



The PILGRIM

Vol. 11, No. 12 Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)

December 2000

MESSAGE of 11/25/2000

Dear Children! Today when Heaven is near to you in a special way, I call you to prayer so that through prayer you place God in the first place. Little children, today I am near you and I bless each of you with my motherly blessing so that you have the strength and love for all the people you meet in your earthly life and that you can give God's love. I rejoice with you and I desire to tell you that your brother Slavko has been born into Heaven and intercedes for you. Thank you for having responded to my call.

(A copy of a message claimed to be given by the Blessed Virgin Mary to Marija Pavlovic Lunetti on November 25, 2000. The Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC) upholds the final decision of the Catholic Church as to the authenticity of this Medjugorje message.)

Sad news from Medjugorje that Father Slavko Barbaric passed away November 24, 2000 begins on page 24.

A PRAYER



Lord, keep us quiet at Your manger side so that we may listen in the silence to Your WORD. Keep us simple and docile to Your guidance. Keep us in Your JOY. AMEN.

(Kathleen prays from the heart for each issue.)

GIVE A RELIGIOUS ARTICLE or BOOK to EACH PERSON YOU KNOW THIS CHRISTMAS



Make your Christmas truly religious. Include the Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC) in your planning for your shopping and giving for Christmas. The new PFMC offices and support spaces at Epiphany House are usually open Monday through Friday from 10:30 AM to 5 PM. We are also open on nights that we have events in Epiphany House.

Come and meet us. Tour the new addition. Come and browse our little display room for the right religious article to share with a friend, a co-worker, or

"The PILGRIM" for December 2000 is dedicated to "Our Lady of Solitude, who conceived in FAITH and in her blessed womb the Salvation of All." See page 3 for Table of Contents / "IN THIS ISSUE ..."

relative. We have lovely statues to place on a mantle, keep at your desk or to put into a car. We have religious articles, medals, rosaries, chaplets, crosses, blessed oil, pictures and statues available.

Visit our library and check to see if we have your selection available or can order it in time for Christmas. Be sure to get a book for your home reading and get one for a friend or relative. We also have children's books and coloring books. Do you need a gift for a birthday, christening, wedding, or anniversary? We hope we can help you in finding or ordering just what you need. Please consider coming and browsing. If there is something you want and we don't have it, we can order it for you.

Have you given a Rosary out lately? Have you shown someone how to pray the Rosary? Pope John Paul II has blessed all our rosaries carried through Rome.

If you cannot come to the new PFMC building at 61 Cooper Road in Voorhees, NJ, then you might look over our book and religious article list and see if you would like to order something by mail.

Any donation over and above the value received is tax deductible and greatly helps the PFMC with its many expenses.

We hope you will remember us when shopping for Christmas. We will pray for all of you during our Advent preparations for Christmas and during the beautiful time of the Nativity, the Holy Family, Mary, Mother of God, and the Epiphany. We hope you all have a blessed and joyous Christmas season.

“The PILGRIM”

As a monthly periodical, “The PILGRIM” is written for individuals who want to deepen their spiritual life. Through articles it seeks to engage its readers in spiritual reflection leading to informed commitment to spiritual growth. Men and women need to know God better than by hearsay, and “The PILGRIM” is attempting to do something about it.

You will be introduced to articles on meditation and prayer, stories of blessings, forgiveness, healing, marriage spirituality, lives of the Saints, the Catholic Church, Sacraments, the Virtues, Silence, and Poems and much more. You will often find book reports that are helpful in Christian life, as well as books and religious articles for you to order.

Retreats, seminars, conferences, or days of recollection, pilgrimages, and prayer groups are announced in “The PILGRIM”. So you will know where to go for an evening, a weekend, or a spiritual escape. We hope that you will enjoy reading “The PILGRIM” over the month’s time. If you do enjoy it, please let us know. We are constantly trying to provide you with material to move you toward a more personal relationship with God.

If you have an interesting article, witness, poem or prayer, please send it to Kathleen. It will be reviewed for possible print. If you have a friend who does not get the newsletter, then share yours with him or her, and have them call us to be placed on our mailing list.

To keep your periodical coming to you please make some kind of contact with us once a year. We update our files, monthly, and require that you contact us in writing either by e-mail (PFMCkmw@home.com) or by “snail” mail at least once per year. If you have a change of address, please send an update to us.

In each newsletter are an offering envelope and a petition slip. All donations toward the cost of printing and mailing “The PILGRIM” are greatly appreciated. We cannot operate the PFMC or publish “The PILGRIM” without your support. We ask that you possibly make a sacrifice to cover the copies we send out to priests, nuns, seminarians without any thought of a return donation. We are amazed when we get

well prayed over dollar bills from nuns in retirement.

Your petition slips are put in a basket and are prayed for until they are taken with us on pilgrimage and left at a holy place. Often they are taken and given to Pope John Paul II via his office.

2001 RETREAT CONFERENCE - Father John Hampsch, CMF, Father Bill McCarthy, MSsA, Father Bob DeGrandis, SSJ, Father John McFadden, Father Michael Semana, Father Jim Sauchelli and many more – JOIN US



We are receiving many applications now for the 2001 retreat conference. The Four Points at Sheraton is requesting that you make your hotel room reservations NOW in order to have a room at the site of the daily events that start Friday evening and end following the 3 day extension with Father Robert DeGrandis, SSJ.

Father Bill McCarthy, MSsA, is returning to join with Father John Hampsch, CMF, author of “Healing Your Family Tree.” Father John McFadden will open the event and bless the facilities. Father Michael Semana will again sing a Healing Mass on Saturday, and will hold a healing concert on Saturday night followed by laying on of hands for healing. Father Jim Sauchelli will join us to help keep things running smoothly.

Music for the weekend will again be provided by REFUGE. Al Barbarino will provide the music for the 3-day extension with Father Robert DeGrandis, SSJ.

Should the hotel overflow as it has for the last 3 years, participants will be referred to other local hotels nearby. There is a new number for room reservations - 1-800-325-3535.

Please review the enclosed gold information sheet and registration form today to register with the PFMC for 2001 RETREAT CONFERENCE attendance.

The volunteer Board of Directors and Staff of the PFMC recognize and accept that the final authority regarding the alleged Marian apparitions, locutions and related messages at, and to the recipients from, Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as all other private revelations, rests with the Holy See, to whose judgment we willingly submit. We give total allegiance to our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and its Magisterium particularly Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II.

While those presenters who work with the PFMC are selected for their personal qualifications and commitment to the Church, their comments and presentations are those of individual Catholics and no endorsement by ecclesiastical authority is to be presumed.

VOLUNTEERS for 2001 RETREAT CONFERENCE ARE NEEDED



Please call Dotty or Kathleen at 856-768-9228 if you can volunteer to help the PPMC. We always need help in the PPMC in setting up the programs, particularly in the area of accepting reservations, and program planning.

If you are interested in helping out with the February 2001 Retreat Conference, we need about 40 volunteers. See articles on page 5 and 27. Consider filling out the form on the bottom of page 27 and mailing it in to us.



The Sheraton Four Points Hotel is filling up fast and we will need help finding rooms for the 700 people wishing to attend the February 2001 Retreat Conference. There is a new number, 1-800-325-3535 for room reservations. We appreciate your help in evangelization.

PRIESTS CONFESSORS NEEDED for RETREAT CONFERENCE



Mary's Beloved Priests: Will you help us with the Sacrament of Confession during the 2001 PPMC RETREAT CONFERENCE? We have reserved at least six private hotel rooms across from the Adoration Room for the purpose of 2001 PPMC RETREAT CONFERENCE attendees receiving the Sacrament of Confession. Four overflow stations are set up in the "Sacristy" Room reserved for priests and deacons. That means we can have ten priests hearing Confessions simultaneously in private settings. More priest confessors can utilize other private hotel rooms based on their availability.

We have Bishop DiMarzio's permission to hold this 2001 PPMC RETREAT CONFERENCE, to celebrate Holy Mass and to have Confessions, as well as 24 hour Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Confessions can be heard at any time from about 4 PM on Friday, February 23rd, 2001, through about 2 PM on Wednesday, February 28th, 2001. We would love it if you could sign up in advance for the hour or more that you can be with us. Please call Kathleen or Dotty at 856-768-9228.

If you wish to attend certain RETREAT CONFERENCE sessions and hear Confessions at other times, please let us know. We greatly appreciate

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priest confessor assistance at any time.

One of the greatest fruits of PPMC RETREATS and the RETREAT CONFERENCE is the spiritual healing through the gift of the Sacrament of Confession.

Over three-quarters of the attendees at PPMC RETREATS and the RETREAT CONFERENCE are believed to receive the Sacrament of Confession during the event. Last year we were privileged to have 19 priests help us with what must have been more than 450 to 500 Confessions.

Would you consider coming and helping this year?

Please call Kathleen or Dotty at 856-768-9228.

We will pay for your meals, and welcome you to concelebrate Holy Mass. Should you be coming from a distant area, we will help you with your hotel costs.

If you would kindly consider putting this 2001 PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE into your bulletin, we would greatly appreciate your doing so. We would be pleased to provide gold information sheets for your ushers to distribute or to insert into your bulletins.

Thank you! We pray daily for our Beloved Priests.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SEMINARS on the DEVELOPMENT and HISTORY of CHRIST'S CHURCH

Dean Pulcini will be leading Wednesday night seminars on "DEFENDING YOUR FAITH." He offers a basic understanding of his Catholic faith in comparison to and contrasted with Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy. These interactive seminars help the student to grasp clearly what the Church authentically teaches and aid in dispelling misinformation, misunderstanding, and myths. Persons of other faiths interested in learning about Catholicism are invited to attend as well.

These Wednesday evening seminars are held in the Great Room of Epiphany House from 7 PM to 9 PM.

Dean has a Master's degree in Sacred Theology from Holy Apostles College and Seminary, Cromwell, CT. Scripture, Morality, and Liturgy are his areas of expertise. He is a certified Youth Minister in the Diocese of Camden. As a catechist, he has taught grades 1 through 12 as well as college students in adult education. His combined total experience in the field amounts to over 20 years. He has offered his services within the Dioceses of Camden and Harrisburg, the Archdioceses Baltimore and the Armed Services (formerly the Military Ordinariate), and abroad in the Archdiocese of Munich, Germany.

On line, Dean hosts a Catholic Theology chat room founded to address questions about the Catholic faith.

Active in music ministry, Dean leads the choral group VOYAGE. He has composed hundreds of pieces of music, some of them being accepted for publication. He has produced music albums on tape and CD.

Dean is certified as a Psychiatric Social Worker in the State of New Jersey. For nearly 12 years, he has worked in Camden County, NJ, with homeless persons

suffering from mental illnesses.

Some related topics of the course include:

Where Do Catholics Find THAT in the Bible?

The Bible and Sacred Tradition, the two fonts of revelation.

Are Good Works Necessary for Salvation?

Justification and salvation: faith alone versus faith and good works.

How Can the Pope Be Infallible?

The history and development of the Petrine Ministry.

Do Catholics Worship Mary and the Saints?

A proper understanding of the role of the Mother of God and the holy angels and saints of the Lord as well as a review of mediation and intercession; also a study on the use of statues and images and iconoclasm.

Do Catholics still believe in Purgatory?

Understanding the afterlife, sin, reward, indulgences, and intercession.

Aren't the Mass and Other Catholic Practices Rooted in Pagan Rites?

Reviewing the Sacred Liturgy, the sacrificial nature of the Mass, the history and development of the various ecclesiastical rites.

Can the Catholic Church be the "Whore of Babylon?"

A look at the book of the Apocalypse (Revelation) and its relevance.

Why Is Confession Necessary; Why Not Confess Directly to God?

Understanding sin, Penance and reconciliation with God and the Church.

What about ALL the Corruption; from Inquisitions to Sexual Abuse?

A scope of the corruption of mankind and the purity of the Church.

Who Gives the Church the Right to Morally Dictate?

A look at ethics, morality and the obligation of fidelity to Christ.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: These seminars run from 7 PM to 9 PM on Wednesday nights, i.e. December 13th and 20th. They will continue on Wednesday nights in 2001 starting on January 3rd.

Free will offering baskets are out. Suggested offering is \$5 per night. The PFMC display room and library will be open. We would appreciate if you would call 856-768-9228 if you plan to attend.

THURSDAY PRAYER GROUP MEETING AT EPIPHANY HOUSE



A prayer group meets in the Epiphany House Great Room from 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM on Thursdays. This prayer group focuses on Marian Prayer, is Charismatic, and prays for Healing. All are most welcome.

BIBLE STUDY - "TYPOLOGY" with PETER DAWSON, 1st and 3rd MONDAY'S at 7:30 PM

Bible study using "TYPOLOGY" lead by Peter Dawson will be held in the Great Room of Epiphany House on the 1st and 3rd Mondays.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in both 128 and 130, discusses "TYPOLOGY" as shown in the November 2000 issue of "The PILGRIM."

Come as often as you can but don't fear coming if you have missed some of the classes. Peter always does review and will work with you to catch up on what has already been covered.

NEEDS of the PFMC – CAN YOU HELP US OBTAIN A CART, A MARKER BOARD and an EASEL?

The PFMC is badly in need of two utility carts, either 2 shelf or three shelf. If you have one around or can sponsor buying one please contact us. They run about \$230 each. We have no preference – either Rubbermaid or metal.

We also have need of a white erasable marker board and an easel with butcher paper for use during our workshops. They don't have to be a gigantic.

Thank you for considering us

FOR ORDERS – PLEASE DO NOT PLACE ON DONATION SLIPS

When ordering books, tapes or oil, we kindly ask you to NOT place them on the donation slips, but rather use the form inside the newsletter, or write us a separate note.

The donation slips are noted and are then placed in a

prayer basket in the Upper Room where we pray daily. They are then taken on pilgrimage with Kathleen or a volunteer coordinator, and are left in a religious place for further prayer. We often do not see the order on the slip as they do not go to our order section, and your order may get lost or not noticed.

PRESENCE OF OUR LORD



Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R and James Monti have published a magnificent book titled "In the Presence of Our Lord, the History, Theology, and Psychology of Eucharistic Devotion".

Unlike books that present the technical aspects of setting up Eucharistic devotion in a chapel or parish, this book focuses on how the Blessed Sacrament has been a source of comfort and faith for countless Christians.

Catholics, for centuries, have answered Christ's plea by placing themselves before His presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Many parishes are now instituting the Adoration Hours for their parishioners.

Most Reverend Harry Flynn, D.D., Archbishop of St Paul and Minneapolis stated " I believe that the authors of this fine work have made a penetrating reflection on the great gift of the Eucharist and the

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Father Robert DeGrandis, SSJ, Father Glenn Hartman, Father

Joseph Szolack, as well as many of Mary's other beloved priests from

the Philadelphia and Newark Archdioceses as well as the Camden,

Harrisburg, Metuchen, Norwich, Pittsburgh, Scranton, Trenton and

Wilmington Dioceses. Father Hartman is reviewing every issue.

Father Joseph Szolack, szolack@camdendiocese.org, Vocations

Director, Diocese of Camden, advises all who are discerning vocations.

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OFFICE HELP, ASSEMBLY, LABELS and MAILING: Too many wonderful pilgrims and volunteers to mention them all by name.

history of adoration with which the Church has responded to such a gift. It has tremendous possibilities as an aid in preaching on the Eucharist and untold probabilities concerning the deepening of one's faith in the Lord's presence in this great gift.

If you are interested in ordering this book for yourself or for a priest for Christmas please call us or write to us. The book is \$15.95, plus \$3.20 postage priority mail. It is 331 pages long.

THE ANNUNCIATION

In the words of the "annunciation" by night, Joseph not only heard the divine truth concerning his wife's indescribable vocation; he also heard once again the truth about his own vocation. This "just" man who, in the spirit of the noblest traditions of the chosen people, loved the Virgin of Nazareth and was bound to her by a husband's love, was once again called by God to this love.

"Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife" into his home (Mt. 1:24); what was conceived in Mary was "of the Holy Spirit." From expressions such as these are we not to suppose that his love as a man was also given new birth by the Holy Spirit? Are we not to think that the love of God which has been poured forth into the human heart through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rm. 5:5) molds every human love to perfection?

This love of God also molds—in a completely unique way—the love of husband and wife, deepening within it everything of human worth and beauty, everything that bespeaks an exclusive gift of self, a covenant between persons, and an authentic communion according to the model of the Blessed Trinity.

"Joseph...took his wife, but he knew her not, until she had borne a son" (Mt. 1:24-25). These words indicate another kind of closeness in marriage. The deep spiritual closeness arising from marital union and the interpersonal contact between man and woman have their definitive origin in the Spirit, the giver of life (cf. Jn. 6:63).

Joseph, in obedience to the Spirit, found in the Spirit the source of love, the conjugal love that he experienced as man. And this love proved to be greater than this "just man" could ever have expected within the limits of his human heart.

(from "THE MARY BOOK—THE MOTHER OF EVANGELISM" by Father Robert Fox)

THE VISITATION and the 'MAGNIFICAT'

After the Annunciation the Blessed Virgin went to visit her cousin, Saint Elisabeth. As soon as Elisabeth heard Mary's salutation, the child she bore leaped in her womb for joy, and she was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she cried out 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.' In the light of divine revelation Elisabeth understands that the Fruit of Mary's womb is beginning to bless men through His mother. She knows that it is the Lord Himself Who comes to her. The Son of God comes, through His mother, to His precursor; and the precursor, through his mother, recognized the Son of God.

Saint Luke gives the canticle of the *Magnificat* in the verses, which follow. The context, the authority of the great majority of the best manuscripts, and the unanimous voice of the oldest and most learned Fathers (Ireanaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Saint Ambrose, Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, etc.) all point to Mary as its author.

What strikes one most of all in the *Magnificat* is its simplicity and its dignity. In substance it is a song of thanksgiving, which recalls that God is the greatness of the humble, that He lifts them up even while He casts down the pride of the mighty. Bossuet sums up well what the Fathers say about the *Magnificat* in his *Elevations on the Mysteries*, 14th week, 5th Elevation. We shall follow him in the next few pages.

God has done great things in Mary

'My soul doth glorify the Lord.' Mary leaves self, as it were, to glorify God alone and to find in Him all her joy. She is in perfect peace, for no one can take from her Him of Whom she sings.

'My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.' What Mary cannot find in herself she finds in God, Who is the Supreme Treasure. She rejoices 'because He hath rewarded the humility of His handmaid'. She does not think herself capable of attracting His gaze, for she is nothing. But He, in His goodness, has turned towards her, and now she has a sure ground for confidence—the Divine mercy. No longer does she fear to recognize all she has received freely from Him: rather is that a debt of gratitude to be paid. 'For

behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed’—a prophecy which is still fulfilled after two thousand years with each ‘Hail Mary’ that men say.

And now she sees that her joy will be the joy of all men of good will: ‘He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generation, to them that fear Him.’ He Who is mighty has performed in her the greatest work of His might—the redemptive Incarnation: He has given a Savior to the world through her, while yet leaving her virginity intact.

The Most High is holy, is Holiness. This is all the more evident to us who believe that the Son of God, Who is also the Son of Mary, has bestowed mercy, grace and holiness on men of so many different times and nations who feared God with that childlike fear which is the beginning of wisdom, and accepted the yoke of His commandments by grace.

The Nativity

Mary grew in humility, poverty and love of God by giving birth to her Son in a stable. His cradle was but a manger. But, by contrast, there were the angels there to sing ‘Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.’ Those words were sweet to the ears of the shepherds and of Saint Joseph, and still more sweet to the ears of Mary. They were the beginning of a *Gloria*, which the Church does not cease to sing at Mass while this world endures, and the liturgy of eternity has not yet replaced that of time.

It is said of Mary that she kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. Though her joy at the birth of her Son was intense, she treasured it up in silence. Saint Elisabeth alone received her confidences. God’s greatest actions defy human expression.

**(from “THE DIVINE MATERNITY AND THE
PLENITUDE OF GRACES” by Father Reginald
Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.)**

THE MARRIAGE of MARY and JOSEPH

According to Jewish custom, marriage took place in two stages, first the legal, or true marriage was celebrated, and then only after a certain period of time the husband brought the wife into his own house. Thus, before he lived with Mary, Joseph was already her “husband.” Mary, however, preserved her deep

desire to give herself exclusively to God. One may well ask how this desire of Mary’s could be reconciled with a “wedding.” The answer can only come from the saving events as they unfold, from the special action of God himself.

From the moment of the annunciation, Mary knew that she was to fulfill her virginal desire to give herself exclusively and fully to God precisely by becoming the Mother of God’s Son. Becoming a mother by the power of the Holy Spirit was the form taken by her gift of self, a form which God himself expected of the Virgin Mary, who was “betrothed” to Joseph. Mary uttered her *fiat*.

The fact that Mary was “betrothed” to Joseph was part of the very plan of God. This is pointed out by Luke and especially by Matthew. The words spoken to Joseph are very significant. “Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 1:20). These words explain the mystery of Joseph’s wife. In her motherhood Mary is a virgin. In her, “the Son of the Most High” assumed a human body and became “the Son of Man.”

Addressing Joseph through the words of the angel, God speaks to him as the husband of the Virgin of Nazareth. What took place in her through the power of the Holy Spirit also confirmed in a special way the marriage bond, which already existed between Joseph and Mary. God’s messenger was clear in what he said to Joseph: “Do not fear to take Mary your wife into your home.” Hence, what had taken place earlier, namely, Joseph’s marriage to Mary, happened in accord with God’s will and was meant to endure. In her divine motherhood Mary had to continue to live as “a virgin, the wife of her husband” (cf. Lk. 1:27).

**(From “THE MARY BOOK—THE MOTHER
OF EVANGELISM” by Father Robert Fox)**

WHY WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

When we say Merry Christmas, just what do we mean?

Do we just think of presents, the party routine?
Is it shopping or lights shining all down the street,
Or of all of the goodies we’re planning to eat?
Is it just one more day when we don’t go to work,
Or an eve when dear Santa by chimneys does lurk?

It seems we’ve forgotten what happened this day.

Nearly two thousand years on our Jesus' birthday.
That the gifts that we give are because we recall
Precious gifts of the Magi to Our Lord in his stall.
That the lights we put up to enjoy this great feast
Are to help us remember the star in the east.

So let's try to remember on this Christmas day
The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay,
While Mary and Joseph look on with such awe
At the shepherds adoring the babe that they saw.
If we're going to be merry in this Christmas season,
Let us never forget that the Christ is the reason.

(by Evelyn Matheis)

ORIGIN of the MANGER SCENE

In his "*Spiritual Exercises*," **Saint Ignatius of Loyola** recommends that we meditate about the life of Our Lord by vividly imagining the circumstances. He advises, for example, "meditating about the city or the stable where Jesus was born--how roomy, how narrow, how low, how high was it, and what kinds of things filled."

Centuries before the birth of **Saint Ignatius**, however, **Saint Francis of Assisi** (1182-1226) had already put this counsel into practice. Filled with a great love for the Infant Jesus since his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, **Saint Francis** said to his friend and patron **John Messmer**, "*I would like to celebrate the Holy Christmas Night with you. Listen to my idea. In the forest near the convent, you will find a cave in the rocks. Put a manger filled with hay inside. There must be oxen and asses there too, exactly as it was in Bethlehem. I would like just once, to celebrate earnestly the coming of the Son of God to earth, and to see with my own eyes how poor and lowly He wanted to be for our sake.*"

John fulfilled his friend's wish, and on the Holy Night of 1223, **Saint Francis**, his brothers, and the residents of the **Greccio** region (in **Umbria, Italy**) came to the cave. Each of the residents carried a torch, and the brothers stood around the manger with candles, such that it became as bright as day underneath the dark holm oak trees.

Mass was celebrated at midnight with the manger serving as the altar. Thus the Infant Jesus became present again in the manger just as in the stable in **Bethlehem** twelve centuries before, but this time under the species of bread and wine. God confirmed His pleasure through a miracle. As **Saint Francis**,

assisting in the Mass as a deacon, took the statue of the Infant Jesus in his arms, it came to life and smiled at him, as He stroked the bearded cheeks and rough cowl of **Saint Francis** with His tiny hands. This was the first celebration of the manger scene in the West.

(by J. Jorgensen, Der hl. Franz von Assisi,
Munich, 1935, in "TRIUMPH of the HEART"
Christmas Edition 1996 - Issue #2)

BETHLEHEM

BETHLEHEM, the birthplace of Jesus, perches atop a ridge of hills here in the Judaeen hills. For a place that has always been small (only 25,000 residents today), little Bethlehem of Judah has an awesome history. Even Scripture distinguishes this place as "Bethlehem of Judah" because there is another "Bethlehem" in Galilee.

On the bus where Father Pavich mans the guide's seat in front, the pilgrim photographers seem to be getting twenty to thirty shots to the mile. The rolling hills are rich with rustic dwellings and tethered donkeys. And under the bright blue sky, the modest monuments of millennia are on display in the open air. Even the feeling of something special is in the clear air.

"These fields are traditionally called the fields of Ruth and Boaz," explains Father Phil. "They were the great-grandparents of David and ancestors of Jesus," he says, indicating the low sloping fields to the left of the road that goes up into the town. "Ruth was a Moabite and they were shunned by the Jews. But Boaz was a wealthy Jewish landowner here, and he was attracted to the faithfulness she had shown to her widowed, aging mother-in-law, Naomi. Remember the line from the book of Ruth? 'Wherever you go, I will go, wherever you live, I will live. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God . . .' (Rt. 1:16)

"And in these hills, somewhere, Samuel, the priest, anointed David to be the king of Israel . . ." Father Phil continues, telling of little Bethlehem.

Suddenly, the buses have pulled into Manger Square. There on the corner of the square rests the Basilica of the Nativity, fifteen hundred years old, but timeless in its meaning. Inside, in the crypt, is the stone grotto where Christ was born. Some of the pilgrims study their own guidebooks about this treasure before they leave the buses to see it. There will be a little time to spend here. Father DiOrio and many others head quietly for the low door which gives entrance to the place that tells the world's most hopeful story.

More than a thousand years after Ruth and Boaz were buried in this neighborhood, tiny Bethlehem saw a night of nights! In the grotto dwellings that honey-combed the hills, there was a sleeplessness. A new light seemed to blaze in the heavens overhead. It was spring, perhaps February or March, probably in 6 or 7 B.C. It was the "lambing season." The flocks, usually quiet at this hour, seemed restless. The shepherds who had been watching the star move for weeks bundled up against the evening chill and kept closer watch over the sheep. But suddenly from the sky . . .

The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified, but the angel said, "Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to men who enjoy his favor." (Luke 2:9-14)

Didn't they question what they had seen and heard? Did all the shepherds leave the sheep behind? Did they run the mile and a half into the "town of David"? Was Joseph nervous when this unknown group of shepherds came to the grotto to see the tiny boy wrapped in swaddling clothes?

Many of these things the pilgrims and all Christians must leave to their own imaginations. They must fill in where the Gospel of Luke leaves off. But, as Father Pavich tells Father DiOrio and the rest of the pilgrims near the basilica entrance, there are many details that are now known about that "holy night."

It is a bright and cloudless day. The gold stones of the basilica behind him glow under a rich Holy Land sun. They look too new to have witnessed pilgrims passing here since the sixth century. In that era, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian made additions to the Church that the Emperor Constantine had started in 326.

Even then, the Bethlehem people believed they knew exactly which cave saw the birth. They pointed Constantine's builders to the grove of trees near the edge of the village. The cave was in the grove. They cut down the trees, cleared away most of the rocks and earth around the cave, and built the church right over it.

"But let me tell you about this door before we go in," Father Phil continues. Some of the pilgrims had been glancing toward the surprisingly small entrance to this

important Christian holy place. Four-year-old Joann, the youngest DiOrio pilgrim, runs over to measure the door against her own small stature. With a big grin, she returns to the group, apparently convinced that this holy place caters mainly to children.

In fact, as the pilgrims hear, the entrance was once much larger. About 1500, the entrance was made much smaller to prevent invaders from riding their horses into the church to desecrate it. "But you may have also heard," Father continues, "that the entrance is low so that everyone must bow to the Lord born here. That wouldn't have been a bad reason either."

Then Father Phil and Father DiOrio bend head and shoulders to enter the basilica. The pilgrims follow. This is the oldest existing Christian church. But during its lifetime, this monument to the divine nativity has been damaged by fire, neglect, and vandalism. In 614, it was spared by the Persians who had overrun Palestine when they saw the mosaic depicting the visit of the Magi inside. The three wise men were costumed in Persian garb.

Through the long, darkened nave built by Justinian, the pilgrims follow their guide. Huge columns built by Justinian's men, ornamented later by the Crusaders, flank the central aisle. Perhaps the shepherds had also once walked this ground . . .

"You know," suggests Father Phil, turning once again to face the pilgrims, "Joseph would have known this town pretty well when he and Mary came here because of the census. He probably tried to find

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lodging first at the caravansary here in Bethlehem. That was a sort of inn which had a huge, enclosed central court where stock could be left without their wandering off. When that was filled, someone might have suggested an unused grotto to Joseph."

These grottoes, as the pilgrims had learned in Air Karem and Nazareth, were often parts of dwellings. This one in which the couple might have finally taken refuge may have been temporarily unused by the family. Perhaps it was being used to store fodder for stock. The region of Bethlehem was known for its agricultural productivity. In fact, "Bethlehem" means "House of Bread."

Father Phil now leads the way down two flights of steps to the crypt and the Grotto of the Nativity. There, Mass is being celebrated at a small altar by the Greek Orthodox, who has custody of the basilica. As priests of the Latin Rite, Father DiOrio and Father Phil could only celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist at two locations in the basilica. And upstairs, adjacent to the basilica, there is the Latin Church, Saint Catherine's. Father DiOrio kneels down to pray with the look of someone who would love to stay forever. Is this about the place where the shepherds did the same?

The shepherds may not have been fully aware that the Messiah's coming had been promised to Bethlehem. The clearest prophecy had come from Micah. He wrote eight hundred years before Christ:

"But you, (Bethlehem) Ephrathah,
The least of the clans of Judah,
Out of you will be born for me
The one who is to rule over Israel;
His origin goes back to the distant past,
To the days of old". (Micah 5:1-2)

The grotto into which the shepherds may have looked with wonder measures about forty feet by ten feet. A silver star set into the white marble floor marks the reputed place of his birth. Toward one end of the grotto is a cistern. Here, legend has it, the miraculous star fell into the cistern once the star's work was done. However, it was said, that the pure of heart could still see the mysterious star if they looked down into it.

But the crush of pilgrims trying to see even the opening to the Nativity grotto is now as heavy as ever. To make room, the DiOrio pilgrims make their way back up the steps to view the adjoining Saint Catherine's Church for a few moments. They also view the cave where Saint Jerome lived in the fourth century. He had come to the Holy Land to be close to the sacred. After years of studying languages, he

translated the Old Testament from the original Hebrew into Latin—a colossal contribution to the young Church already headquartered in Rome.

Then, it is out to the square to the surrounding shops and then back down Bethlehem's hills to a small round church where Father DiOrio will celebrate a midday Mass.

"Don't get lost in the peripheral, in the material things," Father DiOrio had warned his pilgrims earlier. "Don't be a tourist if you were meant to be a pilgrim. A pilgrimage is not a wandering but a positive search, a search for self in order to find Jesus. That sounds like a paradox, I know, but there is truth in it."

It's true that pilgrims need to keep this in mind. There is the ever present "temptation" here in the Holy Land (and in many other places) to get lost in consumerism at the expense of finding Jesus. Here in Bethlehem, where the King of Kings was born in the humblest of settings, the selling of tourist items provides the community's principal income.

Beautiful olive wood nativity sets, brass trays, mother-of-pearl jewelry and carvings are featured in the shops which border Manager Square. Sometimes vendors of postcards or smaller items even follow pilgrims, making the "hard sell." But there are genuinely good buys to be had and handsome and unique items available all over the Holy Land. Shop owners and the "never-give-up" street vendors are not to be faulted if pilgrims become merely tourists here. Each pilgrim finds what he or she is truly seeking. Or as Father DiOrio puts it, "We go as far as our prayer."

When the pilgrims are back on the buses, the vehicles pivot in the square and head back down the hill to the church at Shepherd's Field. In contrast to the church they have just left, this church is about thirty years old, having been put up over the ruins of a monastery. In shape, it looks like a nomad's tent. Inside, pilgrims cluster around an altar, the center of which is supported by four bronze angels. Mass begins inside the "nomad's tent."

"Angels bringing the news of the birth of Jesus didn't come to the priests in Jerusalem," Father DiOrio tells his pilgrims here in Bethlehem's Shepherds' Field. They were too busy about religion. And they didn't come to King Herod. He was too busy trying to run the world.

"The news came to shepherds, the poorest of the poor, the migrant workers on these slopes. In their night vigils and prayers, they prayed about the simple

things, the things closest to them—the sheep. They watched the miracle of the lambs being born. And they watched the stars. They had never lost their wonder at creation. They could see God in all that.

"So God took them from the miracles that they could see and touch to something they could 'see' but not touch. They saw a new kind of miracle—God becoming man.

"We've got to be like those shepherds. Are you able to see miracles, ready to see God in the things and people closest to you? Is there harmony around you? If so, angels are appearing to us all the time saying, 'I want to introduce you to Jesus.' That's the message of Bethlehem."

In the middle of August, with the mercury pushing into the eighties, the DiOrio pilgrimage continues to celebrate the Nativity here in the way Christians find most meaningful. At Communion time and after the liturgy is concluded, "The First Noel" and "Angels We Have Heard on High" echo over the hills that gave these songs their setting.

(from "TRIUMPH OF THE HEART" Christmas
Edition 1996)

THE BIRTH AT BETHLEHEM

As guardian of the mystery "hidden for ages in the mind of God," which begins to unfold before his eyes "in the fullness of time," Joseph, together with Mary, is a privileged witness to the birth of the Son of God into the world on Christmas night in Bethlehem. Luke writes: "And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Lk. 2:6-7).

Joseph was an eyewitness to this birth, which took place in conditions that, humanly speaking, were embarrassing—a first announcement of that "self-emptying" (cf. Phil. 2:5-8) which Christ freely accepted for the forgiveness of sins. Joseph also witnessed the adoration of the shepherds who arrived at Jesus' birthplace after the angel had brought them the great and happy news (cf. Lk. 2:15-16). Later he also witnessed the homage of the Magi who came from the East (cf. Mt. 2:11).

(from "THE MARY BOOK—THE MOTHER OF
EVANGELISM" by Father Robert Fox)

THE GIVING TREE

A genuine gift involves an authentic giving of self. Such a bestowal can take place in any number of ways: through an actual material gift, through a simple exchange of words (be they written or spoken), by spending time with another, by listening to him or her, by simply being present to another person. However it is done, what is important is that the other person's interests be placed squarely before one's own. The scope of this self-giving can range anywhere from the most trivial details of life to the most dramatic. One is limited only by one's imagination and by how far one is willing to go in the act of self-giving.

The children's best seller, *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein gets this message across in typical storybook fashion. It follows the life of a young boy, whose friendship with a tree brings him many blessings throughout his long, worrisome life. In his carefree youth, the tree invites him to play in her leaves, to climb in her branches, to rest in her shade, and to eat of her fruit. When he is a young man and in need of money, she invites him to gather all of her apples and sell them in the city. When he has reached maturity and has a wife and children to support, she invites him to cut down her branches and use them to build a home for his family. Years later, when he dreams of traveling to far away places, she tells him to cut down her trunk and to make a boat so that he can sail far, far away. Finally, in his old age, when he is all alone with nothing to do and with no one to talk to she invites him to sit down on her useless old stump and rest his weary bones. Throughout her life, the tree thinks of nothing else but the welfare of the boy. She is willing to sacrifice her own well-being for that of her friend—even to the point of death. Even then, she still seeks a way to comfort her friend. The final words of the story describe her feelings best: "...and the tree was happy."

Few stories capture the meaning of love and friendship with such depth and childlike simplicity. Few portray in so vivid a manner the extent to which some are willing to go for those they deeply care for and are concerned about. Few bring to life with such vigor the underlying sense of the well-known Gospel adage: "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13). For this reason, it would not be at all far-fetched to suggest that the story of the giving tree resembles closely the way of the cross. As Jesus himself asserts: "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16:25).

A DREAM OF CHRISTMAS EVE

It was the night before Christmas, all quiet and nice;
The house was glittering like a little Paradise.
The children were asleep, tucked in their beds,
With dreams of sugar plums and angels over their heads.
Suddenly there was a strange clutter on the roof's icy top
As Santa brought his reindeer to a stop.
Quickly down the chimney he leaped with a bound,
And tip-toed in the house without a sound.
While moving from left to right foot,
Santa brushed from his suit the chimney soot.
Then he took from his back the empty sack;
And with a sigh, said: "My! Oh my!"
Poor Santa didn't know what to do—
For he had forgotten good Joey and Sue!
As he began resting his head on the table,
He looked up and saw the Stable!
There was a big ox, and sheep that were small;
And a donkey stuck his head inside the stall.
While in the center was the most beautiful sigh
The little Baby Jesus, all glowing and bright!
His Mother Mary and Joseph knelt in awe,
Adoring the Divine Infant on His bed of straw.
Shepherds in bright-eyed wonder gazed;
While angels with heavenly music praised.
Santa knelt, and asked what he should do;
Because he had forgotten poor Joey and Sue.
Mother Mary turned, and looked over the stall,
And asked Saint Joseph to get out the awl.
Many other tools, her took out too;
Santa was amazed at what Saint Joseph began to do!
Then Mary asked the angels to bow their heads;
From them she took beautiful sewing threads.
Touching their soft long colorful robes,
Mother Mary began sewing some clothes.
Looking at Saint Joseph, Santa almost went dumb,
When he saw him finish making a drum!
The ox bent low, asking Mary to take a horn from his

head;
And make with it one that would "Toot" toots instead.
The donkey brayed that Mary pull some of his hair,
To make paint brushes which give good wear.
The lambs crept close to Mary and offered their wool,
For warm mittens and help get the stockings full.
Santa was speechless at the whole sight;
And his jolly red face smiled with delight!
Angels gathered 'round him in his daze,
And began to sing their Christmas Lays.
The tears rolled down Santa's old face,
As he tried to thank Mary for all the grace.
He wanted to say "Thank you," to all in the Stable;
But the more he tried, the less he was able!
The rays from the star sent out a warm glow,
As Santa knelt before Jesus and bowed low.
After praying, his heart nearly burst with bliss;
When Mother Mary gave Jesus for Santa to kiss!
Heavenly songs 'round him, and bells did ring;
All telling it was the birthday of Christ the King!
Giving a last glance and the love of his heart,
Santa unwillingly began to depart.
He had to hurry and get on his way;
Because night was turning fast into day.
As he climbed on his sleigh, patting the reindeer,
Santa cried out:
"God bless all,
with a Mary-Christmas!!
and a Holy New Year!!!
(**"THE MARYFAITHFUL" Nov./Dec. 1990**)

THE CHRISTMAS ROSE

On that Holy Night the shepherds said to each other, "Come, let us go to **Bethlehem** and see this thing which has taken place!" So they went in haste, each one bringing a gift: butter and honey, a pitcher of milk, sheep's wool, and a warm lambskin. But one shepherd boy had nothing to give.
He searched the winter field, hoping to find a flower. But he found nothing. He then began to cry, his tears falling upon the hard ground. And from these tears, flowers immediately sprouted with blossoms resembling roses.

Five petals, delicate and white, form a cup, from

which shines forth a wreath of golden stamens in the form of a little crown. With great joy, the boy picked the flowers and brought them to the Divine Child in the manger.

Since that time these flowers bloom every year in the Christmas season, and therefore they received the name "Christmas rose."

(from *An Austrian folk-Tale* in "TRIUMPH of the HEART" Christmas Edition 1996 - Issue #2)

PILGRIMS of FAITH MARIAN CENTER (PFMC)

We are not a store. We operate like a church pamphlet or bookrack where you make selections and offer a donation based on value posted or received. See the enclosed four-page order form for a partial listing of items that can be obtained from the PFMC through donations. We carry these items because of requests from pilgrims and other readers of "The PILGRIM." If you wish to order, please fill out your order request, make out a check or complete the information for use of a credit card and mail to PFMC, 61 Cooper Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043-4896.

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The PFMC is a lay Ministry made up of dedicated Roman Catholics. It is totally dependent upon financial donations. Every person working in the PFMC is a volunteer for Our Lady's work of converting souls to her Son, Jesus.

The PFMC is 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, Bible Study, Rosary making, books, and religious articles.

Enclosed is a donation slip and envelope for you to use. We rely on Divine Providence.

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.

You are the hands of Jesus and Our Lady. Your help is important. 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 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 or "The PILGRIM," please call us at 856-768-9228 and give us your phone number and name.

We want to keep the PFMC open from 10 AM to 5 PM daily. In order to do this we need a solid list of volunteers we can count on to meet their scheduled times.

We need regular daily or weekly help and help once a month – whatever you can give. We will give you a good orientation, and make use of the gifts that God has given you.

Please come and see the new PFMC. We know you will enjoy what you see and find a way of helping out.

Thank you and God bless you,

Kathleen and the Volunteer Staff

RECURRING EVENTS HELD in the GREAT ROOM at EPIPHANY HOUSE of the PFMC:

**BIBLE STUDY - "TYPOLOGY" with
PETER DAWSON - 1st and 3rd
MONDAY'S at 7:30 PM**

**7 PM to 9 PM WEDNESDAY NIGHT
SEMINARS on the HISTORY and
DEVELOPMENT of CHRIST'S
DIVINELY ESTABLISHED CHURCH**

**PRAYER GROUP every THURSDAY
from 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM.**

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The PFMC phone system at Epiphany House has been set up so that all previously used numbers ring through Epiphany House.

When no one is at Epiphany House (856) 768-9228 and (856) 753-9252 ring over to new phone lines at 129 Deerfield Avenue.

When the ring through is active because no one is picking up before 4 rings at Epiphany House, some extra rings will be heard before you can leave a message.

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BOOKS NEEDED for OUR LIBRARY



We are seeking OLD books on Our Lady, on the Eucharist, Priesthood, Sacraments and Holy Mass for our library.

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

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Would you be so kind as to copy or cut out one or more of following BULLETIN NOTICES and take them to your Pastor and / or Parish Bulletin Coordinator?

Ask them to publish these notices to support the events for which you have an interest. It does wonders when a parishioner asks for a bulletin notice as compared to the thousands of requests that come in from outside the parish.

If you can work with us to promote devotion to Jesus through Mary in your parish, please contact us and we will assist you in any way we can.

We are always looking for Parish representatives to join with the nationwide organization called Medjugorje in America, which exists on a network of regional, diocesan, area, and parish representatives.

Thanks for your assistance, we really need and appreciate it.

Please copy or cut out any one or more of the following BULLETIN NOTICES:

BIBLE STUDY - "TYPOLOGY" with PETER DAWSON - 1st and 3rd MONDAY'S at 7:30 PM

Bible study using "TYPOLOGY" as discussed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and lead by Peter Dawson will be held in the Great Room at Epiphany House of the Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC) on the 1st and 3rd Mondays.

Call 856-768-9228 for information or directions.

7 PM to 9 PM WEDNESDAY NIGHT SEMINARS on the HISTORY and DEVELOPMENT of CHRIST'S DIVINELY ESTABLISHED CHURCH

Dean Pulcini will be teaching a course called "DEFENDING YOUR FAITH" which will offer a basic Orthodox understanding of the Catholic faith in comparison to and contrasted with Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

The Wednesday evening programs from 7 PM to 9 PM will be held in the Great Room at Epiphany House of the Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC).

Call 856-768-9228 for information or directions.

PRAYER GROUP

Meets in the Great Room at Epiphany House of the PFMC every Thursday from 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM. All are invited.

Call 856-768-9228 for information or directions.

PFMC 2001 RETREAT CONFERENCE

“IF I BUT TOUCH HIS CLOTHES, I SHALL BE CURED” (Mk 5:28)

Reserve the weekend of February 23rd, 24th and 25th 2001 for the Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC) 2001 RETREAT CONFERENCE at the Four Points Hotel in Cherry Hill, NJ 08034. The main speaker will be Father John Hampsch, C.M.F. Doctor Junie and Mrs. Sarah Irizari who gave up their respective careers in the Philippines to evangelize their Roman Catholic Faith will introduce Saturday night's Healing Service. The 3-day extension on the Healing Gifts of the Holy Spirit will feature Father Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J.

For a GOLD information sheet with registration form, call the PFMC at 856-768-9228 or visit the PFMC web site at:

<http://www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith>

Please make ROOM RESERVATIONS NOW on the list with the Four Points Hotel, 1-800-325-3535.

Please pre-register for the 2001 PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE with the PFMC as soon as you receive a GOLD information sheet with registration form.

Thanks again for your efforts with BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS on behalf of PFMC AREA EVENTS.

Kathleen as well as all the PFMC Volunteer Staff

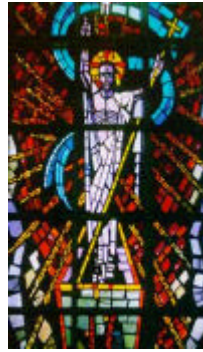
MARIAN SHRINE or PILGRIMAGE PRESENTATIONS

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NAZARETH HOUSE



A place of discernment and formation for men aspiring to priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, Nazareth House is located on the campus of Camden Catholic High School in Cherry Hill. The Diocese of Camden has begun a new formation program to help young men investigate whether God is calling them to priestly formation.

A man's vocation is a mystery that needs to be challenged, investigated and above all, given to prayer. The true calling originates with God and is up to each man to be willing to listen to the Lord and answer with trust. Although vocation is often seen as a personal decision, a religious vocation is always discerned in the context of the Church community. The man who is discerning his path in life should be entrusting himself to the Holy Spirit for guidance and must be open to competent people whom God uses to aid a man in hearing that voice within his soul.

The mission of Nazareth House is to assist young men between the ages of 18-35 in the discernment and development of the seeds of a priestly vocation. The staff will provide them with the foundation for seminary theologate formation, through a shared community life of prayer and worship; human, spiritual and intellectual development; and pastoral service.

Men who want to investigate whether God is calling them into priestly formation will have the opportunity to live the structured life of the seminarian. Without the full commitment of enrolling in a Seminary, a discernment student will share the formation community life for one academic year from mid-August until the end of May. During this time of human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation, the man would decide if he should apply to his sponsoring diocese to be considered as a seminarian.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR APPLICATION MATERIALS, CONTACT:

Father Joseph Szolack, szolack@camdendiocese.org
Director of Vocations, Diocese of Camden

PRAYER for VOCATIONS

Heavenly Father, your divine Son taught us to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His vineyard. We earnestly beg You to bless our Diocese and our world with many priests and religious who will love You fervently, and gladly and courageously spend their lives in service to Your Son's Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We pray that their lives may be always centered on our Eucharistic Lord, and that they may be devoted sons and daughters of Mary, our mother, in making You known and loved that all may attain Heaven. Bless our families and our children and choose from our homes those whom You desire for this holy work. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

(from Nazareth House brochure)

PRAYER for VOCATIONS

Heavenly Father, bless Your Church with an abundance of holy and zealous priests, deacons, brothers and sisters. Give those You have called to the married state and those You have chosen to live as single persons in the world, the special graces that their lives require. Form us all in the likeness of Your Son so that in Him, with Him and through Him we may love You more deeply and serve You more faithfully, always and everywhere. With Mary we ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Card 1874-a, Vocations Committee – Supreme Council, Knights of Columbus [K of C])

PRAYER to KNOW ONE'S VOCATION – K of C

Lord Jesus, up until now you have been quietly preparing me to be your disciple. Now the time of preparation is ending. I seem to hear you say to me as once to Peter: "Will you also go away?" You were saddened then by friends who failed you. But Peter did not fail. "Lord," he said, "to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

I stand with Peter. Through prayer and counsel, show me, Lord, where it is in your vineyard that you want me to serve. Then give me strength to be faithful.

Mary, Mother and Model, help me to respond in generous love to the call of your Divine Son.

(Card 1874-a, Vocations Committee – Supreme Council, Knights of Columbus [K of C])

PRAYER for VOCATIONS - Pope John Paul II

Holy Spirit . . .
It is You who open the heart and the mind to the Divine Call;

it is You who make effective every impetus

toward good, toward truth, toward charity . . .

Open the hearts and minds of men,

so that a new flowering of vocations may show forth

the fidelity of your love, and all may know Christ,

the true light come into the world,

to offer to every human being,

the sure hope of eternal life. Amen.

(from Card, ©1999, NCCV, 1-800-671-NCCV)

A LOVE STORY

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the church's pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and, before he gave his sermon for the evening, briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening.

In the introduction, the pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest friends, and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the church and share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service.

With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak, "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific Coast," he began, "when a fast approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high, that even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright, and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized."

The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat

interested in his story. The aged minister continued with his story, "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life ... to which boy he would throw the other end of the life line. He only had seconds to make the decision.

The father knew that his son was a Christian and he also knew that his son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of waves. As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!' he threw out the life-line to his son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered."

By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister's mouth. "The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus, and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son's friend. How great is the love of God that He should do the same for us. Our heavenly Father sacrificed His only begotten Son that we could be saved. I urge you to accept His offer to rescue you and take hold of the life line He is throwing out to you in this service."

With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair as silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end.

However, no one responded to the appeal. Within minutes after the service ended, the two teenagers were at the old man's side.

"That was a nice story," politely stated one of the boys, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."

"Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face, and he once again looked up at the boys and said, "It sure isn't very realistic, is it?"

"But I'm standing here today to tell you that THAT story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His Son for me. You see...I was that father and your pastor is my son's friend."

(source unknown)

THE DIVINITY OF MARRIAGE

In the liturgy, Mary is celebrated as "united to Joseph, the just man, by a bond of marital and virginal love." There are really two kinds of love here, both of which together represent the mystery of the church—virgin and spouse—as symbolized in the marriage of Mary and Joseph. "Virginity or celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God not only does not contradict the dignity of marriage but presupposes and confirms it. Marriage and virginity are two ways of expressing and living the one mystery of the covenant of God with his people," the covenant which is a communion of love between God and human beings.

Through his complete self-sacrifice, Joseph expressed his generous love for the mother of God, and gave her a husband's "gift of self." Even though he decided to draw back so as not to interfere in the plan of God which was coming to pass in Mary, Joseph obeyed the explicit command of the angel and took Mary into his home, while respecting the fact that she belonged exclusively to God.

On the other hand, it was from his marriage to Mary that Joseph derived his singular dignity and his rights in regard to Jesus. "It is certain that the dignity of the mother of God is so exalted that nothing could be more sublime, yet because Mary was united to Joseph by the bond of marriage, there can be no doubt but that Joseph approached as no other person every could that eminent dignity whereby the mother of God towers above all creatures.

Since marriage is the highest degree of association and friendship, involving by its very nature a communion of goods, it follows that God, by giving Joseph to the virgin, did not give him to her only as a companion for life, a witness of her virginity and protector of her honor: He also gave Joseph to Mary in order that he might share, through the marriage pact, in her own sublime greatness.

This bond of charity was the core of the Holy Family's life, first in the poverty of Bethlehem, then in their exile in Egypt and later in the house of Nazareth. The church deeply venerates this family, and proposes it as the model of all families. Inserted directly in the mystery of the incarnation, the family of Nazareth has its own special mystery. And in this mystery, as in the incarnation, one finds a true fatherhood: the human form of the family of the Son of God, a true human family, formed by the divine mystery. In this family, Joseph is the father: His fatherhood is not one that

derives from begetting offspring, but neither is it an “apparent” or merely “substitute” fatherhood.

Rather, it is one that fully shares in authentic human fatherhood and the mission of a father in the family. This is a consequence of the hypostatic union: humanity taken up into the unity of the divine person of the Word-Son, Jesus Christ. Together with human nature, all that is human and especially the family—as the first dimension of man’s existence in the world—is also taken up in Christ. Within this context, Joseph’s human fatherhood was also “taken up” in the mystery of Christ’s incarnation.

On this basis of this principle, the words that Mary spoke to the 12-year-old Jesus in the temple take on their full significance: “Your father and I...have been looking for you.” This is no conventional phrase: Mary’s words to Jesus show the complete reality of the incarnation present in the mystery of the family of Nazareth. From the beginning, Joseph accepted with the “obedience of faith” his human fatherhood over Jesus. And thus, following the light of the Holy Spirit who gives himself to human beings through faith, he certainly came to discover ever more fully the indescribable gift that was his human fatherhood.

The Census

Journeying to Bethlehem for the census in obedience to the orders of legitimate authority, Joseph fulfilled for the child the significant task of officially inserting the name “Jesus, son of Joseph of Nazareth” (cf. Jn. 1:45) in the registry of the Roman Empire. This registration clearly shows that Jesus belongs to the human race as a man among men, a citizen of this world, subject to laws and civil institutions, but also “savior of the world.”

Origen gives a good description of the theological significance, by no means marginal, of this historical fact: “Since the first census of the whole world took place under Caesar Augustus, and among all the others Joseph too went to register together with Mary his wife, who was with child, and since Jesus was born before the census was completed: To the person who makes a careful examination it will appear that a kind of mystery is expressed in the fact that at the time when all people in the world presented themselves to be counted, Christ too should be counted.

“By being registered with everyone, he could sanctify everyone. Inscribed with the whole world in the census, he offered to the world communion with himself, and after presenting himself he wrote all the

people of the world in the book of the living, so that as many believed in him could then be written in heaven and with the saints of God, to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

(from “THE MARY BOOK—THE MOTHER OF EVANGELISM” by Father Robert Fox)

LOVING MOTHER of the REDEEMER

*L*oving mother of the Redeemer, gate of heaven, star of the sea, assist your people who have fallen yet strive to rise again.

To the wonderment of nature you bore your Creator, yet remained a virgin after as before. You who received Gabriel’s joyful greeting, have pity on us poor sinners.

Amen

(from “LAY WITNESS” May 1997, Vol. 18, No. 4)

JOSEPH and MARY’S MATERNITY

If, after her marriage to Joseph, Mary “is found to be with child of the Holy Spirit,” this fact corresponds to all that the annunciation means, in particular to Mary’s final words: “Let it be done unto me according to your word” (Lk. 1:38). In response to what is clearly the plan of God, with the passing of days and weeks Mary’s “pregnancy” is visible to the people and to Joseph; she appears before them as one who must give birth and carry within herself the mystery of motherhood.

In these circumstances, “her husband, Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly” (Mt. 1:19). He did not know how to deal with Mary’s “astonishing” motherhood. He certainly sought an answer to this unsettling question, but above all he sought a way out of what was for him a difficult situation. “But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’” (Mt. 1:20-21).

There is a strict parallel between the “annunciation” in Matthew’s text and the one in Luke. The divine messenger introduces Joseph to the mystery of Mary’s

motherhood. While remaining a virgin, she who by law is his “spouse” has become a mother through the power of the Holy Spirit. And when the son in Mary’s womb comes into the world, he must receive the name Jesus. This was a name known among the Israelites and sometimes given to their sons. In this case, however, it is the son who, in accordance with the divine promise, will bring to perfect fulfillment the meaning of the name Jesus—Yehousua—which means “God saves.”

Joseph is visited by messenger as “Mary’s spouse,” as the one who in due time must give this name to the son to be born of the Virgin of Nazareth, who is married to him. It is to Joseph, then, that the messenger turns, entrusting to him the responsibilities of an earthly father with regard to Mary’s son.

“When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife” (cf. Mt. 1:24). He took her in all the mystery of her motherhood. He took her together with the son who had come into the world by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way he showed a readiness of will like Mary’s with regard to what God asked of him through the angel.

(from “**THE MARY BOOK—THE MOTHER OF EVANGELISM**” by Father Robert Fox)

THE MYSTICAL TRANSFORMATION of the MAGI

The mystery of the Epiphany--which means “manifestation” -- begins by manifesting something about ourselves. Like the “astrologers” in today’s Gospel, it is not enough for us merely to know that Jesus is alive and living in the world as a human being. That information alone does not satisfy us. The Epiphany manifests our deepest, God-given desire to enter into the presence of Jesus. Our passive knowledge of the Incarnation comes to perfection in our active, personal experience of that miracle.

The astrologers manifest to us the sanctified way to respond to the gift of Christmas. It begins by putting Jesus first and making union with Him their main priority. If the astrologers had been totally self-absorbed, pre-occupied with their own affairs and ambitions, they never would have “observed His star at its rising.” Instead, their alertness and sensitivity moves them to leave their lives behind for a while and

follow the star. It is as if the astrologers already realize that their old life was devoid of meaning as they personally embrace the Incarnate Christ who reveals the very meaning of human existence to men and women.

This experience cannot happen simply in our thoughts, desires, and imaginings. Rather, like the magi, we must actually see Jesus. What the Lord manifests to us on the Epiphany must become the new focus of our life. And the star provides the light to gain that sight.

However, being in the presence of Jesus elicits something special from us. As the infant Jesus is presented to the astrologers by Mary his Mother, they are moved to worship. As they report to **King Herod** and all **Jerusalem**, this is their main motivation, purpose, and goal: they “have come to pay him homage.” Matthew informs us that, at this news, they all “became greatly disturbed.” The homage of the astrologers threatened their own security, authority and sense of self-importance; sometimes our own reluctance to pray and to stand humbly before God is tainted with these same fears.

The magi manifest to us the true glory and joy of humbly adoring God. As so many great sacred artists have depicted, the act of physical prostration puts the magi on the same level of Jesus in the arms of Mary. Ironically, our own humble worship spiritually puts us there as well. It disposes us to receive the justifying graces and the love of friendship that come to us from Jesus through Mary. As we spiritually offer our own gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, we in turn receive the benefits of Christ’s divinity, priesthood, and self-sacrifice as symbolized by the gifts.

Finally, the sacred encounter with the Holy Family changes the astrologers. They leave the house transformed. Mystically enlightened by God, the wise men go home “by another route.” That new route is The Way, Jesus, who in the Epiphany gives our life new direction, meaning and value. The Epiphany enables us to see in ourselves the beauty and goodness of God, which was are called to respond to with the fervent love that characterizes the new way of our life.

(from “**THE MARY BOOK—THE MOTHER OF EVANGELISM**” by Father Robert Fox)

SUGGESTIONS for LAST MINUTE GIFT GIVERS

Want to give the perfect gift? --- something that won't cost you anything! A gift that, GUARANTEED, will:

be appreciated,	be beautiful,
be contagious,	be dust-free,
be exceptional,	be fit-for-a-King,
be great,	be hoped-for,
be inexpensive,	be just-right,
be kind,	be long-lasting,
be memorable,	be non-returnable,
be opened with LOVE,	be perfect,
be quiet,	be right-on,
be suitable,	be tax-free,
be used,	be victorious,
be wonderful,	
be exceptional, yearned for, and zeroed-in-on!	
but -- it <i>MUST</i> come from your <i>HEART</i> !	

Your gift -- Give all those people you meet, during this Christmas season, a piece of paper and a small envelope and have them give *Jesus* a birthday present instantly.

Their gift -- They can write something down (not petitions) that they will do for Him (over and above their already good deeds) whether it be as short as reciting an extra Glory-Be over the Christmas season, not eating in between meals for a day, promising a visit to Eucharistic Adoration in the future, etc. Have them place it in the envelope, seal it, and give it back to you. Now you have a wrapped gift to place at your Manger Scene so that *Jesus* will have presents, too!

If everyone does this, look at the gifts that will be in each and every home this Christmas for *Him*.

--- O COME LET US ADORE HIM ---

(from "Anonymous")

MY CHRISTMAS GIFT TO JESUS

I have many things, they all come from Thee
I want to give one back, it's from inside of me
What I want to give is my cold heart
Please place it in Thine, never to part
Take it and warm it in the Heavenly Flame
Of the furnace of Thy Sacred Heart, this heart that's the same
One that was pierced out of love for mankind
Let it enter Thy side, travel to Thy Heart, let it find

The PILGRIM

This ocean of Mercy and Love, to melt in its fire
Never to be separated from Thy Sacred Heart is my desire

I ask my Heavenly Mother to wrap my heart with care
Under the Heavenly Christmas Tree, please place it there

With a little tag saying, "from Mother to Son,

There are many hearts that love Me, inside you'll find one."

P. Pio

THE BURNING BABE - A CHRISTMAS POEM

As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow

Surprised I was with sudden heat which made my heart to glow;

And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,

A pretty Babe all burning bright did in the air appear:

Who, scorched with excessive heat, such floods of tears did shed

As though his floods should quench his flames which with his tears were fed.

"Alas!" quoth he, "but newly born, in fiery heats I fry,

Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I!

My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns,

Love is the fire, and signs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns;

The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals,

The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls,

For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their good,

So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood."

With this he banish'd out of sight and swiftly shrunk away,

And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas day.

(by Blessed Robert Southwell, S.J.)

THE GIFT BEHIND THE GIFT

An old proverb summarizes this popular sentiment about giving a few, short, easy to remember words: “It is the thought that counts.” Unfortunately, the truth of this statement is so obvious that few people take it seriously anymore. Our society has become so fixated on material wealth as the accepted expression of who and what we are that we have lost our ability to appreciate the spiritual dimension of the gifts we give and receive. We are no longer able (or willing) to recognize the gift behind the gift.

Probably nowhere is the true spirit of giving expressed more clearly than in O. Henry’s celebrated short story, **‘THE GIFT OF THE MAGI.’** Set in Manhattan during the early years of the present century, it tells the story of a young couple whose love for one another is so deep that it brings them to sacrifice their most cherished possessions for the sake of the other. At the outset, the couple is described as hard working, but struggling, with little money to spare for any of the typical holiday cheer. As Christmas approaches, each one wonders privately what he or she can give to the other as a gift. The husband has nothing of any worth but a gold watch that had been his father’s and grandfather’s; the wife, nothing but her long, beautiful hair. As the tale unfolds, each goes off separately and sells what little he or she has in order to buy an expensive set of combs for his wife; the wife cuts her hair and sells it in order to buy a platinum fob chain for her husband’s watch. In the end, the couple is much worse off materially than at the beginning: the husband has a chain without a watch; the wife has a set of combs with very little hair to take care of. From a spiritual perspective, however, they are much closer than ever before. Each realized what the other has sacrificed in order to make the other one happy. Each recognizes the gift of self behind the actual material gift that was given. The platinum chain and the combs become symbols of their love for one another and help them to understand the true meaning of giving. Both are grateful for their gifts and together celebrate Christmas in a way they never had before.

More than anything else, O. Henry’s story highlights the character of reciprocity involved in the giving and receiving of gifts. A good deal of thought goes into each present and, even though neither turns out to be very appropriate at the time, each is a true measure of the deep love they share. In one sense, neither could have given the other a better gift. Both the watch chain and the hair comb represent the uncommon degree of self-sacrifice each is willing to make for the happiness of the other.

(from “Even Today - Theology and the Inner Child” by Father Dennis Billy, CSSR)

ANGEL ON A DOORSTEP - RIGHTING A WRONG with A GIFT

When Ben delivered milk to my cousin’s home that morning, he wasn’t his usual sunny self. The slight, middle-aged man seemed in no mood for talking.

It was late November 1962, and as a newcomer to Lawndale, Calif., I was delighted that milkmen still brought bottles of milk to doorsteps. In the weeks that my husband, kids and I had been staying with my cousin while house-hunting, I had come to enjoy Ben’s jovial repartee.

Today, however, he was the epitome of gloom as he dropped off his wares from his wire carrier. It took slow, careful questioning to extract the story from him. With some embarrassment, he told me two customers had left town without paying their bills, and he would have to cover the losses. One of the debtors owed only \$10, but the other was \$79 in arrears and had left no forwarding address. Ben was distraught at his stupidity for allowing this bill to grow so large.

“She was a pretty woman,” he said, “with six children and another on the way. She was always saying, ‘I’m going to pay you soon, when my husband gets a second job.’ I believed her. What a fool I was! I thought I was doing a good thing, but I’ve learned my lesson. I’ve been had!”

All I could say was, “I’m so sorry.”

The next time I saw him, his anger seemed worse. He bristled as he talked about the messy young ones who had drunk up all his milk. The charming family had turned into a parcel of brats.

I repeated my condolences and let the matter rest. But when Ben left, I found myself caught up in his problem and longed to help. Worried that this incident would sour a warm person, I mulled over what to do. Then, remembering that Christmas was coming, I thought of what my grandmother used to say: “When someone has taken from you, give it to them, and then you can never be robbed.”

The next time Ben delivered milk I told him I had a way to make him feel better about the \$79.

“Nothing will do that,” he said, “but tell me anyway.”

“Give the woman the milk. Make it a Christmas present to the kids who needed it.”

“Are you kidding?” he replied. “I don’t even get my wife a Christmas gift that expensive.”

"You know the Bible says, 'I was a stranger and you took me in.' You just took her in with all her little children."

"Don't you mean she took *me* in? The trouble with you is, it wasn't *your* \$79."

I let the subject drop, but I still believed in my suggestion.

We'd joke about it when he'd come. "Have you given her the milk yet." I'd say.

"No," he'd snap back, "but I'm thinking of giving my wife a \$79 present, unless another pretty mother starts playing on my sympathies."

Every time I'd ask the question, it seemed he lightened up a bit more.

Then, six days before Christmas, it happened. He arrived with a tremendous smile and a glint in his eyes. "I did it!" he said. "I gave her the milk as a Christmas present. It wasn't easy, but what did I have to lose? It was gone, wasn't it?"

"Yes," I said, rejoicing with him. "But you've got to really mean it in your heart."

"I know. I do. And I really feel better. That's why I have this good feeling about Christmas. Those kids had lots of milk on their cereal just because of me."

The holidays came and went. On a sunny January morning two weeks later, Ben almost ran up the walk. "Wait till you hear this," he said, grinning.

He explained he had been on a different route, covering for another milkman. He heard his name being called, looked over his shoulder and saw a woman running down the street, waiving money. He recognized her immediately—the woman with all the kids, the one who didn't pay her bill. She was carrying an infant in a tiny blanket, and the woman's long brown hair kept getting in her eyes.

"Ben, wait a minute!" she shouted. "I've got money for you."

Ben stopped the truck and got out.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "I really have been meaning to pay you." She explained that her husband had come home one night and announced he'd found a cheaper apartment. He'd also gotten a night job. With all that had happened, she'd forgotten to leave a forwarding address. "But I've been saving," she said. "Here's \$20 toward the bill."

"That's all right," Ben replied. "It's been paid."

"Paid!" she exclaimed. "What do you mean? Who paid it?"

"I did."

She looked at him as if he were the Angel Gabriel and

started to cry.

"Well," I asked, "what did you do?"

"I didn't know what to do, so I put an arm around her. Before I knew what was happening, I started to cry, and I didn't have the foggiest idea what I was crying about. Then I thought of all those kids having milk on their cereal, and you know what? I was really glad you talked me into this."

"You didn't take the \$20?"

"Heck no," he replied indignantly. "I gave her the milk as a Christmas present, didn't I?"

(by Shirley Bachelder, *READER'S DIGEST*,
December, 1992)

HUMOR CORNER: IF THERE HAD BEEN THREE WISE WOMEN!

Do you know what would have happened if it had been Three Wise Women instead of three Wise Men?

They would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, and brought practical gifts.

(Unknown)

THE TABLECLOTH

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve. They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc. and on Dec 18 were ahead of schedule and just about finished. On Dec. 19 a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm - hit the area for days. On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high. The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, he headed home.

On the way he noticed that a local business a flea market type sale for charity so he stopped in. One of items was beautiful, handmade, ivory colored,

crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a Cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry.

The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area. Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?" The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria. The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten the Tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. She was captured, sent to prison and never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for church. The pastor insisted on driving her home, that was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job. What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return.

One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood, continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving. The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike? He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety, and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the

woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

(True Story - submitted by Pastor Rob -
d.lyons@juno.com)

PRESS BULLETIN #155 – 11/1/00

WHAT DOES HOLINESS HAVE TO DO WITH LIFE?

The feast of All Souls' Day is casting more and more of a shadow on the feast of All Saints' Day. Whether justified or not, that's how it is. Piety, honoring and praying for the deceased are highly esteemed and without them the world would be remarkably poorer. Remembering the dead is something everyone can accept but the feast of All Saints' is something that only has meaning for Christians who believe. The question is, to what extent and what? Jesus Christ specifically calls us to live a holy life. Writing to the Christian communities, Saint Paul addresses them as 'holy'.

What is valuable and important to us, we call 'holy', 'holiness'. With the belief that God is our creator, we assume that we are valuable and important to Him, that a human being and his life are holy to Him. The more radically we become conscious of this - without planning to become holy - the more open we become for a holy life, which is uniquely perceivable in Jesus' entire life and in the lives of well-known and lesser known holy women and men.

Father Ivan Landeka

VISITS OF BISHOPS

Mgr. Joseph Das of the Indian bishopric of Berhampur visited Medjugorje from October 12th to 15th. On Sunday, October 15th, he celebrated holy mass for the English-speaking pilgrims and he also held the homily. This was his first visit to Medjugorje.

On October 26th, Mgr. Florencio Olvera Ochaoa, Bishop of Mexico, from the bishopric Tabasco, visited Medjugorje on his way to Dubrovnik. He was accompanied by Ante Luburic, Chancellor of the bishopric Mostar-Duvno. He said that it had been his ardent desire to visit Medjugorje, as a great number of his faithful come on pilgrimage here.

At the end of October, four bishops were in Medjugorje: Mgr. Leo Drona from the bishopric of San Jose from the Philippines, Mgr. Nestor Carino, General Secretary of the Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Mgr. Cirilo Almario, retired Bishop from the bishopric of Malolos of the Philippines and Mgr. Nicodemus Kirima, Archbishop of Nyeria, Kenya. These four bishops were part of a group of 700 American pilgrims, who were taking part in a pilgrimage to several Marian shrines throughout Europe. This pilgrimage was organized by an American organization and one of the Shrines they visited was Medjugorje.

FATHER FILIP PAVIC HAS LEFT MEDJUGORJE AND TAKEN ON A NEW ASSIGNMENT

After 13 years of selfless and devoted service for God and the pilgrims, especially the English-speaking pilgrims, Father Filip Pavic has left Medjugorje and taken on a new assignment in the Franciscan province of Chicago, USA. On behalf of everyone who experienced Father Filip's care and help during their pilgrimage to Medjugorje, we thank Father Filip wholeheartedly for all the good he has done. We promise to include him in our prayers that God may be with him in his continued work for his brothers and sisters.

IMPORTANT NEWS!!

Starting with the next issue of the Bulletin – that is Nr. 156 – the Bulletin will be published at the beginning of each month (around the 5th of each month) in seven languages, as usual.

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PRESS BULLETIN #156 – 11/26/00

COME, LORD JESUS

Throughout the history of the Church, grace and sin, good and bad have been intertwined. Anyone who looks at his life objectively will see that also in his life grace and sin, good and bad are intertwined. There is no human being who does not want to be a better human being and no Christian who does not want to be a better Christian. Rarely will anyone want to be a

lesser human being and rarely will a Christian want to be a lesser Christian. Wanting to be a better Christian is the best soil for the work of God during the time of Advent. Not so much because it is Advent – surely also because of it – but more because it is a true need. This Advent is an opportunity not to let overwhelming responsibilities become an excuse to leave everything as it was. Jesus and His mother Mary are the company with which one can truly attain a fulfilled Christmas.

Let us welcome them as our fellow-travellers and accept their companionship with everything that emanates from it.

Father Ivan Landeka

IN MEMORY OF FATHER DOCTOR SLAVKO BARBARIC

Father Slavko Barbaric died on November 24, 2000 at 3.30 p.m. After the Way of the Cross, that he animated usually every Friday on the Hill of Krizevac for parishioners and pilgrims, he felt some pain. He sat down on a rock, then lay down on the ground, lost consciousness and gave his soul over to the Lord.

Father Slavko Barbaric was born on March 11, 1946, as the son of Marko and Luca born Stojic at Dragicina (parish of Cerin). He attended elementary school in Cerin and then went on to high school in Dubrovnik. He entered into the Franciscan order at Humac on July 14, 1965. He made his final vows September 17, 1971. He was ordained priest the December 19, 1971. He studied at Sarajevo, Graz and Freiburg. He finished his studies at Graz (Austria) with a master's degree. After 5 years of pastoral service in the province of Herzegovina, in the parish of Capljina, he continued his studies at Freiburg, where he obtained his doctorate in religious pedagogy and the title of psychotherapist.

As Franciscan priest, he was in Capljina from 1973 to 1978. From the spring of 1982 to September 1984, he was chaplain for students at Mostar, and he held retreats in the house of religious sisters at Bijelo Polje near Mostar. His fruitful work with the students and his retreats very well accepted by the students, however, the Communist government in power at that time persecuted him. In those difficult moments, his eminence, Cardinal Franjo Kuharic, protected father Slavko's mission.

Thanks to his knowledge of the main European language and despite his numerous obligations in different parishes, father Slavko put himself

ceaselessly at the service of Medjugorje pilgrims from the time he finished his studies and came back to the country in 1982. He was officially sent to Medjugorje in 1983. According to the order of Mgr. Zanic, bishop of Mostar, he was transferred to the parish of Blagaj, and in 1988 to Humac, where he was parish vicar and assistant of the master of novices.

At the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when all elderly friars were exiled to Tucepi, with the oral accord of + father Drago Tolj, former provincial, father Slavko remained at Medjugorje.

From the very beginning of his mission in Medjugorje, father Slavko has been writing spiritual books: «Pray With the Heart», «Give Me Your Wounded Heart», «Celebrate Mass With the Heart», «In the School of Love», «Adore my Son With the Heart», «With Jesus and Mary Climbing the Golgotha to Meet the Risen Lord», «Pray Together with a Joyful Heart», Interviews, and «Fast With the Heart», which is now in print. Father Slavko Barbaric's books have been translated in twenty languages and more than 20 million copies have been printed in the whole world. He published also numerous articles in various publications. He was editor of the St Francis' Bulletin in Capljina, collaborated in Krsni Zavicaaj, Glas Mira and the Radio "Mir" Medjugorje. He gave unceasingly conferences for pilgrims, animated adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, veneration of the Cross, the rosary up the Apparition Hill, the Way of the Cross on the Mount Krizevac, where he finished his earthly life. He animated annual meetings for priests and youth, in the prayer house of the Franciscan province "Domus Pacis" he animated "Fasting and prayer retreats". The destructions of the war inspired him to found and lead an institution for the education and care of the young, the "Mother's Village", where more than 60 persons have found their home (war orphans, children from separated families, unwed mothers, elderly abandoned persons and sick children). If there was a man who loved children, it was Father Slavko. Children loved him in return: they always gathered around him and he knew always how to gather them – just like Jesus! His psychotherapeutic formation and education allowed him to work with drug addicts in the Community of the Cenacolo, founded by Sister Elvira, mostly in their house in Medjugorje, "Campo della vita". He oriented the help received from the whole world in two directions: "Foundation for children of deceased defenders" who died during the war, and "Foundation of friends of talents" to help students.

It is difficult to extract something from the life of this big and unusual man. If we would try to do it, it is undoubtedly the period of his life in Medjugorje. Father Slavko Barbaric has traveled throughout the whole world, spreading the message of peace and reconciliation of Our Lady. He was the soul and the heart of the peace movement born in Medjugorje 19 1/2 years ago. He had wonderful gifts: knowledge of languages, facility of communicating with people, education, simplicity, care for human beings in need, inexhaustible energy – one could not believe that one single man could have it, diligence, and above all piety, humility, charity. He prayed and he fasted a lot, he loved Our Lady with a childlike love. It was, in fact, the essence of his life: through prayer and fasting to take souls to God through Mary - the Queen of Peace.

It seemed sometimes above the reality to live near him – he was here, in the world, but at the same time so much out of the world. In his presence, the words of Jesus from his high priestly prayer became reality: "They do not belong to the world, as I myself do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, I sent them into the world. I sanctify myself for them, in order that they may be sanctified by the truth..." (Jn 17,16-19)

The funeral took place at the cemetery in Medjugorje "Kovacica", on Sunday, November 26, 2000, after the mass in the church of St James at 2 p.m.

NUMBER OF HOLY COMMUNIONS AND CONCELEBRANTS

During the month of October, 120.000 faithful received holy communion in the parish of Medjugorje and 2.870 priests from home and abroad concelebrated at holy masses.

THE 'CENACOLO' COMMUNITY - HOUSE FOR WOMEN

On November 1, 2000, a house for drug-addicted girls was solemnly opened and blessed here in the parish of Medjugorje. Many girls and boys of the 'Cenacolo' community were present, as were many of their parents and friends. This house is one of 60 houses and the second in Medjugorje which the 'Cenacolo' community has opened for youths with drug problems.

This community's path from the hell of drugs into a new life is based on prayer and work; therefore, it is

not surprising that such a large number of youths are being healed here. Searching for a way out for the increasing number of young drug addicts, Sister Elvira Petrozzi founded the 'Cenacolo' community in 1983.

Prior to their acceptance into the community, the girls and their parents have to take part in so-called 'colloquiums' – informative talks – which take place every Saturday at 9 am at the parish office in Medjugorje.

RELIEFS OF FRANCISCANS FROM MEDJUGORJE WHO WERE KILLED DURING WORLD WAR II

On November 3, 2000, reliefs of five Franciscans from the parish of Medjugorje who had died a martyr's death in World War II were blessed in the Adoration Chapel. These five Franciscans were among a total of 66 Franciscans who were killed under the Communist regime, bearing witness to their faith in Jesus Christ.

The parish of Medjugorje wanted to honour these Franciscans in a special way in this year of the Great Jubilee, and had five reliefs made which were then put up in the Adoration Chapel. Dr. Father Tomislav Pervan, the Provincial of the Franciscans in Hercegovina celebrated Holy Mass on the occasion. In his homily, Father Pervan reminded us of the many who have given their lives for Christ – almost a thousand Croatian priests died during the last wars.

At the end of Holy Mass, Father Ivan Sesar, the parish priest, thanked the former parish priest, Father Ivan Landeka, who had suggested that these five Franciscan be honoured during this Jubilee Year for having died a martyr's death. Many members of the numerous families, as well as parishioners of Medjugorje attended the ceremony. They will now be able to show their solidarity with their Franciscans - whose graves are unknown - by coming to Adoration Chapel, being there with them, praying for them and asking them for their intercession.

THE BULLETIN IS PUBLISHED ON THE 26th OF EACH MONTH

The Press Bulletin with the monthly news will be published on the 26th of each month, rather than on the 5th, as we had previously announced.

**Published by: Information Center MIR - Shrine of
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DEPARTURE OF GREAT MEN

How do they leave? And who are they in reality? These questions are not as simple as they may seem. Everything starts in fact with the question: Who can be considered a great man? It seems to me that in our contemporary world there is confusion about this question.

As a man, as a believer, as a religious and as a priest, Father Slavko Barbaric certainly belongs to the great men. But what is his dimension? I would say that he belonged to everybody, although some may not think so. As a man and as a believer, he has fully accomplished his mission. If it were not so, the Queen of Peace would not have said explicitly that he has been born into heaven. It is not necessary to enter now into theological discussions about the significance of Her words: whether She thought that he was a saint or not. In any case, all those who are in heaven are saints. Let time answer this question, let us give time some time to answer whether he is a saint in the sense that the hierarchy of the Church gives to this word. Let us remember that St. Francis and other great saints needed time to be declared as examples for us.

Those who do not consider Father Slavko as a great man are those who recognize only our humanity. We have noted this while observing the behavior of the media regarding Father Slavko's funeral: the further a redaction is away from God, the less space they gave to this information in their news, if they spoke about it at all. They did not only mistreat a great man, but they made a big professional mistake, because they did not – in an independent and democratic spirit – transmit news that concern so many.

Yes, Father Slavko's death has touched so many. His friends throughout the world are numberless, numberless are also all those who received his help. He didn't do it with his human strength, if it had been endless, he would not have died so young. He worked and helped others thanks to the strength of God, whom he allowed to use his fragility to reach out to others. This is why he was able to do so much in such a short life.

We Christians are not called to separate ourselves from society, to enclose ourselves in a world apart in order to realize our ideas. Jesus Christ told us that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Why be afraid of our mission? All those who knew Father Slavko know well that he was never afraid of his mission. He was as engaged on a human as on a religious level. Out of this valley of tears, he wanted to

make a pleasant place to cross on the way to our heavenly home. He never made use of his immense academic background to put himself above others, or to make it the sense of his life, but he used it to come closer to his neighbor. Many became aware of it, so it is not surprising that so many diverse people gathered around him. He taught them how to love man and how to love God. He never allowed faith to be separated from daily life. He combined his faith with human life, putting everything in its place and allowing everybody to take his own place, but nobody else's.

We Christians have many chances. We have our Queen of Peace and we have models showing us the way by their example. There is one question: do we try to be an example ourselves? If we do not, Father Slavko's example will remain only a singularity and nothing else.

Let us finally dare to fall on our knees and start to form and build ourselves as we think we should have. This is our foundation, and who has ever seen a house being built without good foundations? The Queen of Peace calls us unceasingly. Heaven is near us, She says, we are blessed, and we can continue to live without any fear concerning the present or the future. When we are confident, we are able to share this confidence with others. We will never feel alone or abandoned but, at every instant, we will cross this earthly road with dignity, holding our heads up high, enduring whatever hurts and troubles us.

Our good intentions will never remain unanswered. They will be encouraged by the heavenly intercession

of all those who have reached God before us. The Queen of Peace tells us that Father Slavko's intercession is with us. Let us not be afraid of the future of the events of Medjugorje. They are God's work and, as such, they will continue to live on throughout history. If we try all together to answer the best we can, there will always be somebody to show us the way by his example, to help us go on. But if we refuse to walk God's way, there will not be many examples. If they exist, they will be like a voice of a thirsty man in the desert, an admonition and condemnation of those who have brought this voice to silence. This is why we can say at the end: Father Slavko's departure is in reality his entry into his eternal homeland.

Medjugorje, November 25, 2000
Fra Miljenko Stojic

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED



We are seeking loving souls to help us out at the February 2001 Annual PPMC RETREAT CONFERENCE.

Please fill out the coupon below to be a volunteer.

Thank you so much.

I WANT to HELP OUR LADY and JESUS at the FEBRUARY 2001 PPMC RETREAT CONFERENCE

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Please complete this form and send to:

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Please sign me up as a volunteer in the following area(s):

PREPARATION DECEMBER TO FEBRUARY:

- _____ Answer phones and perform general office work
- _____ Record Registrations
- _____ Stuffing packets and fixing nametags
- _____ Packing up materials for the conference.
- _____ Loading and/or unloading of trucks.

AT THE CONFERENCE:

- _____ Registration Area
- _____ Book Area
- _____ Confessional/Adoration Area
- _____ Hospitality
- _____ Loading and/or unloading of trucks.

CALENDARS:

In *December*, the Church celebrates the Solemnities of **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (8)** and **CHRISTMAS (25)**, the Feasts of *Our Lady of Guadalupe (12)*, *Saints Stephen (26)*, and *John, Apostle and Evangelist (27)*, *Holy Innocents (28)* and *Holy Family (31)* and Memorials of *Saints John of Damascus (4)*, *Nicholas (6)*, *Ambrose (7)*, *Damasus I (11)*, *Lucy (13)*, *John of the Cross (14)*, *Peter Canisius (21)*, *John of Kanty (23)*, and *Thomas Becket (29)* and *Blessed Juan Diego (9)*.

Plan to do something special for Our Lord, Our Lady and the Holy Family during Advent. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2001.

In *January*, the Church celebrates the Solemnities of *Mary, Mother of God (1)*, *Epiphany of the Lord (6/7)*, the Feasts of *Baptism of the Lord (14)* and *The Conversion of Paul (25)*, and Memorials of *Saints Basil the Great (2)*, *Gregory Nazianzen (2)*, *Elizabeth Ann Seton (4)*, *John Neumann (5)*, *Hilary (13)*, *Anthony, Abbot (17)*, *Fabian (20)*, *Sebastian (20)*, *Vincent (22)*, *Francis de Sales (24)*, *Timothy (26)*, *Titus (26)*, *Angela Merici (27)*, and *John Bosco (31)* as well as *Blessed Andre Bessette (6)*. Most Church calendars recognize **Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday (16) (observed) (15)**.

Pray from the time you read this until January 20, 2001 that the Forty-Third President of the United States of America will be a God fearing, moral, family man who will stop the wrong choices in America and promote life.

This will no doubt mean a conversion greater for the one who has the popular vote than for the one who will more than likely have the electoral vote.

AROUND the PPMC AREA

Try to participate in daily Holy Mass or make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament during your travels to and from work or on errands.

Reserve the weekend of February 23rd, 24th and 25th 2001 for the PPMC RETREAT CONFERENCE at the Four Points Hotel in Cherry Hill, NJ 08034 with Father John Hampsch, C.M.F. The 3-day extension on the Healing Gifts of the Holy Spirit will feature Father Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J.

Please make your ROOM RESERVATIONS on the list with the Four Points Hotel, **1-800-325-3535**, NOW and plan to pre-register for the RETREAT CONFERENCE with the PPMC using the gold information sheet with registration form inserted in this issue of "The PILGRIM."

For more information, call the PPMC at 856-768-9228.

INTERNET

Surf for the PPMC presence on the Internet at:



<http://www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith>

If you wish to see pictures of the twins or related Werner family information, visit:

<http://www.geocities.com/keithwerner>

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If there is no time to read it all 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!"

