



The **PILGRIM**

Vol. 11 No. 7 *Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)*

July 2000

Our Lady's MESSAGE of 6/25/2000 via Marija Pavlovic Lunetti and the *Franciscans* at Medjugorje
Dear Children! Today I call you to prayer. The one who prays is not afraid of the future. Little children do not forget, I am with you and I love you all. Thank you for having responded to my call.

Father Slavko Barbaric's REFLECTION begins on page 25

A PRAYER

Oh Blessed Savior we thank You for your precious Body and Blood which nourishes our souls with Heavenly Food. Our souls are delighted with Its' very sweetness. How only You can satisfy the deep hungers and thirsts for truth, knowledge, peace, and presence. You enkindle and nourish the flame of Divine Love within us. How unworthy we are of being in Your very presence. Oh Lord, you sanctify us with healing. You drench us with Your strength. You shelter us from all evil, and hear our every need in our hearts.

Grant us Lord the gifts of Your Holy Spirit that we may not grow tired in serving You. Keep us strengthened to shepherd through our actions in daily ministry and evangelization to the many souls that you call to Yourself. Use us Lord as You want, always helping us to put aside our self will and our selfishness. We lay our sins of unforgiveness before thee. In moments of fatigue keep us mindful of others needs rather than our own. May we be generous and loyal to Your will so that one day we may lay at Your feet all the successes which are Yours. Grant us peace, and bless us with the grace of Thy Mercy. Lord teach us total trust in Your Holy Love.

AMEN.

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

SUMMER SCHEDULE

Due to the end of July and early August commitments of many of the *Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)* volunteers, there will not be an *AUGUST* issue of "The **PILGRIM**." A combined *August - September 2000* issue of "The **PILGRIM**" will be developed over the next two months and published in early *September*.

"The **PILGRIM**" for July 2000 is dedicated to the "Immaculate Heart of Mary." The Table of Contents / "IN THIS ISSUE . . ." is on page 3.

TWIN GRANDBABY BOYS BORN 7/4/00

Keith and Kathleen are extremely proud of their daughter Katherine. With her husband Ralph at her side, she went full term of 37 weeks prior to Caesarean Section delivery of their twin grandsons Raffaele Joseph IV and Dominic Michael Bagnato at 1:51 PM and 1:53 PM on 7/4/00. Katherine and the boys are doing fine. Raffaele was 6 pounds 2 ounces and 19.5 inches, Dominic was 6 pounds 13 ounces and 20 inches.

DONATIONS DURING the SUMMER MONTHS ARE NECESSARY to KEEP the PFMC OPEN

Please remember that we all work as volunteers. We count on all of you who so love "The **PILGRIM**," the retreats, the Bible study, and the annual RETREAT CONFERENCE, who enjoy getting the rosaries, and who so ask for intercessory prayer to help. There are so many expenses for the facilities from which we work. None of us are paid any salary or income from the funds you donate. Our Lord rewards each of us in His own special way. When we have expenses in the world we turn to you for your help through funds you donate.

We have been handling our first electric bills for operations from 61 Cooper Road. They are much higher than what we had budgeted based on operations at 129 Deerfield Avenue. The buildings are extremely well insulated but we have over five times the square footage to maintain with lights and ventilation. We are asking you to not forget us with a donation during the summer months.

We very much need your help. **PLEASE don't forget us.** When we needed so much to get into the new facilities, you all responded with such fine help. Now we appeal to you again. Please place the enclosed envelope with your monthly bills, and consider tithing to us monthly.

Monthly we pay for "The **PILGRIM**" and all of our expenses to run the various **PFMC** ministries. We hope to provide you with much more in the year 2001. **If you cannot come to donate your time, you could help us so much with your generosity.** Thank you so much.

PILGRIMAGE to MEDJUGORJE, ROME, GARGANO (BLESSED PADRE PIO) and LANCIANO

Michael McColgan will be leading a pilgrimage to **Medjugorje** departing **Newark** on *August 15th 2000*. The Spiritual Director will be **Father Ronald Falatico** of *Saint Peter Parish, Pleasantville, NJ*. Pilgrims will be in **Medjugorje** until *August 20th 2000*.

Returning to **Italy**, pilgrims will go directly for *2 nights* in **San Giovanni Rotondo** on the **Gargano** where *Blessed Padre Pio* is buried and then on to **Rome** for *4 nights*. Not only will the group visit the home of *Blessed Padre Pio* until his death, they will also stop at **Monte Sant Angelo** to see the shrine grotto of *Saint Michael the Archangel* and then visit the **Church of the Eucharistic Miracle in Lanciano** on the way to **Rome**.

This end of the Summer season pilgrimage includes round trip air fare from **Newark** to **Split, Croatia** via **Rome** and return on *August 26th 2000* with Holy Mass and religious program daily. Tour the major basilicas in **Rome** as well as the **Vatican** and the **Sistine Chapel**, with an opportunity to receive the Jubilee Blessing by passing through 4 Holy Doors. Transfers under escort at all times with guides to all major sites. Overnight accommodations (double occupancy) include all breakfasts and suppers, as well as family homes in **Medjugorje**. Listen to the visionaries and attend all activities in this Sanctuary. Package price is **\$2655** including all taxes. Travel insurance is available and highly encouraged. We will give you all the assistance necessary. Tips and beverages not included. This pilgrimage is essentially fully booked with no space left on the connecting aircraft. Call **Kathleen** or **Dotty** at 856-768-9228 if you cannot make one of the other pilgrimages to **Medjugorje**.

AUGUST PFMC POT-LUCK PICNIC REMINDER

Again, the annual pot-luck picnic for the **PFMC** will be held at **129 Deerfield Avenue** in **Marlton, NJ**. This is west of **Hopewell Road** in **Little Mill Acres** near **Evesham Fire Station 225**. Attendees have always had such fun.

Date and Time:- *Sunday, August 20* from *Noon* until ?

Bring: a casserole and a salad or dessert to share as well as things like meat to barbecue for yourself and your family or guests.

Bring: a lounge chair, bathing suit and towel

Bring: a friend or relative and the family.

We will have all the condiments to use, the paper products and the soda to drink. The indoor pool will bring shade and refreshment. The company is wonderful and often the only

time to meet up with pilgrims from your pilgrimage or from the conferences or retreats. At about **3 PM**, we pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet and/or the Rosary prior to a short talk by one of the priests who help us in the **PFMC** work. We then have a short meeting to review the year's activities and tell you of the next year's pilgrimage and activity plans. It is a great way to have a reunion for your pilgrimage group bringing pictures to share with each other. So, we hope you will mark your calendar NOW, and we hope to see you there!

A SEMINAR for PRIESTS and DEACONS - PLEASE HELP US

The **PFMC** will again sponsor a three day seminar for Priests and Deacons and Seminarians. This year **Father John Hampsch, C.M.F.** will be the speaker on *"Healing in the Sacrament of Holy Orders."* Father has given hundreds of seminars to religious, and he has been so gracious to come to the Delaware Valley this year. Father is a dynamic speaker, and has touched millions of hearts. He is a great teacher, evangelist, and has a charism given to him by the Holy Spirit.

We hope that you will help us and give the enclosed flyer to a priest or deacon or seminarian in your area. Possibly you or your prayer group will offer to sponsor someone for this seminar with a **\$199** donation. We know many would come if you would help them to come. If you would like more flyers, please give us a call and we will send them out.

The seminar will be held this year at the **Holiday Inn** in **Cherry Hill, NJ** from *Wednesday, September 27th* at *9 AM* thru the *Friday, September 29th* about *1:30 PM*. The **PFMC** will make all hotel arrangements, and registration assistance. The flyer only needs to be filled out and the donation included and mailed to the **PFMC** at **61 Cooper Road, Voorhees, NJ. 08043-4963**. The donation covers the hotel expenses for the 2 nights and for the food for snacks. Thank you for your help. God Bless You.

A DYNAMIC PILGRIMAGE YOU WILL NEVER FORGET - DEPARTING SEPTEMBER 24, 2000 and RETURNING OCTOBER 9, 2000 - MEDJUGORJE, CANNONIZATION of BLESSED CATHERINE DREXEL, JUBILEE PAPAL BLESSING in ASSISI for the FEAST of SAINT FRANCIS, 2 DAY RETREAT, and the COLLEGIAL BLESSING of the WORLD and RUSSIA in ROME - 31SEATS AVAILABLE.

Have you ever felt you were called to a very special pilgrimage to **Medjugorje**?

Keith and **Kathleen** will lead this pilgrim group to the parish of **Medjugorje**, made up of several tiny farm villages in the valley between the mountains of western

Bosnia-Hercegovina, for an experience of prayer and peace in the love of Our Lady. They would love to have you join them as they travel in pilgrimage to meet with the visionaries, and experience the Holy Mass that stirs the heart into reconciliation and conversion.

They will return to **Rome** for the beautiful **Canonization of Catherine Drexel**. If you have never been to a Beatification or Canonization it is an experience you will never forget.

For the feast of **Saint Francis**, the Holy Father will be going to **Assisi**. We stay in the **Hotel Winsor** inside the walls right next to the great **Basilica of Saint Francis**. We will be part of the blessing and enjoy the **Franciscan** walled city in its entirety.

Our residence in **Rome** is just outside the City - a Catholic Religious Retreat House called "**Mondo Migliore**". Nestled on a lake, you will be offered 2 days of retreat following the **Assisi** experience or, if you so choose, be on your own to further explore **Rome** and its surroundings.

In **Rome** a guide and our escort will help you to enjoy tours of the **Catacombs**, **Holy Mass** in the **Vatican**, and site seeing and prayer at the major Basilicas and Churches. See the **Sistine Chapel** and the magnificent fresco's of **Michaelangelo**.

We are told that about 4000 bishops will be meeting in **Rome** for the **Papal Collegial Consecration** of the **World** and **Russia** to **Our Lady**. This will again fulfill the **Fatima** message request. We will be there for this monumental blessing.

The donation for the pilgrimage covers your air on **Swiss Air** to **Rome**, **Croatia Air** to and from **Split, Croatia**, all hotels and housing throughout in double rooms, all breakfasts and suppers, **USA, Italian** and **Croatia** taxes, escort throughout and guides for all tours, air conditioned bus, and much more. Please see enclosed flyer.

Our Spiritual Director, **Father Joy Chacko**, is a dynamic priest who loves his priesthood. He has a great gift of ministry, and he takes special notice of the soul's put in his care. You will love him. He will say daily Mass, hear confessions, and offer a full spiritual program to you daily.

Please read over the blue-green flyer, fill it out and send with your deposit. We remind you of early registration for this pilgrimage. The airlines are very strict during this year 2000, and do not hesitate to cancel seats 60 days prior if no names are submitted. If you have any further questions then please call and ask for **Kathleen** or **Dotty Monday** through **Friday** from **10:30 AM to 5 PM**.

It must be noted that on all of our pilgrimages we offer private rooms throughout the pilgrimage for a reasonable fee called a "single supplement." We encourage those who snore or who are smokers to utilize this "single supplement" option for the comfort of the other pilgrims.

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WALK in the FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS - A PILGRIMAGE to the HOLY LAND - NOVEMBER 1 through 14, 2000

Receive the Jubilee Blessings of walking in the footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land. **Keith** and **Kathleen** will again lead a 14 day pilgrimage through the beautiful churches, and places we hear about daily in the Holy Bible.

Have you ever wanted to see these places, to touch the Holy ground, to bathe in the waters of the Jordan, or renew your marriage vows in Cana? Join **Father Jim Sauchelli** on this

pilgrimage that will help you to make the Gospels come alive for the rest of your life. We will pilgrimage to each location and will be combining the scriptures with Holy Mass and time for private prayer.

Please read over the list of shrines and holy places on the lavender flyer enclosed. You can join us from all over the **USA in New York**. WE can even help you with your add on fare. We will fly on **British Air to London** and on to **Tel Aviv**. We will also travel into **Jordan to Amman and Petra** (the Pink city of Stone Mountains). This pilgrimage offers so much more as it has been extended to enable us to see more than most pilgrimages. The cost covers round trip air from **New York**, hotels, escort and guides, motor coaches, all breakfasts and suppers throughout, taxes and baggage handling (except taxes which must be paid in person when entering **Jordan** (to include the Visa) , and exiting **Israel . . .** these must be paid in cash at the time of entering and exiting). Call the **PFMC** with any questions, or else fill out the lavender flyer, enclose your deposit, and we will be in contact with you.

PLEASE BOOK EARLIER IF YOU WANT TO GO ON PILGRIMAGE THIS JUBILEE YEAR!

We cannot emphasize enough that because of the large numbers of people leaving for **Europe** for the Jubilee Year, hotels and airlines are overbooked and requiring names as well as deposits to hold confirmed space. The airlines and hotels are asking for names for all Jubilee Year pilgrimages. We will need to release unnamed airline seats and rooms on pilgrimages where we do not have names and deposits to cover the airline and hotel deposits at *60 days* and *30 days* before departure.

PLEASE, if you are thinking of a pilgrimage this year, and a renewal of your commitment to *Our Lady* and Our Lord with special **Jubilee Blessings**, look over the above pilgrimages and call us immediately.

BOOKS AND RELIGIOUS ARTICLES - THE NEW BUILDING IS OPEN

The new **PFMC** offices are **open Monday through Friday from 10:30 AM to 5 PM**. We are also open on nights that we have Bible Study (the *2nd* and *4th* **Monday** night in **Epiphany House**).

Come and meet us, and tour the building. You may look over the thousands of book we have available for you by sitting in our library and looking at each book for materials you might need. We have books, religious articles, medals, rosaries, chaplets, crosses, blessed oil, pictures and statues available in our little display room. All rosaries have been blessed by **Pope John Paul II**.

Be sure to get a book for your summer reading at the beach and get one for a friend or relative. We also have children's books and coloring books. Do you need a gift for a

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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. If you cannot come to the new 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 anything that way.

Any thing you get will help the **PFMC** with its many expenses. We hope you will remember us when shopping for Christmas.

BOOKS NEEDED for OUR LIBRARY

We are seeking OLD books on Our Lady, on the Eucharist, Priesthood, Sacraments and Holy Mass. If you have some, particularly if priests have some on their shelves or stored away in boxes, we would love to have them. We hope to have a fine library for the lay person as well as religious to reference. Please send them to the **PFMC**. We would be grateful.

DONATIONS by CHARGE CARD ACCEPTED

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

BIBLE STUDY GROUP

You are invited by **Keith and Kathleen Werner** to join them in their home

PLACE: **Epiphany House** at **61 Cooper Road, Voorhees, New Jersey** (off of NJ 73) (going South on NJ 73, turn **LEFT** at **Niagara Pools**, with **Cooper Crossing (Marshall's)** on the right and **Hale Trucking** to the left.)

TIME: *7:30 PM* every *2nd* and *4th* **Monday**.

INSTRUCTOR: **Mr. Peter Dawson**

An interactive study using typology. We are still in **Genesis**, and each study time is unique to itself. You will never be behind! So come any time.

DATES FOR YOUR 2000 CALENDAR: *July 24, August 14* and *28, September 11* and *25*

MOTHER of the HEAD - MOTHER of the VINE

Gabriel came to the house of *Mary* at Nazareth. The angel greeted her: **"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women."** Such a greeting, coming from a messenger of the heavenly court, was an overwhelming honor. It was a jolt to the humility of *Mary*. No wonder that she **"was troubled."**

For many centuries all God's works had been aimed at one day - the day on which He sent His archangel. The angel continued: **"Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High."**

Imagine the impact of these words on *Mary's* mind. God had endowed her with a good mind and she had used it well, pondering in her heart all the words of the **Old Testament**. She would naturally think on this occasion of the awful might of the omnipotent God who appeared to **Moses** in the burning bush, the God who destroyed the armies of **Egypt**, the God who gave such glory to the face of **Moses** that the people could not look on his face when he came down from **Mount Sinai**. Yet the angel tells her that her Son is to be **"the Son of the Most High"**! She must have thought of the **Messianic Psalm 2**, in which the seventh verse said, **"The Lord hath said to me, 'Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee'."**

Gabriel continued: **"The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."**

Could *Mary* have forgotten the words of the prophet **Isaiah**: **"For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, GOD THE MIGHTY, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace: he shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom; to establish it and strengthen it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth and forever."**

We who have become so accustomed to the idea of carrying God in our hearts in Holy Communion that many people, for no reason at all, omit remaining after Mass for a short thanksgiving; we have lost the sense of awe for the terrible power of the God within us. Not so *Mary*: **HER MATCHLESS FIDELITY TO ALL THE GRACES GIVEN HER MADE HER REALIZE WHAT A STAGGERING PROPOSAL WAS BEING MADE TO HER.**

But now she remembers her vow of virginity. Not doubting the power of God, but rather by way of inquiring what is God's will in regard to that, she asks: **"How shall this be done, because I know not man?"** *Gabriel* quickly reassured her: **"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High**

shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy One which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Even before *Gabriel* had finished speaking, *Mary's* thoughts probably went back to that other line of the Prophet **Isaiah**: **"Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel."** *Gabriel* states that *Mary's* Son is to be called **"the Son of God."** **Isaiah** says He will be **Emmanuel**, which, translated, means: **"God with us."**

As the Fathers never tired of retelling, **Eve** had ruined us by disobedience. Now, at the beginning of the restoration, all is obedience. *Mary* looked to the depths of her soul. She, the blessed among women, the one full of grace, the only one conceived immaculate, **The Mother of God**—what is her reaction? **"Behold the handmaid of the Lord!"** The word *handmaid* is but a poor translation of the original Greek word *doule*. For to us the word *handmaid* means merely a hired servant. But *doule* meant a slave girl. Here is an obedient humility to balance the proud disobedience of **Eve**. *Mary* had just been raised to the peak of all creation, yet she replies by calling herself a slave girl: **"Be it done to me according to thy word."** Heaven itself waited in obedience for this obedience. For, as *Saint Thomas Aquinas* tells us, "At the Annunciation, the Virgin was asked to give her consent in the name of the whole human race." The world had been created by the *fiat* of the Word of God. Now the beginning of the re-creation in grace is ushered in by the **FIAT MIHI SECUNDUM VERBUM TUUM** of the one who calls herself the **SLAVE OF THE LORD**.

At this moment *Mary* became the *Mother of Christ*. Now **Christ**, the Son of *Mary*, is the **New Adam**. He is the

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new head of the human race. He is the head of the **Mystical Body**. Hence, at this time *Mary* became the spiritual *Mother of the Mystical Body* as well as the human *Mother of the Head of that Body*. It is true, the formal announcement came later, when on the cross the dying Son said: **“Woman, behold thy son.”** But in reality began long before, on the day of the **Annunciation**. Speaking to the **Marian Congress at Ottawa, Canada, on June 19, 1947, Pope Pius XII** said: “But when the little maid of **Nazareth** uttered her *fiat* to the message of the angel...she became not only the *Mother of God* in the physical order of nature, but also in the supernatural order of grace she became the Mother of all, who... would be made one under the Headship of her divine Son. The Mother of the Head would be the Mother of the members. The *Mother of the Vine* would be the *Mother of the Branches*.”

Mary is the *Mother of God*, and *Mary* is full of grace. Which of the two is the greater prerogative: the divine motherhood or the fullness of grace? Some have thought to find the solution in the answer that Our Lord gave to an unknown woman in the Gospel. For when this woman cried out one day in a crowd: **“Blessed is the womb that bore thee...”** His reply was: **“Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.”** It might seem at first sight that *Mary’s* Son is saying that it is greater to be son of God by grace, obeying His word, than to be the *Mother of God*. Even, then, of course, *Mary* would still be the greatest of those who **“hear the word of God and keep it.”** But there is another explanation.

The woman in the crowd probably thought of Christ merely as a great prophet, rather than as divine. Therefore He might well answer her according to her own form of thought, and assure her that it is greater to have grace than to be the mother of a prophet. But even if the woman recognized His divinity, there was need to correct a too carnal way of looking at things, such as the Jews commonly had.

For if *Mary* had been Christ’s mother only in the physical sense, without being holy, her motherhood would have been of a lower order than grace. The truth, however, is that *Mary’s* motherhood was more than merely physical: it was accomplished by a free and meritorious consent to the mystery of the redemptive incarnation. She really did conceive Christ by hearing the word of God and keeping it: her Son is the Word of God.

Recent Popes have made it clear that *Mary’s* divine motherhood, properly understood, is her greatest dignity. **Pope Pius XI** is quite explicit in his encyclical written for the *1500th anniversary* of the **Council of Ephesus** (the council that defined *Mary’s* divine motherhood):...from this dogma of the divine motherhood as from the font of a

hidden gushing spring flows the singular grace of *Mary* and her dignity, second only to God. In fact, as *Aquinas* writes: “The Blessed Virgin from the fact that she is the *Mother of God*, has a sort of infinite dignity from the infinite good that God is.”

Pope Pius XII, in his historic encyclical in which he announced the *Marian Year* of 1954, echoed the very words of **Pope Pius XI**, and singled out for special mention the relation of the divine motherhood to the unique grace by which *Mary* was ever free from all sin: “it is clearly apparent...that she obtained from God this most singular privilege, never granted to another, because of the fact that she was raised to the dignity of *Mother of God*.”

Since she was the *Mother of God*, *Mary* needed to be *full of grace*. We say that *Mary* was full of grace, not in the sense that she had as much grace as Christ Himself, for His fullness was absolute, so as to be incapable of any increase: His humanity had the closest kind of union to the Divinity itself. But *Mary* comes next in order, for she was closest of all to Him. Her fullness was relative to the mission God gave to her: her grace was such as was a worthy preparation for the divine motherhood.

(from “**MARY IN OUR LIFE**” by **William G. Most**)

WHY I AM A PRIEST TODAY

It was late at night. I was *24 years of age*, a junior in college, and my mind was in turmoil. I couldn’t sleep. I took out a sheet of paper, not to do homework, but to try to organize my thoughts and come to a decision about my future. Drawing a line down the center I separated the sheet into two columns. At the top of the left column I wrote: “Reasons I should become a priest;” at the top of the right column I wrote: “Reasons I should get married.”

The right column filled rapidly. The left column contained only one entry, yet it was that single entry that proved to be determinative. Allow me to relate what I wrote there and how I came to write it.

Reflecting upon why one became a priest brings back memories of the positive influences of parents, family, and friends. One recalls those marvelous priests and sisters who were such guiding forces in our growing up. In the day-in and day-out growth process, people like that, more than anyone else, touch our lives, help mold our characters, and help us develop as persons. Our debt to them is unrepayable. But it is outside these that I turn trying to recapture certain pivotal moments that helped play a role in my final decision about priesthood.

“He’s dead,” the doctor said on that *Friday the 13th* in *April 1928*, there at home. “He’s dead and she’s hemorrhaging, so I’m going to work on her.” My body was black. The umbilical cord had wrapped itself around my neck causing oxygen starvation. While the attending nurse

and my dad worked on me, the doctor worked on my mother. The nurse and dad got me breathing. Told about this as I grew, I came to believe that such a second chance at life was a gift that ought not be wasted.

A hot summer treat of my preadolescent boyhood was to sneak into old **Nell Zimmer's** backyard to snatch a luscious apple from her tree and a long cool drink from a well, shaded by that tree. **Nell** often caught me. The penalty I had to pay was that I had to join her and **Pete**, her brother, on the front porch. There the two of them plied me with questions from the old **Baltimore Catechism**. I liked **Pete** and **Nell**, and I was pretty sharp at that question-answer format of the catechism so I didn't really mind. Of course, bits of candy for correct answers helped too. Today I wonder if God hadn't used them to reinforce my interest and knowledge in the faith?

As I grew toward the tumultuous teens and all that implied, the father of two of my buddies was going to send the two off on a youth retreat, and wanted me to go with them. Money wasn't too plentiful in those depression years, so he arranged with my parents that he would pay my way. That was my first experience at making a retreat, and it came at a key time of life. A gesture of generosity, or a more direct movement by God in guiding me?

For *eight* of my *twelve* years in our parish school I had frequently served at Mass and really enjoyed it. On the *first day* of my freshman year, the newly-appointed assistant pastor called me to the rectory. He handed me a thick folder filled with pages on the new way to serve at Mass and told me to master them. To my astonishment he informed me I was to be head of the altar boys, a position of trust, challenge and responsibility. God was moving me to ever-deeper involvement at the altar.

One Solemn Mass I was standing next to the celebrant immediately after the consecration to be ready to turn the page of the missal as required. Suddenly I felt overwhelmed with the realization of what was going on. I felt so out of place there, I left and went to kneel on a step. I didn't feel I was ready to be that close to the Lord. That new awareness got me beyond mere task to deeper meanings and stayed with me long after.

After high school and then in the **Navy** while we were cruising at sea, a number of us would gather in the evening in the **Supply Office** to exchange ideas and share lives. Often we'd get into discussion on religious issues, and quite frequently I was put into the role of defender of the faith. Some of my buddies even kidded me by calling me "deacon." Looking back now, I see that God wasn't about to let me stray too far during those **Navy** days while at the same time opening me to sharing the faith with others.

Next came **Gannon College**, a Catholic college, on the **G.I. Bill**. It wasn't until my sophomore year that I felt I had academics under sufficient control to branch out in both

social and extracurricular life. That was when I met the girl of my dreams. She had everything I'd ever hoped for in a potential future wife, and more. Her presence in my life was a gift. She helped me become a better person and helped me believe I had something worthwhile to offer others. Yet, though I did love her, marriage didn't seem quite enough for me; I wanted more. Later I would say: "I wasn't satisfied with being the father of a few; I wanted to be the father of many."

In that same sophomore year I joined the only extracurricular club that interested me, the **Catholic Student Action Club**. Its membership was about half seminarians and half lay-students. Getting to know seminarians and seeing that they were little different than the rest of us helped me see priesthood in a more human and less exalted way. These weren't plaster-of-paris saints but genuine human beings. Maybe there was a chance for me in priesthood. **Father James Peterson** was the chaplain, a man and priest I greatly admired.

In my junior year I was appointed cadet commander of the **ROTC Cadet Corps**. I was also elected president of the **Catholic Student Action Club**. Positions of leadership were being thrust upon me in spite of my hesitations.

One night after a meeting, **Father Peterson** asked me to remain behind. I sensed priesthood was about to be pushed at me again as it had been during high school, and all my defenses rose. He faked me out. Priesthood was never mentioned.

"What are you going to do with your life?" he asked. I muttered something about having two possible careers in mind, the military or teaching. What I didn't tell him then was that in the back of my mind I was thinking that if neither of these satisfied me I might then, and only then, try priesthood. I had confided this to no one; not my family, my girlfriend, nor even my best friends.

He probed again, "And what then?" "Probably get married,

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have kids and enjoy life,” I answered. “And then what?” he continued. “I suppose I’ll die, everyone does,” I retorted. “Yes,” he said rather pointedly, “and then what?” Now I was getting a bit frustrated and more than a bit uncomfortable. I blurted out, “Hopefully I’ll get to spend eternity in heaven.” “And are you going to take anyone there with you?” he asked.

That question stunned me. Catholics of my era had been taught that the single most important goal of our lives was to save our souls, to get to heaven, with God’s help, of course. I had never ever thought of it in terms of taking someone there with me. When I left his office that night, in my heart I knew I was done in. All my resistance to priesthood was dead. I had to come to a decision. I hadn’t admitted that to Father that night, but I did admit it to myself.

That was the night I took out that sheet of paper and divided it into two columns and tried to sort out my thoughts. The right column did indeed fill up easily and quickly. That single determinative entry in the left column, the column on priesthood, was an entry I could no longer run away from. I wrote there that night: “Because deep in my heart, when I’m not trying to out-argue anyone else, when I’m most honest with myself before God, I have to admit, I truly believe God wants me to become a priest, and I don’t know how to say ‘no’ to God.”

Why am I a priest today? I think of the words of Jeremiah: “You duped me, Lord; and I let you dupe me.” Truth is, I never had a chance.

Looking back I admire the subtle cleverness God exhibited in allowing me to think that it was I who was doing the deciding, while all the while God was using others to nudge, prod, and guide me toward priesthood. Now, in the twilight of that priesthood I can look back and see the gentle traces of God’s touch bringing me to what he wanted me to be. I’m both humbled and grateful.

I can truthfully say it has been a richly varied and wonderfully fulfilling life, and I wouldn’t trade places with anyone. I know that, but the grace of God, I have touched lives. Whether that means I’ll be taking anyone to heaven with me, that’s not for me to say or know. That’s up to them, and to God. All I know at this stage of my life is that one day yet ahead I must make that final consecration, giving my body, my blood, my life as a final gift for them. God has brought me this far. He’ll help me through that as well. Who could ask more of a life?

(by Father James McCullough, *Emmanuel*)

WE ARE PILGRIMS on OUR WAY-A HOMILY for the THIRD SUNDAY after EASTER

I was very moved by the homily this *Sunday*, and asked if we could reprint it. It has a profound message for each of us. Easter is every day, and so I share this with you.

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Believe it or not *three weeks* have passed since the glorious celebration of Easter! During this time the Church has centered her affection and attention on the Resurrection of the Savior. Beginning today, the Liturgy begins to shift our attention - and we begin to look toward the Ascension of Our Lord.

"A little while now and you shall not see me, because I go to the Father"

This, of course, does not mean that the joy of Easter diminishes - rather it increases. The introit is a song that bursts with joy.

"Shout with joy to God all the earth Alleluia; Sing a psalm to His name, Alleluia; Give Him glory and praise Alleluia."

" How terrible (not awful) but how awesome and incomprehensible are your works oh Lord"

The Church is happy to behold her Savior ascending to Heaven, because her own home is not on earth. Heaven is her own home as she yearns to follow the spouse as soon as possible.

But, this shift in attention does intend to strengthen us for the reality of daily life and the goal of getting to Heaven.

Today's Gospel is taken from the Last Supper discourse of Jesus - recorded by **Saint John**. These words were spoken before the death and Resurrection of Our Lord. At the beginning of **Chapter 16**, Jesus says,

"I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away." The Latin word used is "Scandalizemini" or so that you won't be scandalized.

He goes on to tell them: **"They will cast you out of the Synagogues; indeed the hour is coming when whomever kills you will think he is offering service to God."**

In **verse 16** He says: **"In a little while you will see me no more, and in a little while you will see me."**

They ask "What is he talking about!"

Then Jesus responds, "Truly, truly I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice, you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. When a woman is in labor she has sorrow, but when she delivers the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world.

Of course we know, in hindsight, that Our Lord is preparing them for His horrible death on the Cross. He is trying to brace them up to bear the scandal of the cross. But of course, they will see Him after the Resurrection. But as always, there is deeper meaning in Our Lord's words that prepare them for the future and teach us.

The image of the woman giving birth is often used, particularly by the prophets **Isaiah, Jeremiah,**

Hosea, and **Micah** to symbolize the birth of the new messianic people - the birth of the Church.

The birth of the Church would involve intense pain and suffering.

For Jesus on the Cross

For the Apostles - who shed their blood

For all the martyrs

It is said that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church. Every generation needs to be reborn and go through it's birthpangs in accepting the faith and then living it.

As a teacher of *18 year olds*, the thought often crossed my mind - why aren't they getting it - why are they having such a tough time understanding?

Then I remind myself

Every year I grow older - with another year of experience and hopefully understanding

Every year - they are another group of 18 year old students who are hearing things for the first time.

The Church, you and me, with the Pope and Bishops will never be free of suffering, trial, struggle and trauma in the things of faith and morals until Christ comes again.

The world (whose under the rule of - those who do not know God) rejoices and wants to rejoice at any cost and be immersed in the pleasures of life, with no thought of what awaits beyond. People try to drown their sorrow in pleasure, drink, drugs, every conceivable distraction.

We too are tempted by the world around us - a world that is so pervading, convincing and strong. It is hard to stand against the wave of popular culture. It is, especially hard for the young to be different - to stand out - to not be in to the trash that is sent their way - but to live the Gospel.

Saint Peter in today's Epistles exhorts us.

"I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims to refrain from carnal desires (all earthly desires that lead us away from God - and war against the soul."

Sure! We can enjoy legitimate, good pleasures that God sends our way. But we pilgrims cannot let anything of this earth stop or delay us from our journey to Christ in Heaven.

The Secret Prayer of today's Mass is our prayer: "O Lord, may these mysteries quench the ardor of our earthly desires, and teach us to love only the things of Heaven."

A Christian lives a life of true sacrifice of self for Christ - and experiences true lasting joy.

Saint Paul says: "The sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

Yes in this life we will weep and lament and struggle, and the world will rejoice - We will have sorrow, and sacrifice and self discipline - but holy joy as well. It will be a Joy that will lead us to the Lord in eternal bliss.

We are pilgrims on our way to Heaven - let us never lose

sight of our goal.

(By Father Robert Pasley)

FRIENDSHIPS ARE LIKE FLOWERS (THE BEST PART IS WATCHING the WAY THEY GROW)

This was supposed to be the weekend I put my garden to bed for winter—time to clip the lilac suckers, mulch some perennials, and tuck in a few last bulbs—but instead I'm on a train to Philadelphia to say good-bye to a friend who is dying. I had planned for my hands to be happily immersed in dirt, but then I got the call asking, "Will you come hold my hand?" She never asked me to hold her hand before. I'm thinking about her, and my garden, and suddenly I'm reconfirming my resolve to specialize in perennials, plants that only pretend to die. They surprise you each spring with a resurrection.

Winter is a gardener's holiest time, an opportunity to examine the stupid sins of last year's growing season and repent. Only in winter do you have time to read all those garden books you acquired over the summer. And winter is a time to stare out the window at your barren plot and wonder, How did this garden become so important?

The woman I am going to visit is crazy, some people say. This makes me mad. She's hard to get along with, I guess, and can get ornery. She is 87 and fully in charge of her life. I have always liked visiting her because she can so quickly delight in how ridiculous the world looks. Politicians make her laugh. Doctors make her laugh. Corporate American makes her laugh. Maybe this is the definition of crazy; I don't know.

She lives alone. She's taken care of herself, lived an adventurous life, and even in old age refuses to be cared for. She'd not seen a doctor or taken a drop of medicine in more than half a century. A week ago, at home, she had a stroke. She called an ambulance. She lasted a week in the hospital before she drove the doctors crazy enough to let her go home. The stroke took away control of her mouth and right eye and her ability to walk. They put one of those automatic beds in her dining room and a portable toilet next to it. And there she was left.

She tried to sleep in the bed. But midnight the first night she climbed out of it and crawled up the steps to her old bed. She called me. Here she would sleep, she said. That was when she asked me to come hold her hand.

I came into gardening the way all true gardeners do: I took a path of utter ignorance. I knew next to nothing about plants when I bought my house and inherited this amazing yard, which runs along the side and back of my house, and L-shaped stretch of land that separates me from a railroad track. Mine is an urban garden, a mini-paradise surrounded by the noise and smells and warmth of the city.

As I said, I knew next to nothing about gardening when I

moved here. I just wanted some pretty colors and sweet aromas to walk among.

I went to my local nursery and discovered that flowers come in basically two types: the kind you only have to plant once because they come back every year, and the kind you have to keep planting over and over again because they die every year.

Now, why would I want a plant that was just going to die on me? And so I stayed in the perennial section of the nursery. Next I discovered that perennials come in basically two types: the kind that bloom for a long time and the kind that bloom for a short time. Now, why would I want a plant that hardly ever blooms? And so all my decisions were made.

I took my garden home in my hatchback. I pulled each plant out of its pot and stuck it in the ground. I turned on the hose, looked up at the sun, said, “Go for it guys,” and felt happy. I would now have flowers all summer long, for the rest of my life.

Well, you know the rest of the story. Some plants died immediately and some waited (politely) a few weeks. The rest of the stuff just sort of sat there and did nothing for the first year, and I got really disgusted by all the rude bugs that came in and gnawed on my plants (“SLUGS!”), and then there were all those weeks, and then it wouldn’t rain too much, and by September I was suffering from a fairly profound depression.

The heck with this, I said.

How I got from this point to my present delightful obsession with all things that grow in a garden—perennials as well as annuals and shrubs and weeds and beetles—is a mystery gardeners throughout the ages have likewise pondered, I suspect. I believe the earth continues to call you, once you get your hands in it.

A garden is a relationship. You wouldn’t have started it if you knew what you were getting into: something difficult and messy and maintenance intensive. Still, it fills empty spots you never knew you had inside. So you dig deeper and deeper and the joy you take becomes richer and more complicated and fuller.

My relationship with my 87-year-old friend began about ten years ago. I was writing a series of stories about old women and she was the most intriguing of all, a balloonist who spent her life breaking world records in the sky. She was a wildly eccentric character who loved flying—almost as much as she loved cutting the grass. Often when I’d visit she’d be climbing down off a gigantic tractor, proudly displaying the grass runway she had just mowed smooth. She did this for her husband, a pilot who would land his airplane there. She did this for him for years after he had died, as if expecting him to zoom out of heaven and come back in for a landing at any moment.

A lot of people said she was crazy for doing that, but she

didn’t care. Often she and I would get in her car and drive down the runway, just for fun. “See how smooth it is! Velvety smooth!” Other than that, we would just eat lunch, talk, maybe go to the bakery, or explore fields of wild flowers. My visits became more frequent as the bond between us grew, and though we loved each other, I can’t say we ever got to know each other very well.

I feel a similar way about my flowers. I don’t understand why some of them crawl into the earth in the winter and then reappear in spring, and some of them just throw seeds and then give up living, and some of them propagate with cuttings, and some just go along happily cloning themselves with underground tubers. How remarkable! I keep finding more and more plants I want to try, just to see how each has worked out this game of growing, propagating, and dying—the same game all of us are in.

I don’t really have a favorite plant. Like a good parent, I don’t arrange love that way. My perennials do thrill me with their loyalty, though. I’ll be snooping around in the garden in spring and there one of them will be, rising from the earth, seeming to yawn after some excellent hibernation. And my heart will leap. “Hey!” I’ll say, “Hello there!” right out loud. So begins a summer-long conversation.

When the train finally pulls into the 30th Street Station, I get a taxi, and when I arrive at my friend’s house, I let myself in. I see the automatic bed that she abandoned in the dining room, and the toilet. “Hello?” I yell.

“Hello, dear,” she says. “Up here.” I go up to her bedroom, a place I was never allowed to enter before. It is very messy and very dusty. She is lying there, in the darkness of the late afternoon. I put a light on. “Look at that tree,” she says, motioning toward the window where a tall oak stands. “Isn’t it wonderful?”

“Wonderful,” I say, thinking, This is it? This is how she’s been amusing herself? Not with some TV show—well, she’s never owned a TV—not with her beloved Larry King on the radio; not with the books that were once her passion. She just wanted to watch the oak tree.

“My feet are freezing,” she says. “Would you fix the blankets?”

I smooth them around her feet and then tuck in her shoulders, too.

“You’re good at this,” she says. “Have you been tucking in a lot of old ladies?”

“No, you’re my first,” I say. We laugh. She reaches for my hand and I give it to her. Her skin is surprisingly soft. How do old people get baby skin? I wonder.

“Guess what,” she says. “I’ve decided not to die.”

“That’s good,” I say.

“I’ll die when I’m good and ready,” she says.

“Would you like some soup?” I ask.

“Yes, dear,” she says. “Let’s have a picnic right here.”

I bring up the bed tray with two bowls of soup and some bread and coffee, and I'm pleased to see her appetite is so large. But she is clumsy and has trouble feeding herself. The soup spills down here front. She is wilting. I face this. Night is falling and she asks me to turn on the outside light, which throws a spot on the oak tree.

"Isn't that wonderful?" she asks.

"Wonderful," I say, adding, "You want me to bring up the radio or something? Or why don't you try and read?"

"Oh, no," she says. "I have to watch the tree."

"All right."

"What are you working on now?" she asks.

"An essay about my garden in winter," I say. Something about death and resurrection, I tell her. Or something about how flowers leave you, eventually, just like friends. So why bother? Well, because that's just the way it works.

"That's nice, dear," she says. "I love you, too."

We say good-bye. It feels as if years go by before I finally make it back home to my garden. There, I get on my knees and cover the coreopsis with a blanket of shredded bark. I put the few last tulip bulbs in, a stately row between the picket fence and a patch of grape hyacinths due up in April. It's good to stick your hands in the dirt sometimes. You can own the smallest plot of land in America and still it would be 8,000 miles deep. You start digging with your mind and pretty soon you're doing a free fall right through to China. It's good to take a journey like that sometimes.

(by Jeanne Marie Laskas)

PRAYER CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING WHEN WE TAKE THE TIME

The critical first step into the mysteries of prayer is simply to begin.

Imagine waking in the morning, making a cup of coffee, sitting in a comfortable, supportive chair, closing your eyes, taking a deep breath and acknowledging God's presence. When you move beyond imagining, and actually clear some time and space for this encounter, you have begun to pray.

These early prayer times may be brief, five to 15 minutes, but no matter. Faithful presence is what counts!

So does authenticity. Wise spiritual directors remind us to pray as we can, not as we can't.

When we come to pray, we may be grieving over some desperate loss or rejoicing over good fortune. We may feel confused or empty. Whatever our present condition, that is the place to start. For, one aspect of prayer is laying before God the truth of our lives, presenting our real selves.

If we listen as well as talk when we pray, we are likely to hear of the human needs that touch and sometimes break the heart of Christ. These concerns may be as close as our children or as far away as the Bosnian refugees.

As we listen we are directed to join our will to God's will by acting out the *Beatitudes* in contemporary settings by comfort in, making peace, seeking justice, simplifying our lives.

One way to develop our listening power in prayer is to use the Scriptures. A Gospel passage, a psalm or one of the soaring passages from Paul's letters can serve as a point of departure for our dialogue with the Spirit.

Psalm 90 says that "70 is the sum of our years or 80 if we are strong,"

If I listen, I may hear God's suggestions to do less, savor more and measure everything in terms of love.

The next step is to act upon the insight gained in prayer. I may hesitate or stumble, but this action step is critical. It closes the circle of prayer.

Often an action that flows from prayer is more prayer for people and events.

Over the years as I prayed for my children growing into adulthood I discovered the power in the action of holding these free, unique men and women in God's light, the light of Pentecost.

This relieved me from figuring out precisely what my grown children should do. Rather, my love for them could be joined with God's, trusting that the Spirit would know what paths they should follow.

Time after time I watched them follow the light; time after time I thanked God for saving me from my penchant to control the drama of life unfolding in them.

People who like to walk, by the way, can discover the joys of prayer-walking. Choose a Scripture verse, and ponder that inspired word with every step. Or imagine walking with Jesus, much as his friends did in Galilee's meadows.

Ask for guidance and blessing. Listen carefully for Christ's word. It will come.

Not all prayer is solitary. Often joining others makes us conscious of the holy presence. Even with busy schedules families still gather for meals, and that time can draw people into prayer.

In our family we have tended to say a standard grace learned in childhood. On great feasts we sing the doxology. But lately on the rare occasions when grown children from afar gather, along with a grandchild or two, we ask someone to pray from the heart.

On a recent evening, 11-year-old Sam, who had visited museums with his grandfather all day, prayed for the hungry children in the world saying, "I hope no one will ever be as hungry as I was today." That's when we realized grandfather and Sam had forgotten lunch!

As small Christian communities grow within the Church, men and women experience the power of prayer together. Sometimes their prayer asks God to aid families, parishes,

neighborhoods. Sometimes prayer leads the small community to some form of mission.

One group I know began an affordable housing project, an outgrowth of study and prayer together. Another group supported a member in her election to the school board. Yet another began a support system for immigrants.

None of these initiatives would have happened without prayer

Someone once gave me a book called *Prayer Can Change Your Life*. I've forgotten much of its contents, but the title remains with me.

From the beginning of the Christian era when the Apostles and a group of women, including Jesus' mother, were gathered in the Upper Room and enveloped by the Holy Spirit, prayer has ignited the divine spark in people.

The world of the Galileans was about to expand beyond anything they could imagine. And so it goes, from generation to generation.

Prayer—however brief, however simple, however silent—changes everything, most especially, the pray-er.

(by Dolores R. Leckey, *The Monitor*, October 5, 1995)

PRAYER for THOSE on MEDICATION

Gracious God, You have provided in our world many healing remedies, that are for our benefit when we are sick. You have given great knowledge to doctors and scientists to discover medicines that can cure illness, and help our bodies to heal. God of life, hear my fervent prayer. Through the miraculous intercession of Saint Anthony, I ask your blessing upon the medication prescribed for (mention name) so that he/she may experience healing, and be restored to the fullness of health, in both mind and body. I call upon your holy and divine power to remove this sickness, with the assistance of medicine, so that his/her recovery may be a cause for our joy, and a special sign of Your love and blessing in our lives. Amen.

(flyer by Capuchin Franciscan Friars, Union City, NJ.)

THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US IN OUR PRAYER LIFE

The purpose of prayer is not to change God, but to change us.

Since this change—this transformation—takes place in people of all sorts, there is no “one size fits all” prayer. There is no magic prayer formula.

Prayer, at bottom, is a mystery since it expresses a relationship between people and God, who is the ultimate mystery.

Saint Paul, a man of prayer if ever there was one, said the

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Spirit aids us when we feel that our efforts to pray are weak. **“For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings” (Rm. 8:26).**

While the Bible gives many suggestions about praying, it doesn't solve the mystery. Prayer, like all religion, aims at a union of heart and mind and will with God.

Prayer begins with an awareness of God's presence in human lives. Prayer then responds to that presence.

People experience their dependence on God — their need for God — and respond to that experience in various ways: by praise, adoration, awe, thanksgiving for loving kindness or a sense of unworthiness. All these responses are seen in the Bible, especially the Psalms, a collection of private and communal prayers.

The most common type of prayer probably is prayer of petition, asking God's help. From one standpoint, this type of prayer may seem selfish, but at least implicitly it is prayer of praise. For by requesting help we admit our dependence on God, our trust in God's loving concern for us.

Much advice about prayer deals with prayer of petition. Jesus urged his disciples not to give up their trust in God's active care, to persevere in the face of delays, to go on asking, seeking, knocking at the door (**Lk. 11:9-10**).

He gave as an example a person coming to a friend for help in the middle of the night. The initial response may be apparent reluctance, but eventually the petitioner gets what he asks — and more.

This persistence could seem like badgering God to get our own way, but we cannot “wear God down.”

We maintain contact with God by this persistence, however. This constant personal contact is important. Our relationship with God needs to be an ongoing conversation.

Perhaps the most important instruction on prayer was given by Jesus through his own example. In the garden, with his crucifixion impending, Jesus prayer: **“Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still not my will but yours be done” (Lk. 22:42).**

(by Father John J. Castelot, *The Monitor*, October 5, 1995)

PRAYER to SAINT ANTHONY for EMOTIONAL HEALING

Saint Anthony, dear friend and heavenly guide, be present to me now, and let me know your compassion. Pray to our dear Lord for me, that I may experience calmness, tranquility, and peace in all my emotions. Help me to grow in faith and hope. Protect me from all that displeases God, and obtain for me serenity of mind and spirit. I place all my confidence in you, Saint Anthony, and I pray for

mercy, grace, and God's gentle goodness.

Amen.

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THE BACK DOOR to HEAVEN

The angels had ceased from their singing, Strange whispers were filling the air; The saints seemed perturbed over something and gathered in groups, here and there. Strange people were walking through Heaven, with shadowy garments and face. Saint Paul to Saints Thomas and Andrew- "Who let THOSE folk in this place?" But no one would answer this question! So, he set out to look for his mate; for surely Saint Peter could tell him. He'd know if they'd passed through the gate. But Simon knew nothing about it.

So off they went to explore, and hunted in vain through the Heavens, Until, at the very last door, they heard such a terrible racket. Both looked at each other and stopped. Says Paul -- "What can Joseph be doing?" For this was his carpenter's shop. Then opening the door kind of slowly, sure what do you think they did see -- A hole in the flagstone of Heaven, and Joseph down there on his knee. Till, spying a ladder descending, they saw the hole mystery unfold -- He'd built a back door-way to Heaven to rescue the poor suffering souls!

Saint Peter got mad as a hatter, "Man, this all has to stop, or else you'll be put out of Heaven. We'll close up your carpenter's shop!" Saint Joseph got up from the ladder, and drew himself up, full of pride. "If you dare suggest I leave Heaven, I'll take with me, *Mary*, my bride; And, since She is truly God's Mother, she'll take with her, Jesus, her Son. And, then there WON'T be any Heaven." Says Peter, "St Joseph, you've won!"

(By Rev. Hugh F.X. Sharkey)

FIRST PRINCIPLES of PRAYER: TAKE the TIME, PRAY AS YOU ARE

There are many styles of prayer, and the difficulties experienced in prayer are just as numerous.

Since prayer is really a relationship with God, everyone's experience of it is unique. Every friendship is unique, after all

In any relationship, however, some common principles can help. Two principles have been greatly helpful to those wanting to pray better.

The first principle is this: Prayer takes time. Any relationship must be nurtured, and that requires spending time together.

If prayer is important, we make time for it. How much time varies widely.

Some people pray a full hour each day. Others manager five or 10 minutes. The length of time is not as important as the regularity.

It is important to develop a regular patter of prayer. Choosing the same time each day (even if we miss a day occasionally) is crucial.

The second principle also is simple: Pray as you are.

Some people are uncomfortable being invited to a come-as-you-are-party. They want to get dressed up to look better, often to look better than they really are.

Many people have the same instinct with prayer. They feel they cannot enter into a relationship with God until first becoming better somehow. They don't feel worth of God's friendship, for any of 1,000 reasons.

The joy of Christianity, however, is precisely that God didn't wait for us to become worthy before loving us.

—We are not redeemed because we are worthy; we become worthy because we are redeemed.

—We are not loved because we are so lovable; we become lovable because God loves us first.

Our one task is to accept God's love and grace, and let God transform us gradually.

This also means we need to pray no matter how we are feeling.

If I am depressed, I pray out of my depression. If I am happy, I pray out of my joy. If tired, I pray in my weariness. If I am excited, I pray with excitement. If I am angry, I pray from my anger, even if God is the object of my anger.

We pray as we are, from wherever we are.

The content of my prayer will often be whatever is going on in my life and mind and heart. I can share with God whatever is making me depressed, happy, tired, excited, bored or angry.

This also is a helpful approach to distractions in prayer.

When I realize I am distracted, I need not get upset at my wandering mind. I can just return to my awareness of the Lord and make whatever distracted me the subject of my prayer.

If I feel like praying, I pray with ease. If I don't feel like praying, I pray with effort. No state of mind or situation of life is a good excuse for not praying.

This brings us back to time for prayer.

We only get physically fit if we exercise even when we don't feel like exercising. Likewise, we develop a strong relationship with God in prayer when we pray whether we feel like it or not.

Partners in marriage must make time for each other even when they would rather be doing something else. If they begin finding excuses not to spend time together, the marriage relationship will soon be in trouble.

It's the same with our relationship with God.

If we want a healthy relationship with the Lord, we will take time to pray, just as we are.

(by Father Lawrence E. Mick, *The Monitor*)

ONE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE of FASTING

I began to fast, because my wife and children were fasting. I did not want them to cook just for me. And it worked... The first experience was in prayer. Suddenly I noticed that I was distracted while praying. Suddenly I noticed that I was distracted at Mass. I listened to the Word of God, and did not feel it as working for me. I heard it and left not taking in anything for myself. The need came to change my prayer. It seems as if a new approach to prayer came, because on the day of fasting I was more recollected. A whole day I was conscious of the fact that I was fasting. I was constantly struggling with things; with food and drinks, and was leaving prayer for tomorrow. But, gradually, I began to feel better in prayer. One day something happened which made the prayer pay off. I have to confess that I quarreled with my brother for a long time. It became like a habit. It did not even bother me that the two of us did not talk, and that our wives and children did not talk to each other. Suddenly, it began to bother me. I continued to pray and to fast. One morning I felt as if some kind of burden fell down from me. I went to my brother and asked him for reconciliation. He was ready, thank God. Today we live like brothers again and that, now, is most important.

If we look at this example only, we can say that fasting helped this man to find himself. First it helped him to be aware of self and experience his own relationship with God and with people. And when the prayer began to take action in his heart it was not necessary to wait too long that from a new relationship with God, a new relationship with his brother would develop. So, evil blinds a person to the point that it is not seen, nor can a person change until the basic conversion to God begins and until, through this conversion, the feelings of soul and heart become more perceptive.

The battle during fasting, helps a person to achieve inner freedom in a relationship with a brother and to see things in a new light.

TO FAST MEANS:

- To always seek God and to put Him in the center of life.
- To give praise, to give glory and to love God above all.
- To love our neighbor as ourselves.
- To love the one who is closest to us.
- To be a true brother and true sister.
- To think about others and pray for them.
- To take time for self and others.
- To give a smile to others always.
- To be good, faithful and a peacemaker.
- To share with others what we have, especially with the poor.
- To be courteous in traffic.
- To pay the right bills.
- To always grow in virtues, especially in love.

The PILGRIM

- To keep converting to God and keep dying to sin.

(from "The Call of the Queen of Peace" by Father Petar Ljubicic)

PRAYER of CONFIDENCE to SAINT ANTHONY

Most holy Saint Anthony, Beloved Friend of Jesus, I place myself in your heavenly care. Be with me, especially in life's troubles and difficulties. Intercede before the Lord for me, so that I may confidently know I do not face my problems alone. I join my prayers to yours, O Great Saint, as I ask God to give me consolation in times of sorrow, courage when I am afraid, and healing from all the ills that afflict me. Obtain for me from God, Most High, the grace to accept whatever is God's holy will for me and my loved ones. Strengthen my faith so that I will never despair, but always have hope in God's healing presence and power in my life. Amen.

(flyer by Capuchin Franciscan Friars, Union City, NJ.)

ARMOR of GOD - A LOVE LETTER for YOU!

Good Morning, Father! Good Morning, Jesus! Good Morning, Holy Spirit!

Today Heavenly Father, according to Your Word, I present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in Your sight. Because I am not contending against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, world rulers of this present darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places, I take the whole armor of God so that I may be able to withstand in the evil day.

So today I stand and gird my loins with truth. I put on the breastplate of righteousness. I shod my feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all these, I take the shield of faith to quench ALL the flaming darts of the evil one. I take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

I pray at ALL times in the Spirit with ALL prayer and supplication for ALL God's family and for me that I may open my mouth boldly TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL. The weapons of my warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. Today I destroy arguments and EVERY proud obstacle to the knowledge of God and take EVERY thought captive to OBEY Christ. Thank you, Father, that according to Your Word the glory of the Lord is my rear guard. I praise You and thank You for the armor of light You've provided for me this day. I am completely covered now. Upon Jesus I have built my life. The gates of hell shall not prevail

against me.

Jesus, I apply Your Precious Blood to my life, my family, my home, and all my possessions. You are my Shepherd and I shall not want. For You have supplied ALL my needs according to Your riches in glory. I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me. I praise You for walking in divine health, for You are my God who heals ALL my diseases. I praise You and thank You for my prosperity and good health even as my soul prospers. For the joy of the Lord is my strength. Father, I have prayed according to Your Word.

You said You would watch over Your Word to perform it. I am reminded that every word spoken becomes a living thing - either to minister life or death and destruction. Lord Jesus, let my meditation be sweet to You as I will rejoice in You all day. Just rise up and live big within me. For I am Yours and You are mine in the Mighty Name of Jesus. Amen

Print out the above prayer and place it in a prominent place in your home. Pray the prayer every morning!

(e mail to PFMC - no source)

PRAYER HELPS in FORGIVENESS and CONVERSION

One young **Medjugorje** pilgrim tells a story of how many difficult problems she had at her work place. She was working as a medical nurse. Many of her co-workers did not like her because she was a true believer. They were envious of her because she was so conscientious. They tried to provoke her, and some even hated her...She complained about it to God in prayer and was seeking an answer. She tried to resolve this through her own power the

way she imagined it should be done. She said she had a temptation to return with the same measure and to hate them back. All this brought much unrest into her heart...She could no longer sleep in peace. "I can't go on like this anymore." She found enough sense and took the Holy Scripture and began to read...She opened her heart to God, she surrendered her life to Him. She also handed to Him all of those with whom she worked. "You, God, know my hardships. I am helpless. You are the Almighty. I beg You to resolve my problem." She confessed, "I had a feeling that God was waiting for me to say this. A peace and an indescribable joy encompassed my heart. I had a powerful feeling that first of all, I had to forgive those people. I had to get to like them and pray for them and to give thanks to God for them...All of a sudden, everything changed around me. I went to confession and revealed all this to the priest. I even received some useful advice. From that moment on, there were no more enemies for me, nor were there people who hated me." So, the solution is here: Prayer changes enemies into friends! At her work place, the situation changed completely. Everyone recognized in her a special power that comes from faith. Here, then, is a solution for those hard and heavy life situations...

A few years ago, something unusual happened in France. A woman was killed in her apartment while her husband and her children attended mass in a nearby church. How awful it must have been for her husband when he saw her dead body upon returning from church. He gathered enough strength to say, "God you know everything - why this had to happen. If this is Your will, help me to bear with this as a Christian. Give me strength to forgive the murderer and to pray for his conversion...!"

A few days after the crime, the police were able to track down the murderer and to apprehend him. The reporters hurriedly came to interview the husband. But they were all

PILGRIMAGE to MEDJUGORJE, ROME (CANNONIZATION of BLESSED CATHERINE DREXEL) and ASSISI, 24 SEPTEMBER – 6 OCTOBER 2000

Name: _____ Room With? _____ **PPM 9/2000**

Address: _____ Date of Birth (DOB): ____/____/____ Age: _____
Month / Day / Year Kept Confidential

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____ - _____ Phone: (____) _____ - (____) _____ - _____
Post Office (Home Location) Plus four, if available Area Code Home Area Code Office

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: (____) _____ - (____) _____ - _____
Required for Air Travel First and Last Name Relationship Area Code Home Area Code Office

\$500 Deposit (\$250 Non-Refundable) Enclosed: • **\$2899 PPM Total Package Payment Enclosed: •**
Single Supplement \$250• (Advised for Smokers/Snorers) **Traveler's Insurance at Cost Desired: Yes • No •**

Help me with add-on air from: _____ to Newark.

Charge Account Number: _____ Name on Card (Print): _____

Discover • Master Card • Visa • Expiration Date: _____ Signature: _____

Your "Signature" indicates understanding and acceptance of the terms and conditions of this **PPM** as well as that you are mentally and physically capable of making this **PPM**. Reservations cannot be accepted without signature and either deposit or full payment. "DOB" and "Age" are used to match you with a room mate if NO "Room with?" preferences are provided.

PPM 9/2000

surprised when he said to them: "Please proclaim that I have forgiven the murderer and that I am praying for his conversion." In the headlines on the front page, the newspaper printed the unusual wish of this religious man. Encouraged by the article, many Christians prayed that God would have mercy on the murderer. God heard and answered the desires and prayers of the many people and softened the heart of the hardened criminal. He recognized his sin, confessed it and humbly made a contrition for all of his sins. He then recognized Jesus as Savior. The prison priest confirmed the conversion of this criminal - with a happy heart.

What to say to all of this? It would be better to leave this without comment. But let us allow only this much: Did this murderer deserve such mercy from God? Some might say that it would have been better for God to spare the life of an innocent woman rather than give mercy to this criminal. If we think in this way, then we should also understand that we, too, are guilty...the Holy Scripture is telling us that all people have sinned and have lost the grace of God...this example is helping us to look up to this great man who looked up to the Savior, Jesus Christ; He prayed for His enemies on the cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!" The love of God is expressed in that He sent His only Son to death for unworthy and lost sinners.

One young man tells us how once he received a letter from a woman who showered him with insults, humiliations and blasphemies. She called him all kinds of names. The letter was full of offenses. He said how in the beginning he read the letter fast, and then he read it again slowly. "At the end, I was so bitter," he exclaimed, "that I told my friend "I will write her a letter back, and I will tell her what she deserves!" My friend told me: "I advise you first to pray." Pray now when I am so angry? Can this be done? Yes, it

can, and it must!

What kind of letter would it had been if I had written it in anger, when I was full of bitterness? As soon as I came to my room, I threw myself to my knees. I could not pray right away. When I was able to quiet down, I prayed first of all for myself, because I had allowed myself to be provoked. Then I prayed for the woman that God forgive her for all those insults, and then again, I prayed for myself, because something must have moved this woman to write in this way. What this "something" was, I never found out, but I prayed to God to forgive me for this. Only then was I able to answer this letter. I wrote a peaceful letter and also sent a small package.

Soon another letter came from the same woman. I opened it up with anticipation. It was short but clear. She asked for forgiveness and to forget the first letter. She said: "I know that you have forgiven me, otherwise you would not have sent me that gift after all those insults."

If I had sent the letter back immediately, in the state of mind I was, it would have been like pouring oil on the fire and Satan would have been happy about it. This way, thank God, all ended well."

To those who love God and who pray - there will always be a good ending.

("The Call of the Queen of Peace," Father Petar Ljubicic)

DO YOU LOVE HIM?

Do you know 10 people who would admit they love Jesus? This is a Simple Test: If you love Jesus--send this poem to at least 10 people.

I knelt to pray but not for long,
I had too much to do.

**PILGRIMAGE to the HOLY LAND "WALK IN HIS FOOTSTEPS,"
1 -14 NOVEMBER 2000**

Name: _____ Room With? _____ **HLP 11/2000**

Address: _____ Date of Birth (DOB): ____/____/____ Age: _____
Month / Day / Year (Kept Confidential)

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____ - _____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____ - _____
Post Office (Home Location) Plus four, if available Area Code Home Area Code Office

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____ - _____
Required for Air Travel First and Last Name Relationship Area Code Home Area Code Office

\$500 Deposit (\$250 Non-Refundable) Enclosed: •
Single Supplement \$475 • (Advised for Smokers/Snorers) **\$2899 PPM Total Package Payment Enclosed: •**
Traveler's Insurance at Cost Desired: Yes • No •

Help me with add-on air from: _____ to **JFK, New York, NY.** A detailed itinerary for this **HLP** will be provided.

Charge Account Number: _____ **Name on Card (Print):** _____

Discover • Master Card • Visa • Expiration Date: _____ **Signature:** _____

Your "Signature" indicates understanding and acceptance of the terms and conditions of this **HLP** as well as that you are mentally and physically capable of making this **HLP**. Reservations cannot be accepted without signature and either deposit or full payment.

"DOB" and "Age" are used to match you with a room mate if NO "Room with?" preferences are provided. **HLP 11/2000**

I had to hurry and get to work
For bills would soon be due.

So I knelt and said a hurried prayer,
And jumped up off my knees.
My Christian duty was now done
My soul could rest at ease.

All day long I had no time
To spread a word of cheer.
No time to speak of Christ to friends,
They'd laugh at me I'd fear.

No time, no time, too much to do,
That was my constant cry,
No time to give to souls in need
But at last the time, the time to die.

I went before the Lord,
I came, I stood with downcast eyes.
For in His hands God held a book;
It was the book of life.

God looked into His book and said
"Your name I cannot find.
I once was going to write it down...
But never found the time!"

PRAYER to SAINT ANTHONY for HEALING

Compassionate Saint Anthony, you are called the 'Miracle Worker' by those who have blessed by your special friendship. I ask you to look with favor on (name of person) who is weak and failing. Great Saint Anthony, come to their assistance of (name). Obtain for him/her health in mind and body, and the strength to accept all suffering in union with Christ, our Savior. Loving Saint Anthony, console all those who are afflicted, and guide them to the heart of the Divine Physician, where they will obtain compassion, mercy and hope. Amen.

(flyer by Capuchin Franciscan Friars, Union City, NJ.)

PRESENTATION of TEXT of THIRD SECRET of FATIMA

This morning in the Holy See Press Office, the document "The Message Of Fatima" was presented. It has been prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and carries the signatures of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone S.D.B., respectively prefect and secretary of the congregation.

The document, which is over 40 pages long, has been published in English, French, Italian, Spanish, German, Portuguese and Polish. It is made up of an introduction by

Archbishop Bertone; the first and second parts of the "secret" of Fatima in Sr. Lucia's original text dated August 31, 1941 and addressed to the bishop of Leiria-Fatima, and a translation; the photostatic reproduction of the original manuscript of the third part of the "secret" and a translation; John Paul II's letter to Sr. Lucia dated April 19, 2000, and a translation; a summary of Sr. Lucia's conversation with Archbishop Bertone and Bishop Serafim de Sousa Ferreira e Silva of Leiria-Fatima which took place on April 27, 2000, in the Carmel Monastery of Saint Teresa of Coimbra, Portugal; the words of Cardinal Secretary of State Angelo Sodano at the end of the beatification of Jacinta and Francisco on May 13, 2000; a theological commentary by Cardinal Ratzinger.

In his introduction, Archbishop Bertone affirms that "Fatima is undoubtedly the most prophetic of modern apparitions. ... In 1917 no one could have imagined all this: the three 'pastorinhos' of Fatima see, listen and remember, and Lucia, the surviving witness, commits it all to paper when ordered to do so by the Bishop of Leiria and with Our Lady's permission."

He continues: "The third part of the "secret" was written on January 3, 1944. There is only one manuscript, which is here reproduced photostatically. The sealed envelope was initially in the custody of the Bishop of Leiria. To ensure better protection for the 'secret' the envelope was placed in the secret archives of the Holy Office on April 4, 1957. The Bishop of Leiria informed Sr. Lucia of this."

The secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith indicates that "according to the records of the Archives, the Commissary of the Holy Office, Father Pierre Paul Philippe O.P., with the agreement of Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, brought the envelope containing the third part of the 'secret of Fatima' to Pope John XXIII on August 17, 1959. 'After some hesitation,' His Holiness said: 'We shall wait. I shall pray. I shall let you know what I decide.' In fact Pope John XXIII decided to return the sealed envelope to the Holy Office and not to reveal the third part of the 'secret.' Paul VI read the contents with the Substitute, Archbishop Angelo Dell'Acqua, on March 27, 1965 and returned the envelope to the Archives of the Holy Office, deciding not to publish the text. John Paul II, for his part, asked for the envelope containing the third part of the 'secret' following the assassination attempt on May 13, 1981," and this was given to Archbishop Eduardo Martinez Somalo, Substitute of the Secretari of State, on July 18 of the same year. On August 11 it was returned to the Archives of the Holy Office.

"As is well known," added Archbishop Bertone, "Pope John Paul II immediately thought of consecrating the world to the Immaculate Heart of *Mary* and he himself composed a prayer for what he called an 'Act of Entrustment' which was

to be celebrated in the Basilica of Saint *Mary* Major on June 7 1981."

"In order to respond more fully to the requests of 'Our Lady,' the Holy Father desired to make more explicit during the Holy Year of the Redemption the Act of Entrustment of June 7, 1981, which had been repeated in Fatima on May 13, 1982."

"Sr. Lucia," continued the archbishop, "personally confirmed that this solemn and universal act of consecration corresponded to what Our Lady wished. Hence any further discussion or request is without basis."

Sr. Lucia had already hinted at the interpretation of the third part of the 'secret' in a letter to the Holy Father dated May 12, 1982. That letter is also published in the document.

Finally, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone indicates that "the decision of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to make public the third part of the 'secret' of Fatima brings to an end a period of history marked by tragic human lust for power and evil, yet pervaded by the merciful love of God and the watchful care of the Mother of Jesus and of the Church."

(VATICAN CITY, JUN 26, 2000 MESSAGE FATIMA / BERTONE VIS 000626 (740))

COMPLETE TRANSLATION of ORIGINAL TEXT

Given below is the complete translation of the original Portuguese text of the third part of the secret of Fatima, revealed to the three shepherd children at Cova da Iria-Fatima on July 13, 1917, and committed to paper by Sr. Lucia on January 3, 1944:

"I write in obedience to you, my God, who command me to do so through his Excellency the Bishop of Leiria and through your Most Holy Mother and mine.

"After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendor that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: 'Penance, Penance, Penance!'. And we saw in an immense light that is God: 'something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it' a Bishop dressed in White 'we had the impression that it was the Holy Father'. Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain, at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark; before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed

for the souls of the corpses he met on his way; having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions.

Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal as persorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God."

(VATICAN CITY, JUN 26, 2000 -THIRD SECRET / VIS 000626 (380))

CARDINAL RATZINGER: PENANCE IS the KEY to the "SECRET"

Cardinal Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, writes that the "key word" of the third secret of Fatima "is the triple cry, 'Penance, Penance, Penance!'"

These words appear in his "theological commentary" published at the end of the document made public today by the Holy See. Cardinal Ratzinger goes on to state that other key words are "my Immaculate heart will triumph," and "the Heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of every kind. The 'fiat' of *Mary*, the word of her heart, has changed the history of the world."

The theological commentary of the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is divided into three parts: "Public Revelation and private revelations - their theological status"; "The anthropological structure of private revelations" and "An attempt to interpret the 'secret' of Fatima".

"The term 'public Revelation' refers to the revealing action of God directed to humanity as a whole and which finds its literary expression in the two parts of the Bible: the Old and New Testaments. It is called 'Revelation' because in it God gradually made himself known to men, to the point of becoming man himself, in order to draw to himself the whole world and unite it with himself through his Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. In Christ, God has said everything, that is, he has revealed himself completely, and therefore Revelation came to an end with the fulfillment of the mystery of Christ as enunciated in the New Testament."

'Private revelation,' on the other hand, "refers to all the visions and revelations which have taken place since the completion of the New Testament. This is the category to which we must assign the message of Fatima. The authority of private revelations is essentially different from that of the definitive public Revelation. The latter demands

faith." Private revelation, on the other hand, "is a help to this faith, and shows its credibility precisely by leading (one) back to the definitive public Revelation."

Quoting the Flemish theologian E. Dhanis, Cardinal Ratzinger affirms that "ecclesiastical approval of a private revelation has three elements: the message contains nothing contrary to faith or morals; it is lawful to make it public; and the faithful are authorized to accept it with prudence. Such a message can be a genuine help in understanding the Gospel and living it better at a particular moment in time; therefore it should not be disregarded. It is a help which is offered, but which one is not obliged to use."

Cardinal Ratzinger also highlights that "prophecy in the biblical sense does not mean to predict the future but to explain the will of God for the present, and therefore show the right path to take for the future."

The most important part of the theological commentary is dedicated to: "An attempt to interpret the 'secret' of Fatima." In the same way as the key word of the first and second part of the 'secret' is to 'save souls,' "the key word of this third part is the threefold cry: 'Penance, Penance, Penance!'"

The beginning of the Gospel comes to mind: 'Repent and believe the Good News.' To understand the signs of the times means to accept the urgency of penance of conversion of faith. This is the correct response to this moment of history, characterized by the grave perils outlined in the images that follow. Allow me to add here a personal recollection: in a conversation with me Sister Lucia said that it appeared ever more clearly to her that the purpose of all the apparitions was to help people to grow more and more in faith, hope and love everything else was intended to lead to this."

The prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith then considers the "images" of the secret: "The angel with the flaming sword on the left of the *Mother of God* recalls similar images in the Book of Revelation. This represents the threat of judgement which looms over the world. Today the prospect that the world might be reduced to ashes by a sea of fire no longer seems pure fantasy: man himself, with his inventions, has forged the flaming sword.

"The vision then shows the power which stands opposed to the force of destruction the splendor of the *Mother of God* and, stemming from this in a certain way, the summons to penance. In this way, the importance of human freedom is underlined: the future is not in fact unchangeably set, and the image which the children saw is in no way a film preview of a future in which nothing can be changed. Indeed, the whole point of the vision is to bring freedom onto the scene and to steer freedom in a positive direction.

It's meaning is to mobilize the forces of change in the right

direction. Therefore we must totally discount fatalistic explanations of the 'secret,' such as, for example, the claim that the would-be assassin of May 13 1981 was merely an instrument of the divine plan guided by Providence. Rather, the vision speaks of dangers and how we might be saved from them."

Cardinal Ratzinger explains that "the place of the action is described in three symbols: a steep mountain, a great city reduced to ruins and finally a large rough-hewn cross. The mountain and city symbolize the arena of human history: history as an arduous ascent to the summit, history as the arena of human creativity and social harmony, but at the same time a place of destruction, where man actually destroys the fruits of his own work.

On the mountain stands the cross the goal and guide of history. The cross transforms destruction into salvation; it stands as a sign of history's misery but also as a promise for history.

"At this point human persons appear: the Bishop dressed in white ('we had the impression that it was the Holy Father'), other Bishops, priests, men and women Religious, and men and women of different ranks and social positions. The Pope seems to precede the others, trembling and suffering because of all the horrors around him. Not only do the houses of the city lie half in ruins, but he makes his way among the corpses of the dead. The

Church's path is thus described as a 'Via Crucis,' as a journey through a time of violence, destruction and persecution. The history of an entire century can be seen represented in this image. Just as the places of the earth are synthetically described in the two images of the mountain and the city, and are directed towards the cross, so too time is presented in a compressed way.

"In the vision we can recognize the last century as a century of martyrs, a century of suffering and persecution for the Church, a century of World Wars and the many local wars which filled the last fifty years and have inflicted unprecedented forms of cruelty. In the 'mirror' of this vision we see passing before us the witnesses of the faith decade by decade."

The Cardinal also states that "in the Via Crucis of an entire century, the figure of the Pope has a special role. In his arduous ascent of the mountain we can undoubtedly see a convergence of different Popes. Beginning from Pius X up to the present Pope, they all shared the sufferings of the century and strove to go forward through all the anguish along the path which leads to

the Cross. In the vision, the Pope too is killed along with the martyrs. When, after the attempted assassination on 13 May 1981, the Holy Father had the text of the third part of the 'secret' brought to him, was it not inevitable that he

should see in it his own fate? He had been very close to death, and he himself explained his survival in the following words:

'... it was a mother's hand that guided the bullet's path and in his throes the Pope halted at the threshold of death' (May 13 1994). That here 'a mother's hand' had deflected the fateful bullet only shows once more that there is no immutable destiny, that faith and prayer are forces which can influence history and that in the end prayer is more powerful than bullets and faith more powerful than armies."

The conclusion of the secret, continues the cardinal, "uses images which Lucia may have seen in devotional books and which draw their inspiration from long-standing intuitions of faith. It is a consoling vision, which seeks to open a history of blood and tears to the healing power of God.

Beneath the arms of the cross angels gather up the blood of the martyrs, and with it they give life to the souls making their way to God. Here, the blood of Christ and the blood of the martyrs are considered as one: the blood of the martyrs runs down from the arms of the cross. The martyrs die in communion with the Passion of Christ, and their death becomes one with his."

"The vision of the third part of the 'secret', so distressing at first, concludes with an image of hope: no suffering is in vain, and it is a suffering Church, a Church of martyrs, which becomes a sign-post for man in his search for God. From the suffering of the witnesses there comes a purifying and renewing power, because their suffering is the actualization of the suffering of Christ himself and a communication in the here and now of its saving effect."

"What is the meaning of the 'secret' of Fatima as a whole (in its three parts)?" asks the Cardinal:

"First of all we must affirm with Cardinal Sodano: '... the events to which the third part of the 'secret' of Fatima refers now seem part of the past. Insofar as individual events are described, they belong to the past. Those who expected exciting apocalyptic revelations about the end of the world or the future course of history are bound to be disappointed. Fatima does not satisfy our curiosity in this way, just as Christian faith in general cannot be reduced to an object of mere curiosity. What remains was already evident when we began our reflections on the text of the 'secret': the exhortation to prayer as the path of 'salvation for souls' and, likewise, the summons to penance and conversion.

"I would like finally to mention another key expression of the 'secret' which has become justly famous: 'my Immaculate Heart will triumph.' What does this mean? The Heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of every kind. The 'fiat' of *Mary*, the word of her heart, has changed the history of the world, because it brought the Saviour into the world

because, thanks to her 'Yes,' God could become man in our world and remains so for all time. The Evil One has power in this world, as we see and experience continually; he has power because our freedom continually lets itself be led away from God.

"But since God himself took a human heart and has thus steered human freedom towards what is good, the freedom to choose evil no longer has the last word. From that time forth, the word that prevails is this: 'In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart; I have overcome the world.' The message of Fatima invites us to trust in this promise."

VATICAN CITY, JUN 26, 2000 - FATIMA MESSAGE /
RATZINGER VIS 000626 (1940)

PRESS BULLETIN 144, May 31, 2000.

VISIT of the MASTER GENERAL of the FRANCISCAN ORDER

As they were travelling from **Split** to **Mostar**, the Master General of the Franciscan order, Father Giacomo Bini, and the Secretary of the Order, Father Stefan Ottenbreit, visited **Medjugorje**. During their short meeting with the Franciscans, they talked about the pastorate of the parish, life in the Shrine and about the Franciscans who work in the Shrine.

<http://www.tel.hr/medjugorje/enpb2000.html>

PRESS BULLETIN 145, June 14, 2000.

THE MODEL of FAITH in GOD'S WORD

Immediately before the 19th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions it is necessary to return to the basic and central contents of Our Lady's messages. It is necessary to renew them and to call them to mind so as to preserve the authentic heritage of Our Lady that she is bestowing on us. That heritage is the heritage of her Son which the Church received, which it must live and proclaim. According to the testimony of the visionaries in the first encounters Our Lady appeared to them with the child Jesus and under the cross. In that light are understandable her calls to conversion, prayer, fasting and reconciliation. In the light of those first apparitions also the response of millions of pilgrims and of the parish can be understood. From the patristic period of the Church *Mary* has been held up as the model of faith and obedience to God's world. That model of the Church is speaking today through the apparitions and events in the parish of **Medjugorje** and through the response of Christians throughout the world.

Father Ivan Landeka

VISIT of BRAZILIAN BISHOP

From June 1st to 4th Msgr Waldemar Chaves de Araujo was here from Brazil with a group of pilgrims. Before his departure from **Medjugorje** Msgr. Araujo spoke with

Father Slavko Barbaric. We present here the full conversation.

S.B.: Your excellency, would you say something to our readers about yourself?

WCH: I am Msgr. Waldemar Chaves de Araujo, Bishop of the diocese of Sao Joao del Rei in Brazil. I studied in Brazil and in Belgium. The situation in my diocese is good. I have developed good relations with my priests, religious and laity and we have various groups of active people who are working on different levels. In my diocese there are about 300,000 faithful with 304 communities. I came on pilgrimage with a small group from Brazil that has made the pilgrimage here to this place dedicated to *Mary's* presence. We pray together, meditate and remain in silence. This is my first time in **Medjugorje**.

S.B.: When and how for the first time did you hear about **Medjugorje** and what is your experience?

WCH: I read reports from **Medjugorje** about the apparitions and all that was happening, and I spoke with people who came here on pilgrimage. I believe that Our Lady is appearing here. She is the Mother of Jesus and our Mother. She desires to help us. That is why I came with this group and why we are living these days conscious that she is present with us in a special way as Mother. My experience is that this indeed is a real place of prayer. I can say that I have always nurtured devotion to *Mary*, but here I have renewed and deepened it still more. Really, I have no difficulties believing that She is appearing here. God is working here how He wants to and when He wants to and He has decided to work in this manner to work in **Medjugorje**.

S.B.: Do you have some message for the parishioners, the pilgrims and people in general?

WCH: My message from **Medjugorje** is a message of hope. Whoever decides for a true devotion to *Mary* and does what She says, will meet Jesus, and Jesus give hope. Whoever starts living the sacraments, as I saw they are lived here - the celebration of mass, confessions, adoration, prayer - will have his life path filled with hope and peace. With *Mary* our path is sure. Accept what she says, she knows the Way, she knows her Son and will help us on our path to the final homeland in heaven. May God bless you all. I shall pray for all of you.

<http://www.tel.hr/medjugorje/enpb2000.html>

THE ANNUAL APPARITION of OUR LADY to the VISIONARY, IVANKA

The visionary **Ivanka Ivankovic Elez** had her regular annual apparition *June 25, 2000*. **Vicka, Marija**, and **Ivan** according to their testimony still have the daily apparition, while **Mirjana, Ivanka** and **Jakov** have an apparition once a year.

On the occasion of her last daily apparition *May 7, 1985* Our Lady confided to **Ivanka** her *10th* secret, and told her that for the duration of her entire life she would have an apparition once a year and that on the anniversary of the apparitions. Thus it was also this year. The apparition lasted *7 minutes* and **Ivanka** had it in her family home. Present for the apparition were only **Ivanka's** family, husband and three children.

Our Lady gave the following message: *"I introduced myself as 'Queen of Peace.' Again I call you to peace, fasting, prayer. Renew family prayer and receive my blessing."*

Ivanka told us that Our Lady was happy and that she spoke to her about the sixth secret.

<http://www.tel.hr/medjugorje/enajново.html>

REFLECTION on OUR LADY's MESSAGE of JUNE 25, 2000

Due to renovations in the computer system in Medjugorje the reflection was not available as of 7/6/00. It will be printed in the August / September 2000 issue.

PILGRIMS of FAITH MARIAN CENTER (PFMC)

We are not a **store**. We operate like a **church pamphlet or book rack** where you **make selections** and **offer a donation** based on **value** posted or received. See the center section of this issue of *"The PILGRIM"* for a partial listing, four pages, of items which can be obtained through donation. We carry these items because of requests from pilgrims and other readers of *"The PILGRIM."* If you wish to order, please remove the center pages, 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**.

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 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 need regular 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. 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. Please come and see the new **PFMC**. We know you will enjoy what you see and finding a way of helping out.

Thank you and God bless you, **Kathleen and Staff**

MARIAN PILGRIMAGE PRESENTATIONS

Kathleen will be speaking at *Saint Veronica Parish* in **Howell, NJ**, on *Tuesday, December 12, 2000*. For details call *Saint Veronica Parish*.

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

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

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

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

The PILGRIM

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

PHONES

The **Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (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**, particularly at night and on weekends, (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 at **Epiphany House**, some extra rings will be heard before you can leave a message. Please be patient and wait at least 5 or 6 rings.

All FAX messages should be sent to (856) 768-9428. They go to the FAX machine in **Epiphany House**.

BLESSED OIL

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

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

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

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

CATHOLIC TALK RADIO

If you live in the **Delaware Valley** or **Southern New Jersey**, listen to **In His Sign Ministries "Putting It On The Line,"** 5-6 PM, *Monday-Friday* on **WTMR-AM 800**.

Also listen to "**HELP WAKE UP AMERICA**" from 2-2:15 PM, *Monday-Friday* on **WTMR-AM 800**.

Kathleen and **Keith** as well as others from the **PFMC** will be joining **Dom Lettieri** more frequently on **WTMR-AM 800**. We will soon have news about a regular time for the **PFMC** and the planned program of "**Putting on the ARMOR of GOD.**"

NOTICES for PFMC AREA EVENTS

Would you be so kind as to copy one or more of following BULLETIN NOTICES and then 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.

We really do need your assistance.

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.

**A SEMINAR for PRIESTS and DEACONS –
PLEASE HELP US**

The **PFMC** will again sponsor a three day seminar for Priests and Deacons and Seminarians. This year **Father John Hampsch, C.M.F.** will be the speaker on "*Healing in the Sacrament of Holy Orders.*" Possibly you or your prayer group will offer to sponsor someone for this seminar with a **\$199** donation.

The seminar will be held this year at the **Holiday Inn in Cherry Hill, NJ** from *Wednesday, September 27th* at 9 AM thru the *Friday, September 29th* about 1:30 PM. The **PFMC** will make all hotel arrangements, and registration assistance.

If interested, call **Kathleen** at **Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)**, (856) 768-9228 or visit the **PFMC** web site at:

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

**Pilgrimage to Medjugorje, Rome and Assisi –
Be present for the Canonization of
Blessed Catherine Drexel**

Want to pilgrimage to **Medjugorje** and **Rome** and **Assisi** for *September 24 thru October 6, 2000* for **\$2899**? Want to visit **Rome** with an opportunity to obtain a **JUBILEE INDULGENCE** from the Holy Father by going through doors of all 4 major basilicas and attend the Cannonization of *Blessed Catherine Drexel*?

If interested, call **Kathleen** at **Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)**, (856) 768-9228 or visit the **PFMC** web site at:

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

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Want a wonderful, gentle paced *14 day* pilgrimage, *November 1st thru 14th*, to see where Jesus walked in the **Holy Land** and **Jordan** with a requested donation of **\$2899** to include all morning and evening meals, transportation, overnight accommodations and full spiritual program? We are planning to stay overnight in places that will provide an atmosphere for a year *2000* pilgrimage you will never forget. We currently have **40** seats available. **We are now taking applications.**

If you are interested, please send your application and a **\$500** deposit to **Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)**, 61 Cooper Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043-4963.

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

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

PFMC 2001 RETREAT CONFERENCE

"If I but touch His clothes, I shall be cured"

(Mark 5:28 NAB)

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.** 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, 1-800-257-8262, NOW** and plan to pre-register for the **RETREAT CONFERENCE** with the **PFMC** as soon as the you receive an information sheet with registration form.

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

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

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.

Keith and Kathleen as well as all the **PFMC** Volunteer Staff

CALENDARS:

In *July*, the Church celebrates the Feasts of *Saints Thomas, Apostle (3)* and *James, Apostle (25)* and the Memorials of *Saints Elizabeth of Portugal (4)*, *Anthony Mary Zaccaria (5)*, *Maria Goretti (6)*, *Benedict, Abbot (11)*, *Henry (13)*, *Bonaventure (15)*, *Lawrence of Brindisi (21)*, *Mary Magdalene (22)*, *Joachim and Anne (26)*, *Martha (29)*, and *Ignatius of Loyola (31)* and *Blessed Junipero Serra (1)* and *Kateri Tekakwitha (14)* as well as *The Immaculate Heart of Mary (1)* and *Our Lady of Mount Carmel (16)* and U. S. Independence Day (4).

In *August*, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the *ASSUMPTION (15)*, Feasts of the *Transfiguration (6)*, *Saints Lawrence (10)* and *Bartholomew (24)* and Memorials of *Saints Alphonsus Liguori (1)*, *Eusebius of Vercelli (2)*, *John Vianney (4)*, *Cajetan (7)*, *Pope Sixtus II and Companions (7)*, *Dominic (8)*, *Clare (11)* *Pope Pontian (13)*, *Hippolytus (13)*, *Maximilian Kolbe (14)*, *Stephen of Hungary (16)*, *Jane Frances de Chantal (18)*, *John Eudes (19)*, *Bernard (20)*, *Pope Pius X (21)*, *Rose of Lima (23)*, *Louis of France (25)*, *Joseph Calasanz (25)*, *Monica (27)* and *Augustine (28)* as well as the *Dedication of Saint Mary Major (5)*, *Queenship of Mary (22)* and the *Martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist (29)*.

In *September*, the Church celebrates the Feasts: *Birth of Mary (8)*, *Triumph of the Cross (14)* and *Saints Matthew, Apostle (21)*, and *Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels (29)*, and the Memorials: *Peter Claver (9)*, *John Chrysostom (13)*, *Cornelius and Cyprian (16)*, *Januarius (19)*, *Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang and Companions (20)*, *Cosmas and Damian (26)*, *Vincent de Paul (27)*, *Wenceslaus (28)*, *Lawrence Ruiz and Companions (28)* and *Jerome (30)* as well as *Our Lady of Sorrows (15)* and U.S. Labor Day (4).

AROUND the PFMC AREA

See CALENDARS to the left for Feasts, Solemnities and Memorials in *July, August* and *September*. Try to participate in daily Holy Mass or make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Sunday, 20 August 2000, NOON until ? with a Brief Meeting preceded by Divine Mercy Chaplet at 3 PM: **Annual Pot-Luck Picnic and Meeting of the Membership of the PFMC**, at the home of **Keith and Kathleen Werner, 129 Deerfield Avenue, Marlton, NJ 08053**. Call (856) 768-9228 if you need directions or a map.

Reserve the weekend of *February 23rd, 24th and 25th 2001* for the **PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE** at the **Four Points Hotel** in Cherry Hill, NJ 08034. The main speaker will be **Father John Hampsh, 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, 1-800-257-8262, NOW** and plan to pre-register for the **RETREAT CONFERENCE** with the **PFMC** using the gold information sheet with registration form inserted in this issue of "**The PILGRIM**."

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

INTERNET

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

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

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

The PILGRIM

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Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC)
A Religious Association, Inc. - NON-PROFIT and
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Keith and Kathleen Werner,
Co-Directors, 61 Cooper Road,
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If there is no time to read it all right now, please put it with other reading material in a place where you can

read at least an article per day until the next issue arrives.

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

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

