “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons and daughters. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” (Rom 8:15) “And because you are sons and daughters, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘ABBA! FATHER!’” (Gal 4:6)

What a magnificent testimony! Abba, Father! What wonderful self-affirmation! What a powerful prayer in the midst of any kind of suffering, temptation, sickness or tragedy. What better prayer is there to express our union with the Father and claim our victory over Satan?

“Satan, you are defeated in my life! You can’t separate me from my Father! I am a child of God! I belong to Jesus and Mary! They both defeated you at the cross and I claim my victory in the name of Jesus! Be gone, Satan! Abba Father! Into your hands I commend my Spirit!”

See what power is in those words of Jesus. The very power of God’s Spirit of adoption, the very power of the uncreated Holy Spirit rebuking and defeating the proud Satan who wants to separate us and make us orphans! But Satan will never succeed.

In this year dedicated to God the Father may we all have a new joy and power in saying Abba, Father! Anyone can say such a short prayer! Only two words, but oh, so powerful! May everyone of us know the power and grandeur of belonging to Our Father in Heaven.

In the words of Saint Paul, “nothing created can separate us from Our Father: **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!” (Rom 8:35, 37-39)**

Hallelujah! I am not an orphan! God is my Father forever! Jesus has given me His spirit of adoption so I can forever say Abba, Father! Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Mary! Keep us safe under your mantle as **“offspring of the Woman” (Rev 12-17) and “children of God, Our Father!”**

(By Father Philip Pavich, O.F.M. Medjugorje)

JESUS CALLING!

Take advantage of your short time on earth. Do those things that will lead you to eternal life.

Do you really Love Me? WON’T YOU PLEASE?

Come to Me frequently before the Blessed Sacrament,

especially, when you are hurting with worry, fear, anxiety and pain and suffering of any kind.

Attend Mass and receive Holy Communion more frequently.

Pray more and say the rosary.

Get to know Me better so that I can better help you carry your cross.

(from a holy card)

CONFERENCE WITNESS

Friday night Rose was sitting in the lobby of the hotel. She shared the following story to a man named Mario who sat next to her. She said “you look like my father, you sound like my father, but your words are full of love. My fathers words were full of hate.”

Saturday, she sat talking about her childhood. “Since my childhood my father had developed a hate for me!” There was a real sadness in her face and eyes. The hate between them had kept them apart and not talking.” Mario told her she had to talk to her father and to start a new life with him. She got up, embraced Mario and they prayed together.

Sunday morning she was seen in the confession lane. Mario approached her and said “You are giving your husband exactly what you have inside for your father. You will hate your husband like you hate your father. You must change this.” She responded that it was already happening. She looked even more sad. Mario added, “hurry up, you must talk to your father”.

Tuesday at 6 AM Mario got a phone call from the woman saying that her 2 year old child was in the crib crying. She got up turned on the light and the little child said “mommy you must pray” Her husband awoke and said “what did she say?” She said “you heard her she said ‘mommy you must pray’”.

So she knew that it was time to reconcile with her father. She got up and prayed and then called her father. And asked him to come over. He was to arrive at 7AM.

She had called Mario for intercessory prayer while her father was to be there. She asked Mario to pray for her and her father as an intercessor. Mario began to pray, and immediately felt pain throughout his body. He knew the father was there, and they were talking. He knew it in his spirit. He became anxious, and had pain in his hands and head. He knew he was in true intercessory prayer.

As she and her father talked, she experienced the happiest moment of her life with her father. There was then peace in her life. Her husband is a totally different man. His attitude has also changed. There is prayer in the family. There is happiness in the family now. There is total healing!

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit with a renewed strength and

enlighten your Church. Help us to work effectively for the salvation of all the world. Come Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, with your counsel and wisdom for our Holy Father, the Pope, for all cardinals, bishops, priest, religious and all those in ministry to your flock. Come Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, and give to all your people the fullness of your grace: teach, console and enlighten all whom you have been given. Come Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, free our hearts of all hatred, and fill us with your Love for everyone. Come Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten all who govern us, especially our president and all legislative and judicial systems in our land and all leaders and their governments in every country in our world today. May they see only what is right and just and with your strength have the courage to follow through and do what is right. Come Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit, with your bond of unity and peace. May we see all peoples united in Christ our Savior. Remove from us the scourge of war and from our hearts the cause of war. Come Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Spirit. May you break down the barriers that divide the Body of Christ but strengthen all the ties that bind us together. Make us one in Faith and Love. Come Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit and in your kindness, heal the sick, welcome the dying, counsel those in doubt, console those who have lost all hope. May we all find our rest in you. Come Holy Spirit.

M.R.

THE POWER OF POSITIVE FAITH

To help us have a positive, dynamic and living faith we should do all the following! They're easy to remember because they spell out the words Positive Faith.

Prayer--To have a strong, dynamic, energized faith we have to pray. We have to do more than talk about prayer, we have to pray! Make time for prayer. The more we pray the more we will want to pray!

Optimism--I can if I think I can! With Christ I can do all things! Look on the bright side, be happy and work at being happy. Immanuel Kent wrote, "God wants us to be happy and He wants us to make ourselves happy."

Service--Be a person of service. Serve others, especially serve the poor, the forsaken. Reach out to the lonely, the sick and the elderly.

Intellect--Study the faith. Read the Catechism of the Catholic Church from cover to cover and don't just read the cover! Saint Aldhelm said, "When we pray we talk to God, when we read God talks to us."

Truth--The Catholic Faith is the True Religion and the

Church has the correct, the true answer for everything! We should love the truths of the Faith and obey the Church.

Initiative--Find new ways to be an apostle, to teach other people about the Catholic Faith. Think of ways to really share what the faith means to you.

Victory--We are people of victory. We are followers of Jesus the Victor! We have no need to fear. Jesus had conquered sin and death. We should be strong, determined and brave. We should always think victory.

Enthusiastic--Enthusiasm, from Greek, means "in God." As friends of God we should live our faith, our life enthusiastically. If we don't feel enthusiastic we should think and act enthusiastic and then we will be. Just "fake it" until you make it!

Free--We have the freedom of the children of God, feeling bound, fearful, scrupulous or anxious is not of God. We should have a childlike trust and confidence and believe that God wants us to be happy and joyful.

Adventurous--If we are adventurous, like the Saints, like Saint Francis Xavier or Mother Cabrini, then we'll do great things for the Church, like go to Africa as a medical missionary! Do something adventurous for God.

Inexhaustible--Let's do everything to be fit and healthy and energized, to do more for the Church. Let's take care of our bodies to be stronger, to work for God more.

Trust--Jesus wants to be trusted. he loves us. It's stupid (and that's the right word) not to trust Him. Let's go through our day praying, "Jesus I trust in you!"

Humor--Truly a sense of humor can help us be kind, virtuous and holy. It can help us not to take ourselves too seriously. Being funny can be a ministry of mirth as we bring cheer and laughter into the lives of others.

(By Brother Craig "CENTER FOR PEACE" September, 1997)

THE TWELVE REASONS from the APOSTLES'

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, (**Mt. 5, 45**) Creator of heaven and earth. (**Gn. 1, 1ff; Rom. 1, 20**)
2. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; (**Mt. 3, 17; Phil. 2, 11**)
3. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit. (**Lk. 1, 35**) born of the Virgin Mary, (**Lk. 2, 7**)
4. suffered under Pontius Pilate, (**Jn. 19,16**) was crucified died and was buried. (**Jn. 19, 29-42**)
5. He descended into hell; (**I Pt. 3, 19-20**)
6. the third day He rose again from the dead; (**Mt. 28, 1-10; Jn. 20, 11-18**)
7. He ascended into heaven (**Lk. 24, 51**) and sits at the right hand of God, (**Heb. 1, 3**) the Father Almighty; (**Mk. 14, 36**)
8. from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. (**Mt. 16, 27; Acts 10. 39ff; I Cor. 15. 51ff**)

9. I believe in the Holy Spirit, (**Jn. 14, 15-20; Acts 1, 7-8**)

10. the Holy Catholic Church, (**Mt. 16, 18-19; Eph. 5, 26-27; Col. 1, 24**) the communion of Saints, (**Mt. 28, 19-20; 2 Cor. 11, 13; Cor. 15, 33**)

11. the forgiveness of sins, (**Jn. 20, 22-23**)

12. the resurrection of the body, (**I Cor. 15, 51-54; Thes. 4, 13-18**) and life everlasting. (**I Jn. 5, 20**)

Amen.

(**"THE CATHOLIC VISION"** Kati Reyburn, Ed. Nov. 1997)

SEVEN OFFERINGS of the MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Redeemer for the propagation and exaltation of my dear Mother the Holy Church: for the safety and prosperity of her visible Head, the Holy Roman Pontiff; for the cardinals; bishops, and pastors of souls; and for all the ministers of the sanctuary.

Glory be to the Father, etc. Blessed and praised forevermore be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Divine Redeemer for the peace and concord of nations; for the conversion of the enemies of our holy faith; and for the happiness of all Christian people.

Glory be to the Father, etc.

Blessed and praised forever be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Divine Redeemer for all my relations, friends and enemies; for the poor, the sick and those in tribulation; and for all those for whom Thou wilt I should pray, or knowest that I ought to pray.

Glory be to the father, etc. Blessed and praised forever be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Divine Redeemer for all those who shall this day pass to another life, that Thou mayest preserve them from the pains of hell and admit them the more readily to the possession of Thy Glory.

Glory be to the father, etc. Blessed and praised forevermore be Jesus Who hath saved us by His Precious Blood!

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Divine Redeemer for all those who are lovers of this Treasure of His Blood, and for all those who join with me in adoring and honoring it, and for all those who try to spread devotion to it.

Glory be, etc.

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus, Thy Beloved Son and my Divine Redeemer for all my wants, spiritual and temporal, for the holy souls in Purgatory, and particularly for those who in their lifetime were most devoted to this Price of our Redemption, and to the sorrows and pains of our dear Mother, most holy Mary. Glory be, etc.

Blessed and exalted be the Blood of Jesus, now and forevermore Who has saved us by His Precious Blood!

(**"SIGNS OF THE TIMES"**, Spec. Issue II, 3rd Qtr. 1994)

INVOCATIONS to OUR LADY of the PRECIOUS BLOOD

Lady of the Precious Blood, entreat It for us. Lady of the Precious Blood, adore It for us. Lady of the Precious Blood, bless It for us. Lady of the Precious Blood, offer It for us. Lady of the Precious Blood, pour It on us, on all poor sinners, on all the agonizing of this day, and on all the souls in purgatory. Amen.

Our Lady of the Precious Blood, open thy suppliant lips, and a legion of the elect will enter paradise through the "Gate of Heaven."

(**"SIGNS OF THE TIMES"**, Spec. Issue II, 3rd Qtr. 1994)

WORDS FOR QUIET MOMENTS

In the actual, living, human person who is the Virgin Mother of Christ are all the poverty and all the wisdom of all the saints. It all came to them through her. The sanctity of all the saints is a participation in her sanctity, because in the order God has established, God wills that all graces come to us through Mary.--*Thomas Merton*

(**"CENTER FOR PEACE"**, April, 1997)

EUCCHARIST: SACRAMENT TO BE ADORED

On the occasion of the 750th anniversary of the first celebration of the feast of Corpus Christi, the Holy Father wrote a letter to Bishop Albert Houssiau of Liège, Belgium successor of Bishop Robert of Thourotte, who in 1246 had established the feast which was later extended to the universal Church by Pope Urban IV. Here is a translation of the Pope's Letter, which was dated May 28 and written in French.

To: Bishop Albert Houssiau of Liège, Belgium

1 In 1246, Robert of Thourotte, your distant predecessor in the see of Liège, instituted in his Diocese the Eucharistic feast now known as *Corpus Christi*, at the request of Juliana of Cornillon, who had already composed an office for *Corpus Christi*, Eve of Saint Martin and other women of Liège. A few years later in 1264, Pope Urban IV made this feast of the Body of Christ a holy day of obligation for the universal Church, thereby expressing the importance of venerating the Eucharistic Body of our Saviour. On the

occasion of the 750th anniversary of the institution of this feast, as I join all the pilgrims who will be participating in the jubilee ceremonies and faithful all over the world who ceaselessly pray before the Blessed Sacrament, I make a fervent prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord.

Christ whom we adore is really present

2 Jesus is no longer present to men in the same way that he was on the roads of Palestine. After the Resurrection, he appeared in his glorious body to the women and to his disciples. Then he took the apostles and **“led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them....He departed from them, and was carried up into heaven” (Luke 4:50-51).** But in ascending to the Father, Christ did not distance himself from men. He dwells forever in the midst of his brethren and, just as he promised, he accompanies them and guides them with his Spirit. Henceforth, his presence is of another kind. Indeed, at the Last Supper, after celebrating the Passover with his disciples and when he was about to pass from this world to his Father, Christ instituted this sacrament as the perpetual memorial of his Passion....,the greatest of all his miracles; and he left this sacrament to those whom his absence filled with grief, as an incomparable consolation” (*Saint Thomas Aquinas, Office of Corpus Christi*, 57, 4). Every time we celebrate the Eucharist in the Church, we recall the death of the Saviour, we proclaim his Resurrection as we await his return. Thus no sacrament is greater or more precious than that of the Eucharist; and when we receive Communion, we are incorporated into Christ. Our life is transformed and taken up by the Lord.

3 Outside the Eucharistic celebration, the Church is careful to venerate the Blessed Sacrament, which must be “reserved...as the spiritual center of the religious and parish community” (Paul V, *Mysterium fidei*, n. 68). Contemplation prolongs Communion and enables one to meet Christ, true God and true man in a lasting way, to let oneself be seen by him and to experience his presence. When we contemplate him present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, Christ draws near to us and becomes more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. He grants us a share in his divine life in a transforming union and in the Spirit, he gives us access to the Father, as he himself said to Philip: **“He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).** Contemplation, which is also a communion of desire, intimately associates us with Christ, and in a very special way associates those who are prevented from receiving it.

Remaining in silence before the Blessed Sacrament, it is Christ totally and really present whom we discover, whom we adore and with whom we are in contact. However, it is not through the senses that we perceive him and are close to him. Under the appearances of bread and wine, it is faith and love which lead us to recognize the Lord, he who fully communicates to us “the blessings of the Redemption which

he accomplished he, the Master, the Good Shepherd, the Mediator most pleasing to the Father” (Leo XIII, *Mirae caritatis*). As the *Livre de la foi* of the Belgian Bishops recalls, prayer of adoration in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament unites the faithful “with the paschal mystery; it enables them to share in Christ’s sacrifice, of which the Eucharist is the ‘permanent sacrament.’”

4 In honoring the Blessed Sacrament, we also offer a profound thanksgiving to the Father, for in his Son he visited us and redeemed his people. Through the sacrifice of the Cross Jesus gave his life to the world and made us his adoptive children, in his image, establishing a particularly intimate relationship that enables us to call God by the beautiful name of *Father*. As Scripture reminds us, Jesus spent nights in prayer, especially at the moments when he had to make important decisions. In his prayer, by an act of filial trust and in imitation of his Lord and Master, the Christian opens his heart and his hands to receive God’s gift and to thank him for his freely offered blessings.

5 It is invaluable to converse with Christ and leaning against Jesus’ breast like his beloved disciple, we can feel the infinite love of his Heart. We learn to know more deeply the One who gave himself totally, in the different mysteries of his divine and human life, so that we may become disciples and in turn enter into this great act of giving, for the glory of God and the salvation of the world. “Following Christ is not an outward imitation, since it touches man at the very depths of his being” (*Veritatis splendor*, n. 21). We are called to learn from him, gradually to be conformed to him, to let the Spirit act within us and to fulfill the mission entrusted to us. In particular, Christ’s love spurs us to work constantly for the unity of his Church, to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and to serve men; **“we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17)** such is the Good News which gladdens man’s heart and shows him that he is called to take part in the blessed life with God. The Eucharistic mystery is the source, the center and the summit of the Church’s spiritual and charitable activity (cf. *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 6).

Model your life on mystery of the Lord’s Cross

Closeness To Christ in silence and contemplation does not distance us from our contemporaries but, on the contrary, makes us attentive and open to human joy and distress and broadens our heart on a global scale. It unites us with our brothers and sisters in humanity and particularly with children, who are the Lord’s dearly beloved. Through adoration, the Christian mysteriously contributes to the radical transformation of the world and to the sowing of the Gospel. Anyone who prays to the Savior draws the whole world with him and raises it to God. Those who stand before the Lord are therefore fulfilling an eminent service. They are presenting to Christ all those who do not know him or are far from him; they keep watch in his presence

on their behalf.

6 On the occasion of this jubilee. I encourage priests to revive the memory of their priestly ordination, by which Christ called them to take part in a particular way in his one priesthood, especially in the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and in building up his Mystical Body which is the Church. May they remember the words spoken by the Bishop at their ordination liturgy: "Know what you are doing and imitate the mystery you celebrate; model your life on the mystery of the Lord's Cross!" In drawing from the source of the sacred mysteries by faithful and regular periods of contemplation, they will derive spiritual fruit for their personal life and their ministry, and in turn, they will be able to make the Christian people entrusted to their care capable of understanding the greatness "of their own particular sharing in the priesthood of Christ" (*Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 1996*, n 2; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, March 27, 1996, p. 3).

7 "When the faithful adore Christ present in the sacrament, they should remember that his presence derives from the sacrifice and is directed towards both sacramental and spiritual communion" (Sacred Congregation of Rites, *Instruction on the Worship of The Eucharistic Mystery*, n 50). I therefore encourage Christians regularly to visit Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, for we are all called to abide in the presence of God, thanks to him who is with us until the end of time. In contemplation, Christians will perceive ever more profoundly that the paschal mystery is at the heart of all Christian life. This practice leads them to join more intensely in the paschal mystery and to make the Eucharistic sacrifice, the perfect gift, the center of their life in accordance with their specific vocation, for it "confers an incomparable dignity upon the Christian people" (Paul VI, *Mysterium fidei*, n. 67); in fact, during the Eucharist, we are welcomed by Christ, we receive his forgiveness, we are nourished by his word and his bread, we are then sent out on mission in the world; thus each one is called to witness to what he has received and to do the same for his brethren. The faithful strengthen their hope by discovering that with Christ suffering and distress can be transfigured, for with him, we have already returned from death to life, their work and all creation, their days are illumined by him.

Teach young people value of Eucharistic adoration

8 I urge priests, religious and lay people to continue and redouble their efforts to teach the younger generations the meaning and value of Eucharistic adoration and devotion. **How will young people be able to know the Lord if they are not introduced to the mystery of his presence? Like the young Samuel, by learning the words of the prayer of the heart, they will be closer to the Lord, who will accompany them in their spiritual and human growth, and in the missionary witness which they must give throughout their life.** The Eucharistic mystery is in fact the "summit of evangelization" (*Lumen gentium*, n 28), for

it is the most eminent testimony to Christ's Resurrection. **All interior life needs silence and intimacy with Christ in order to develop. This gradual familiarity with the Lord will enable certain young people to be involved in serving as acolytes and to taking a more active part in Mass; for young boys, to be near the altar is also a privileged opportunity to hear Christ's call to follow him more radically in the priestly ministry.**

9 As I commend you to the intercession of the Mother of God, *Saint Juliana*, and also *Saint Lambert* and *Saint Hubert*, zealous evangelizers of your country, and all the saints of your land, I cordially grant my Apostolic Blessing to you, to all the members of the diocesan community and to the faithful who during the year will take part in the various events of the jubilee.

(From: *L'Osservatore Romano* Vatican, May 28, 1996.)

MEDITATION

Meditation is the source of life for the human heart and inflames it with holy intentions. Padre Pio valued it for the soul that wants to attain Christian perfection.

We have many definitions for prayer, one more beautiful than the other. For Evagrio it was "conversation of the soul with God;" for *Saint John Damascene* it was "the raising of the spirit to God or requesting suitable gifts from God." I prefer *Saint Bonaventura's* "the elevation of the mind and heart to God."

These definitions explain the meaning of prayer of the mind, or mediation. But before giving my definition I will present you with the concept of the founder of the Cistercian monks, *Saint Bernard of Chiaravalle*.

He asserts that "mediation is the work of our minds for which, with our common sense for escort, we go in search of hidden truths" (*Scala Claustrale*). As we see he lays emphasis on the intellectual action of man in the search for understanding the mysteries of God, or if you prefer, man is left alone with his reason along this path. While Saint Teresa of Avila affirms frankly: "For me mental prayer is none other than an intimate friendly relationship, a frequent private meeting with the One whom we know loves us" (*Life*, Chap. 8,5).

Although she does not exclude the reasoning part of the person, the Saint brings foremost in her thoughts the affective components of the human being who mediates. It is a question of loving and of knowing oneself to be loved.

At this point I think I am not mistaken in giving the following definition of mediation which takes into account the heart and soul of the individual. It is a form of contemplative prayer through which the one who applies his heart and spirit tries to give his faith a more personal character in the light of God.

The aim of mediation is the growth of our spiritual life. In meditating we discover the greatness of God's benefits and of his love which provokes our hearts irresistibly to an

enthusiastic response of love. We feel drawn to imitate Christ and become each day more like Him.

In mediation we discover the beauty of virtue and of our souls are charmed. We discover the horror of sin, the ugliness of defects and our souls conceive horror. In short, mediation is the furnace in which our hearts are softened, are warmed and are inspired with holy intentions.

The Beauty of Mediation

We well know that prayer is a giving and taking; we know many prayers, but we must understand that only a humble and open heart knows how to pray. Only such a heart is capable of loving. A proud heart does not seek love and prayer. God the Father reveals himself only to those who have pure hearts: **“Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God” -- Mt 5,8.**

“To contemplate” means “to see;” when man sees with his mind, with his intellect, he goes into the depths and discovers the unfathomable greatness of God. If we do not possess charity it is impossible to know God, because **“God is love” -- 1 Jn 4,8** -- God as first Cause of the universe, is discovered with the eyes of the intellect. But God, as charity, love, reveals Himself only to those who love Him: **“I praise Thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth that thou didst hide these things from the wise and prudent and didst reveal them to little ones” -- Mt 11,25.**

METHOD

As regards the method of meditating I must say there are several ways depending on the school of spirituality.

I will try to suggest one:

1. Before placing oneself in the presence of God to pray we must invoke the help of the Holy Spirit, so that with his strength He keeps distractions and temptations far from us.
2. Choosing and reading with love and pleasure a passage of the Bible, the mystery of faith or the virtue we wish to consider.
3. Study the subject carefully.
4. Find out the difficulties.
5. Observing if our life is in conformity with divine requirements.
6. Determine to live a life of sanctity.
7. Contemplation: it is the most beautiful moment in which God makes one understand, perceive and see marvelous things that are not written in any book and that no man has been able to write, because it is there that takes place a relationship with God that is different for everyone depending on the sensibility of the person.

At this point time ceases to exist; prayer plunges into the infinite and goes down from the head to the heart, only then does the mystery or the virtue we have considered really penetrate into us and form a part of our lives.

Padre Pio

Padre Pio was a great mystic and like all mystics he understood the importance of daily meditation. In a passage of his letters in 1929 he says he meditated no less than four hours a day (*Letters IV*).

He instructed his spiritual children to practice this stupendous form of prayer. Speaking of Jesus he said to Erminia Gargani “...daily reflection on your life is necessary; by reflecting and meditating we grow to admire his actions, and from admiration grows the desire and consolation of imitation” (*Letters III*)

On 17/12/14 he writes to Raffaelina Cerase, a Franciscan tertiary of Foggia, recommending her to dedicate two periods of half and hour each for meditation, taking into account her physical constitution and her various illnesses. For other spiritual daughters he insisted on two hours a day (*Letters III*).

He was demanding and paternal as a spiritual director, but when he had suggested the course a soul had to take he would not allow disobedience. In fact he was upset and would not forgive Assunta Di Tommaso for giving up meditation (*Letters III*).

At the same time he knew how to be indulgent and understanding for those souls who could not meditate well and he told them not to worry themselves about this. He wrote to Lucietta Campanile: “Don’t worry if you are unable to meditate; make an examination of conscience and do all the other devout practices well. Do this as I suggested to you and pay no attention if it seems to you that you gain no profit. If you were to obtain no other profit in those exercises except that of having done them out of obedience, this would still be a great gain for your soul” (*Letters III*).

The Padre did not stop at this but many times suggested the subject of meditation (*Letters IV*) and even the method. In fact writing to Maria Gargani who became a nun, he presented her with a method of meditation. “Mental prayer or meditation is practiced as follows: First and foremost, prepare the subject of your meditation. There is not always a need to use a book in order to prepare this, as every truth of our religion can and must be a subject of meditation for the Christian soul. Here it is important to note that the soul should habitually meditate on the Life Passion and Death of our Lord, Jesus. No soul, however advanced in the ways of the Lord, should neglect this.

“Once the material for meditation has been prepared, place yourself in the presence of God, humbling yourself profoundly at the thought of who you are and to whom you are presenting yourself. Ask God for the grace of performing well the mental prayer you are about to practice, in order that you may obtain the fruit that God wants from it. Finally, recommend yourself to the Most Holy Virgin’s intercession along with the entire heavenly court, that they may help you to meditate well and keep all distractions and temptations far from you.

“Once you have done this, begin your meditation which must be centered on that subject you previously prepared for this purpose. Once the subject has been mediated upon well, in all its particulars, go on then to resolutions. Aim at correcting that defect which most impedes your union with God and which is the cause of many other defects and sins. Propose to practice a certain virtue and then stop when you have acquired it.

“Finally ask God for all those graces and that help you need. Recommend all men to the Lord, both in general and in particular. Pray for the re-establishment of God’s reign; for the propagation of the faith; for the exaltation and triumph of our holy mother the Church. Pray for the living, the dead, for the unfaithful, for heretics and for the conversion of sinners.

“Once you have done all this, offer your meditation and prayers along with the offering of your entire self, besides all those people who are dear to you. I mean, offer everything to God along with the merits of Jesus, and of his and our Mother. And you will offer all this through the hands of Most Holy Mary, your Guardian Angel, Saint Joseph, etc.,

“Finally make a brief examination of how you behaved during this meditation and when you see your defects, humble yourself before God, asking his pardon and proposing to make amends.

“As regards this mediation I exhort you to establish at least two periods a day for this purpose. Try to spend not less than half an hour for each period. Try to see that those periods of mediation are, possibly, in the morning in order to prepare yourself for the battle, and in the evening in order to purify your soul from any earthly affections which have become attached to it during the day” (*Letters III*).

Each person can assume the position they prefer; the important thing is that it is not a position that induces sleep as it would be useless to meditate.

From what has been said and the continuous recommendations to his spiritual children we can understand what a great importance Padre Pio placed on this kind of prayer. If we really want to inspire ourselves with his spirituality we must convince ourselves that we cannot leave aside daily meditation even if it may sometimes be necessary to reduce the time, because it is a vital lymph for the soul who aims at Christian perfection.

(from “**THE VOICE of PADRE PIO**” dated Vol. XXV, No. 11, 1995 by Livio Dimatteo)

REFLECTION on OUR LADY’S MESSAGE of 12/25/99

I greet all those who are trying to follow Mary’s messages. We already have 18 years and 6 months of Mary’s presence here behind us, and we are right when we call Medjugorje Mary’s school where, let us not forget, peace is the primary subject.

So, I again wish all of you a joyful Christmas and a fulfilling Jubilee Year. This Jubilee Year is another impulse for all of us to renew our decision to follow Mary, the new Eve and the teacher for all of us. I want to remind you quickly of the message with which Mary wished to prepare us all for Christmas, and so the message that we all tried to reflect on during Advent.

Mary once again called us to prayer and also said a sentence that especially we in our school of prayer may simply not forget: **PRAY UNTIL PRAYER BECOMES A JOY FOR YOU**. This means that we should pray and especially to pray when we are not feeling the joy in doing so and when we do not like prayer. We will understand this better when we think of the Italian proverb: From eating one develops an appetite. When this is used when it concerns prayer it just means that in our praying we will then develop an appetite and also gain a joy for praying more. When we ask ourselves whether prayer can become a joy for us, then the answer is positive, ‘yes’. Prayer is an encounter with God, and God is God who loves us and always when we are with someone who loves us, then we always have peace, love and joy. Why do so few people experience joy in prayer? The answer to this is also simple. One only needs to take some time for prayer for it to become a real encounter. Many also make the mistake of waiting for joy in order to be able to pray, and this is certainly not the good methodology. One must pray so that one may receive joy in so doing. That is why so many people here in Medjugorje have such a good chance. Mary is praying for us so that we may have the experience of the love of God in prayer, and so then the problem of prayer will be solved. Many pilgrims should be grateful for the spirit of prayer simply because that is a grace.

Mary also reminded us in that message that the cross is the sign on the way to love and unity. It here concerned both the vertical as well as the horizontal dimensions -- our relationship with God and our relationship to the world and the others around us -- and these must be balanced with one another. And conversion, in the light of that message, means that we ought to seek this balance between those two dimensions -- spiritual values and, let us say, the values of this world.

I hope that all of us prayed a lot so that, as Mary told us, **JESUS MAY BE BORN IN YOUR HEARTS AS THE CREATOR OF PEACE**. We may not forget this intention, and especially not in this upcoming year. Jesus wishes to be born in our hearts and when He is born as the Creator of peace, then we will also become carriers of peace in this world without peace.

The visionaries are living their normal lives, and at the moment Marija is here with her family and she is also planning to stay here for the New Year. Vicka is also at home. Ivan was here in Medjugorje for a short time during Advent and then returned to the USA to be with his family. Ivanka and Mirjana are also living their normal family

lives.

Jacov is also here with his family and, as you all know, since December 12, 1998, he no longer has his daily apparitions, but as she did with the other visionaries Mary promised to come to him once a year and with him Mary chose Christmas. And so he had the apparition on Christmas Day and this was the message:

"Dear Children, Today on my Son's birthday, when my heart is filled with immeasurable joy and love, I invite you to complete openness and complete abandonment to God. Throw all darkness out of your heart and allow God's light and God's love to enter into your heart and to dwell there forever. Be carriers of God's light and love to all mankind, so that all in you and through you may feel and experience true light and love which only God can give you. I bless you with my motherly blessing."

Mary came at 3:00 p.m. and the apparition lasted for 10 minutes. Jacov's family and a few friends had met and prepared themselves with him for the apparition. Jacov tells us that Mary was very joyful, that she came with baby Jesus, that she spoke to him about the secrets but that he may not tell us anything about that, and that she blessed all of us. Regarding the content of this message, it is very important for us all to live in this way, and I might add especially to do so during this Jubilee Year.

It is true that the world and all the other people expect true love and true light from us believers. What does it mean to permit God's light to enter into our hearts? It means that everything that we think and that we do we first prove with God's love and God's light. All that which is not good we then improve for the better. We base all our relationships with the others and with the world according to His light and His love. This is our primary assignment, because those who are with God simply cannot remain in darkness, cannot remain in hate, cannot remain in sin, and that is why these very decisive words **THROW ALL DARKNESS OUT OF YOUR HEART AND ALLOW GOD'S LIGHT AND GOD'S LOVE TO ENTER.**

Let us really take this message seriously and try to live this way from day to day.

We can also be assured that we will succeed because Mary says that she is blessing us with her motherly blessing. Motherly blessing means that we are really in Mary's arms the way Jesus is in her arms. When she is with us, prays for us, protects us, and carries us a mother, then we will certainly conquer darkness and sin and live in God's light and love.

During this Advent we always had pilgrims, but the groups had gotten smaller, and now after Christmas and especially for New Years we are expecting many people who along with us wish to enter the New Year in prayer. For Christmas Eve we began with prayer at 10:00 p.m. and exactly at midnight we celebrated Holy Mass. We will also

do something similar for New Years in that we will begin around 9:15 in the evening, so that the Consecration will occur at exactly midnight. In so doing we will be showing symbolically that we wish to begin the New Year or the new time with God. And I recommend to all prayer-groups that they do the same along with us here.

THIS IS THE TIME OF GRACE

We may never forget what this really means. From God's point-of-view every moment from the very beginning to the end of time is a time of grace. He always has loved us completely and unconditionally. He cannot be more merciful today than yesterday or more tomorrow than today. All our prayers and everything that we do does not, so to say, help God to become more merciful or more loving. It is from our side that when we pray, fast, and confess that we help God in giving us more graces. He wishes to do this all the time. The time of grace is when people respond and begin to look for God.

The entire time since the apparitions began, on June 24, 1981, until this very day has all been a time of grace, because so many people have responded and so many have found their way back to God by way of Medjugorje. God opened for Medjugorje a great time of grace. The huge number of people having opened themselves to God is in itself the greatest grace of all. How many people have begun to pray due to Medjugorje? How many have discovered Holy Mass and Confession? And, in coming back to God in these ways, they changed their lives and their relationships with everyone due to the graces that they have received there and especially so within their families. It is this that gives us the needed hope for the New Year and for every day of the new century.

Let us very consciously ask God that He may free us of everything that hinders us from seeking to accept His graces. This is why we should first ask ourselves what our goal is. Everyone's goal is to live in peace. The second question is, what are we using to achieve this goal? If we take the world's ways of achieving this, then we will never have peace. That is why we must decide for God's ways to achieve true peace.

The next lines of this message tell us what the main conditions are for us to achieve peace.

**TODAY IN A SPECIAL WAY WITH LITTLE JESUS,
WHOM I HOLD IN MY EMBRACE, I AM GIVING
YOU THE POSSIBILITY TO DECIDE FOR PEACE**

We all know that she first introduced herself to us as the Queen of Peace. In so many messages she called us to peace and asked us to decide for peace and called us to pray for peace. It is because she is with us and because she is praying for us that we can so easily decide for peace. By calling herself the Queen of Peace she really touched the deepest yearning in our hearts and in the whole world. Medjugorje remains so actual, precisely because here it only concerns peace, but here it must clearly be said that...

**THROUGH YOUR 'YES' FOR PEACE AND YOUR
DECISION FOR GOD, A NEW POSSIBILITY FOR
PEACE IS OPENED**

To say 'yes' to peace means to say 'yes' to unconditional love, to unconditional forgiveness, to unconditional reconciliation, and to ask for unconditional forgiveness and to accept unconditional forgiveness. That is our 'yes' to peace. The yearning for peace is a constant and that is because it was given to us, but the decision for peace we must always fight for. The decision for peace again involves the decision for unconditional love, unconditional justice and for being unconditionally good, and therefore it is a decision for a new heart that feels for people the way they are, and then to come to people with God's love and with God's light. A decision for God is the primary condition for us to even be able to decide for peace. Because those who do not decide for God and for what He says and wishes to teach us will run into emptiness, they will remain without a purpose and without a foundation. Therefore peace will always remain unattainable.

To decide for God means to know His words, to believe in His words, to believe in His love and to always believe that He really does enter our lives, so that He can then become active in our lives. Therefore, it is so important for us to seek what it still is in our lives that hinders us from deciding more for God. We always find the same answer to this and that is our egoism, our pride and our openness for the world. We, in being this way, start seeking peace by way of wrong paths and wrong means. The world with all that it offers is seductive. When it offers us peace, it is really only offering us amusement. Amusement always goes on the costs of others. It destroys us and then finally also destroys others. Here it is sufficient only to think about an alcoholic, a drug addict or someone who has taken upon himself some other bad habit, here it always concerns this same seeking for peace. And it is this then that also seduces. Whoever does not decide for the difficult way to peace will never attain it, and therefore has never decided for God. By way of prayer, fasting, regular Confession and attendance of Holy Mass and especially also for the time we take for Adoration, our hearts will become firm in God and firm in peace. Then we will be able to resist the temptations of this world. Then Mary says...

**ONLY IN THIS WAY, LITTLE CHILDREN, THIS
CENTURY WILL BE FOR YOU A TIME OF PEACE AND
WELL-BEING**

We may not become tired of the realization that it really depends upon us what will happen in these new times. All of us want peace and therefore we also expect better times. This last century was one in which there were an extreme number of wars, an extreme amount of injustice in which millions upon millions fell due to these wars. There were millions upon millions of refugees and uncountable persecutions only due to other peoples' consciences in the totalitarian systems. All these wounds have remained and

these then are a real danger for the individual as well as for whole nations and for the whole world. The material prosperity in the West has also brought about a great distance between many people and God. This has, for instance, allowed for millions upon millions of abortions that also leave their wounds in society. It is only a very firm decision for God that will make this new time a time of peace and of well-being. We may simply not fall victim to the many temptations of this world and then wait for someone else to bring about true peace for us, something that we ourselves are really waiting for. We must, in order to attain true peace, listen to Mary, the Queen of Peace, and then also do what she is requesting of us. We may not allow ourselves to expect something from others, but rather that we ourselves start doing everything that we can to attain this peace that Mary has promised us if we listen to her. If we expect peace by way of others, then we will always remain disappointed. But, if we decide and act for our own peace and love in our own hearts, then we will always have more and more work to do on behalf of true peace because all of humanity needs peace. At the end of the message, Mary says...

**THEREFORE, PUT LITTLE NEWBORN JESUS IN THE
FIRST PLACE IN YOUR LIFE AND HE WILL LEAD YOU
ON THE WAY OF SALVATION**

Often Mary has called us to place God in the first place in our lives or to allow Him to take the first place in our lives. When she tells us to place the little Jesus in the first place in our life, then Mary is telling us something that we should really understand. Jesus came to us as a child and it is, more than anything else, the child that we should be able to give the first place in our life. When we think of a child and its mother, then we know that the mother is always attending to that child day and night and that she never leaves that child alone. The child without the help of its mother could never survive, and our spiritual lives are very much the same way. Our hearts, in which Jesus lives as a child, are always in need of our care and our activity. We must nourish our hearts with good food and here it means spiritual food that we receive in prayer, in fasting, in Confession, at Holy Mass and at Adoration. We must at all times cleanse our hearts, so that the child Jesus is able to live inside us. The child Jesus will not be able to live and survive in those who do not decide for the daily spiritual work. This is why we should also think about some advice of Mary's when she told us to work in our hearts as we do in our fields.

Everyone who has ever tended to a garden knows that the work there or in the fields must be a radical type of work. The useless and bad roots that are able to suffocate the good plants must be hindered and removed. The ground must be cleaned so that the good plants can grow and then have their flowers or their fruits. It is this way also with the child Jesus in our hearts. If we want Him to live in us and to grow in us, then we must, as Saint Paul tells us, "fight to the blood against sin" and untiringly fight for the good. This

is certainly difficult work, but it is the only work that brings good fruit. Therefore, this new time, in which we can have peace and well-being, demands this from us. So we very consciously must want to take little Jesus in our hearts and to attend to Him as a mother does her child. Only if we do this will we be on the path of salvation.

Salvation, in the biblical sense, does not only mean to some day attain eternal peace, but it also signifies a well-being here on earth if we follow Jesus. If all people were to follow Jesus, then all of us would be doing well spiritually, mentally as well as materially. So the biblical meaning of salvation includes all spiritual, mental as well as material goods. Only in this way can humanity attain salvation. God is a God who is offering each of us salvation, and Who also wishes to participate in this salvation for us. He does not only offer His help to us, but He offers Himself to us as this help. When people refuse this help then they are isolating themselves from all those around them and from the rest of the world. This message is a really an important message because it is such a hopeful message. It is telling us very clearly what it is that we should do, that God is very much with us, that He wishes to remain with us, and that He wishes to work through us. And that all may happen, we now wish to pray...

God, our Father, we wish to thank You that You sent us the child Jesus, and that He decided to remain with us. With Mary, His mother and Your humble servant, we ask You for ourselves, at the beginning of this new time, to send us the Holy Spirit so that He may free us of everything that hinders the child Jesus from remaining in our hearts. Cleanse us of all our selfishness, our pride, our egoism, our jealousy and our envy. Free us from our laziness and our fear of working with Your Son every day. Cleanse our hearts, O Father, so that they may become good homes for Your Son.

Father, give us the grace that we may say 'yes' to peace and that we may therefore decide only for You. In Your Name, at the beginning of this new time, we reject all sin, all that is evil and all temptations that come from the world and from Satan.

Protect us, O Father, and give us the grace that we may allow ourselves to be protected, and Father, along with Mary. We also ask You for protection of all families, all parents, for every mother, for every father, and for all children, that they may during this new time all decide for peace and therefore only for You, O Father, and that the newborn Jesus may remain in all of them. Help our families to overcome all that is evil. Keep our families unified and in peace through Your Son Jesus, and heal all families that have been divided, all families into which the worms of conflict, pride, selfishness, alcoholism or disloyalty have entered.

We bring before You all the wounded relationships

The PILGRIM

between men and women, between parents and children, cleanse them, heal them, so that all our families may really become families for this new time, families of peace, families in which only life is served. We ask You for all women who have conceived a child or who will conceive a child during this time, for all Doctors and all those who through their service attend to unborn life, that every conceived child may be accepted. We also ask that this new time be especially known as a time in which true peace and all life can be served. We ask You, O Father, for all the sick and for old people, that they too may experience help by way of the young and healthy, and that You wish to give to everyone. Let us become conscious of the fact that peace depends entirely on the behavior of each individual.

We ask You on behalf of all those who are responsible in the Church and in the world, that their hearts may all become open to Your offer of true peace. We also ask that everyone who carries a responsibility may also decide for You, O Father, and that all of us may during this time cooperate only with You.

We ask You on behalf of all Catholics, all other Christians and all those of other religions, that You show us all that we are in fact able to live in peace with one another, and that all of us help in the well-being of all the others.

O Father, bless us all in this Jubilee Year so that we may constantly stay active and that all pilgrims who this year wish to travel to the Holy Land, to Rome, to Medjugorje or to other Marian Shrines may receive a new impulse for their lives with You. Give all of us the grace that we may live this new time in You and with You. Bless us, O Father, and make of us all witnesses of Your peace, and so may it be. Peace be with you all.

Amen.

fra Slavko Barbaric
Medjugorje; Dec 27, 1999

PILGRIMS of FAITH MARIAN CENTER (PFMC)

We are not a store. We operate like a church pamphlet rack where you make selections and offer a donation based on value posted or received.

The **PFMC** is now permanently approved as an **Internal Revenue Service (IRS)** Code Section 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax exempt religious association which can accept tax deductible contributions or donations in relation to its organizational functions. These functions include pilgrimages, retreats, days of recollection, presentations, books and religious articles.

Please patronize your local Catholic Book Store as well as the **PFMC**.

DONATIONS by CHARGE CARD ACCEPTED

We accept **DISCOVER/PRIVATE ISSUE, MASTER CARD** and **VISA** for all donations to the **PFMC**. This includes for books and religious articles, pilgrimages, retreats and for **"The PILGRIM"** or the building fund.

This availability does not come without its cost to us. Every charge card use costs us about 3% of the total charged. Since we had to invest in new equipment and must pay fees beyond the per charge cost to us, there will be 3% **PROCESSING FEE, non-refundable if credit is necessary**, added to each charge that is processed.

COMPLETE ADDRESS — USE RETURN ADDRESS LABEL or STAMP!!!

ALWAYS complete any order forms or give us full address with any letter order. Consider using one of the many mailing labels each of us receives in our mail so that we can see your address clearly printed and often with the ZIP+4 which is supposed to speed the mail delivery.

We appreciate the communication so that we can correct our mailing labels and list. ORDER and SPONSOR **"The PILGRIM"** for your favorite religious or priest.

BLESSED OIL

Kathleen has bottles of blessed oil from **Medjugorje** blessed at Holy Mass in **Saint James** and then carried to **Vicka's** house to be present in the room during an apparition. Volunteers transfer the oil to small bottles for you or your prayer group to use as a sacramental.

Read the articles in the *November* and *December 1994* issues as well as the **Bible** readings for the **Holy Week Chrism Mass** about Blessed Oil and Oil of Gladness.

Oil from Medjugorje is a sacramental and should be handled as such. It is NOT the same as the oils blessed by the Bishop for official church ceremonies or during administration of the sacraments by a priest. People being blessed should not be misled into thinking that blessing by the laity in any way replaces blessing by a priest, whose Holy Hands are consecrated by the Bishop in the sacrament of Holy Orders.

We request a \$5 donation per small bottle. This covers \$3 for the bottle, packaging and special handling plus \$2 mailing or postage expense.

NOTICES for PFMC AREA EVENTS

Would you be so kind as to take the following BULLETIN NOTICES to your **Pastor** and / or **Parish Bulletin**

Coordinator and ask them to publish these notices to support events for which you have an interest. Thank you.

2000 PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE

Reserve **February 25th, 26th and 27th 2000** for the **PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE** at the **Four Points Hotel** in **Cherry Hill, NJ 08034**. The topic will be **"DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME" (1Cor11: 24 and 25) "The HOLY MASS."** Call (856) 768-9228 for an information sheet and registration form.

Pilgrimage to Italy and Its Shrines

Scheduled to depart **May 1, 2000**, enabling pilgrims to receive a **JUBILEE INDULGENCE** from the Holy Father by going through doors of all 4 major basilicas. **Father James Sauchelli** of the **Trenton Diocese** will be Spiritual Director. If you are interested, please call **Kathleen** at the **Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)**, (856) 768-9228.

Pilgrimage to Medjugorje and Rome and Assisi

Want to pilgrimage to **Medjugorje** and **Rome** and **Assisi** for **June 20 thru 30, 2000**? Want to visit **Rome** with an opportunity to obtain a **JUBILEE INDULGENCE** from the Holy Father by going through doors of all 4 major basilicas? If interested, call **Kathleen** at **Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)**, (856) 768-9228.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Want a wonderful, gentle paced pilgrimage to see where Jesus walked in the **Holy Land** with a requested donation as reasonable as possible to include all morning and evening meals, transportation, overnight accommodations and full spiritual program? Can you depart on *November 1, 2000* for *12-14 days*? We are planning to stay overnight in convents, monasteries or hotels that will provide an atmosphere for a year 2000 pilgrimage you will never forget. We are currently planning to have **40** seats available and transfer through **Rome** with an opportunity to obtain a **JUBILEE INDULGENCE** from the **Holy Father** by going through doors of all 4 major basilicas.

If you are interested, please send your name and address to **Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)**, 61 Cooper Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043-4963.

CALENDARS:

In *January*, the Church celebrates the Solemnities of *Mary, Mother of God (1)*, *Epiphany of the Lord (2/6)*, the Feasts of *Baptism of the Lord (9)* and *The Conversion of Paul (25)*, and Memorials of *Saints Elizabeth Ann Seton (4)*, *John Neumann (5)*, *Raymond of Penyafort (7)*, *Hilary (13)*, *Anthony, Abbot (17)*, *Fabian (20)*, *Sebastian (20)*, *Agnes (21)*, *Vincent (22)*, *Francis de Sales (24)*, *Timothy (26)*, *Titus (26)*, *Angela Merici (27)*, *Thomas Aquinas (28)* and *John Bosco (31)* as well as *Blessed Andre Bessette (6)*. Most Church calendars recognize *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday (observed) (19)*.

In *February*, the Church celebrates the Feasts of *Presentation of the Lord (2)*, *Seven Founders of the Order of Servites (17)*, and *Chair of Saint Peter (22)*, the Memorials of *Saints Blase (3)*, *Ansgar (3)*, *Agatha (5)*, *Jerome Emiliani (8)*, *Scholastica (10)*, *Cyril and Methodius (14)*, *Peter Damian (21)* and *Polycarp (23)* as well as *Our Lady of Lourdes (11)*. Most Church calendars show *Presidents' Day (14)* and *Saint Valentine's Day (14)*.

INTERNET

Surf for the **PFMC** presence on the Internet at:

<http://www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith> or
<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Woods/6240> or
<http://www.PFMCkmw.org>.

Thank you for your patience and kind words about our efforts with "*The PILGRIM*" and the Internet.

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Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)
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(856) 768-9228 FAX: (856) 768-9428



PLEASE DO NOT THROW THIS AWAY!!

If you do not desire to read "The PILGRIM," please give it to your Marian prayer group or return it to sender. If address has changed, please send a change of address card.

If there is no time to read it all right now, please put it with other reading material in a place where you can read at least an article per day until the next issue arrives.



We operate on divine providence and the kind donations of those who can afford to support us.

PRIESTS! Please note that **HOMILY** ideas have come from priests reading articles in "*The PILGRIM*!"

AROUND the **PFMC** AREA

Reserve *February 25th, 26th and 27th 2000* for the **PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE** at the **Four Points Hotel** in **Cherry Hill, NJ 08034**. The topic will be **"DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME"** (1Cor11: 24 and 25) "The **HOLY MASS**." See pages 1 and 2 or the enclosed gold colored information sheet with registration form. Please make your **ROOM RESERVATIONS** with the **Four Points Hotel, 1-800-257-8262**.

Use the enclosed reservation form to make your **RETREAT CONFERENCE** reservations with the **PFMC**. For additional information, call 856-768-9228.

NEW AREA PHONE CODE

For those who keep our phone numbers handy, please change the area code from **609** to **856** immediately. Our **PFMC** phone number is **856-768-9228** and our FAX number is **856-768-9428**. We will be transferring these lines to the new building when it is ready. Thank you.

MARIAN PILGRIMAGE PRESENTATIONS

Keith and Kathleen are always willing to schedule presentations to prayer group, **Altar Rosary Society**, **Legion of Mary** or other parish group meetings. The experiences and continuation of ministry for **Our Lady** in this time of graces and manifestation of Our Lord's Mercy are shared through videotape, witness and/or slide presentations followed by a question and answer session.

There is no charge. Free will offerings are accepted especially for books, tapes and religious articles which are made available at the presentation sites just like they are at the **PFMC** which operates like a church book rack.

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