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See page 3 for **Table of Contents** /
“IN THIS ISSUE . . .”

operations or the monthly mailing but we see little choice unless we receive increased and regular contributions.

Please, if you can contribute a donation in your Christmas Card, we will be most grateful. Also, any petitions enclosed will be prayed over at a Christmas Holy Mass for the staff. They will also be brought on pilgrimage with us in the spring.

Also remember to come to Epiphany House at 61 Cooper Road in Voorhees, NJ and browse over the many books, statues, medals, and religious goods. They will make wonderful gifts for friends, neighbors, and relatives. And for everyone's socks, there is always a little stocking stuffer. The pre-Christmas hours will be from 10 AM to 5 PM Monday through Friday except on Wednesdays till 9 PM.

Think about signing someone up for the March 2002 Retreat Conference as a Christmas gift. What a spiritual gift to enrich anyone's life. Based on our 501(c)(3) tax exempt status, donations for gifts to others may be considered tax deductible.

Thank you and God be with you.

(Kathleen, Keith and all the volunteers.)

OUR PILGRIMAGE – A REPORT of GIFTS ABOUNDING



On November 9th, 2001 we departed Newark, NJ with 11 pilgrims to Medjugorje via Rome. The stop in Rome was rewarded with the addition of a 12th pilgrim. Our escort in Rome, Sarah Nardone, turned out to be from Gloucester, MA, outside of Boston, living in Rome for some years escorting English speaking groups. She had heard of Medjugorje and expressed an interest in going there "sometime" and responded to our challenge to go there with us. Last minute packing and arranging for round trip passage on Croatia Air was accomplished while the pilgrims toured the Vatican. What an addition to a group of pilgrims that was already becoming like family. We all

adopted Sarah.

With the last minute, 11/2/01, cancellation of Father Romanoski as Spiritual Director, Our Lady brought us Father Charles Davis. Father Davis joined us as our Spiritual Director without passport but in Our Lady's hands. We were so blessed to have him with us. Father Davis is a retired Army Airborne Chaplain currently living in Bath, NH. He was ordained by the Bishop of Camden Diocese in 1962 and served in South Jersey until he entered the Army. Father's closing comment to us personally was that this pilgrimage and Medjugorje affirmed his priesthood in

Security in Newark was very high, and we couldn't feel safer. There was no fear by any of the pilgrims. We traveled in His arms, and trusted in graces from Holy Mass and Eucharist just before leaving.

We stopped in Rome for a day at the Vatican. We were blessed with being able to attend Holy Mass and blessing for volunteers who worked in the Vatican. There was also a personal blessing by the Holy Father for the Firemen of New York who were personally present. Many of our pilgrims were just an arm away from the Holy Father. It seemed as though the blessings were more than just beginning!

After a long continued flight and bus ride to Bosnia, we arrived in Medjugorje and were greeted with a full dinner and the warm love of our hostess Maria and host Christian Bevanda. Our rooms were simple but just a short walk from Saint James Church.

Tired from travel, it was wonderful to sleep in a bit, but the Sunday NOON English Mass bells drew each of us running to the church. We just wanted to report that a pilgrimage to Medjugorje is full of peace. The blessings can never be measured by words alone.

There was daily Holy Mass where the singing overwhelmed us to tears. Croatian Mass in the evenings was followed by healing prayer and completion of the 15 decades of the rosary. Adoration after the Holy Mass on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday nights drew standing room only for prayer, singing, and procession of the Blessed Sacrament. Our pilgrims had never seen nor been able to enjoy HIS presence in such a personal way.

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

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

Confessions were available daily, and priests were abundant to give each person time and guidance.

There were daily talks by the Franciscan priests, and by Mariologist, Theologian, and Canon Lawyer Monsignor Matthew Malnar of Independence, Wisconsin. Monsignor led the English speaking people to understand the Churches position on Apparitions, and the alleged apparitions in Medjugorje. We have invited Monsignor Malnar to be a principal speaker at our conference in 2003.

The visionaries Jakov, and Vicka met with our pilgrims and shared with them the gifts of the messages of Our Lady. We also had the privilege of being present in the Oasis of Peace Chapel with Maria for her daily apparition on Friday, 11/16/01.

Sister Clare Marie of the Oasis of Peace greeted our little group of pilgrims with a personal teaching of Our Lady's love for them, and her desire for them to know her intimately through the messages of Medjugorje, and through her Son in Eucharist. We will never forget her gentle voice and her compassion and love as she smiled, and reached into the soul of each pilgrim as she layed hands on them in prayer.

Our last day was departure to the airport via Tihaljina where we had morning Holy Mass, and took pictures with the beautiful statue of Our Lady Queen of Peace. We stopped at the shrine at Veprits, which is a miniature of the shrine of Lourdes as well as on the shore of the beautiful Adriatic Sea for a picnic.

Should you travel to Medjugorje on pilgrimage? We say an imperative "YES." We were constantly asked "how are things in America?" or "I am praying for all of you in America." We felt "special" being there, and wanted you all to know that the world is with us in our sorrow, and in our prayer and blessings.

Once again, security was tight. We felt safe going into Rome. When in Rome we had a lovely welcome dinner with music and singing at Taverna Parione, and then a walking tour to the Plaza Navona and Trevi Fountain. We all prayed that, as we threw our coins into the Trevi Fountain, we will some day return to this Eternal City, but even greater, that we will be granted the gift of travel to Medjugorje again. For it is into Our Blessed Mother's arms that we throw ourselves, and from there, she leads each into the Sacred Heart of her Son through her own Immaculate Heart. On the 18th of November we awoke early to participate in Holy Mass at the altar of the crucifixion of Saint Peter in the Vatican. See pages 22 and 23 for the words of the Holy Father that NOON.

IN THIS ISSUE . . .

USE THE ENCLOSED ORDER FORM FOR A RELIGIOUS ARTICLE, BOOK OR PAMPHLET GIFT, FALL CLASSES HAVE BEGUN, RETREAT CONFERENCE - MARCH 8, 9, and 10, 2002, DOROTHEA DEGRANDIS SUDOL - 3 DAY EXTENSION (3DX) "HEALING of MEMORIES" - MARCH 11, 12, and 13, 2002	5
PETITION / DONATION SLIPS, IN SEARCH OF THE REAL MARY	6
THE MATERNITY OF MARY	8
FIVE FEATURES OF GOOD MARIAN THEOLOGY	10
MADE FLESH, THE TRUE MEANING of CHRISTMAS	11
THE DOLL, PLEASE READ THIS NOTICE AND RESPOND -STAY ON THE BULK MAILING LIST	12
SAINT NICHOLAS BLESSING PRAYER, ADVENT, VOCATIONS - NAZARETH HOUSE, HOLY MASS TIMES.....	13
THE ORIGIN OF THE MANGER SCENE, THE HIDDEN CHRIST, THE BIRTH AT BETHLEHEM.....	13
JUST BEING, CORPUS CHRISTI NOVENA, A CHRISTMAS QUERY, 12 DAYS of CHRISTMAS	13
CHRISTMAS PRAYER, THE GIFT.....	13
ANTIPHONS FOR THE CANTICLE OF MARY, MY CHRISTMAS GIFT TO JESUS, THE BURNING BABE - A CHRISTMAS POEM.....	13
THE GIFT BEHIND THE GIFT, SUPPORT ETERNAL WORD TELEVISION NETWORK (EWTN), PILGRIMS OF FAITH MARIAN CENTER (PFMC)	13
BULLETIN NOTICES FOR PFMC AREA EVENTS	13
REFLECTION ON THE MESSAGE OF 10/25/01	13
JOHN PAUL II INVITES BELIEVERS to PRAYER and FASTING for PEACE	13
PRESS BULLETIN 168, 11/26/2001	13
CALENDARS:, AROUND THE PFMC AREA, PFMC PRESENTATIONS, INTERNET	24

Six of us stayed on for personal time and prayer and sightseeing in Rome. It was hard for us to separate from our other members who flew home via Milan, Italy. But our time in Rome was richly blessed and so enjoyed by all.

Our next pilgrimage to Medjugorje will be the last week in April. We will be setting up the flights during the next few weeks. We will have information sheets and reservation forms available before Christmas if you wish to give a pilgrimage as a Christmas gift. We hope that, if you feel Our Lady is calling you, you will answer the call with no fear of flying or travel. It is a blessing to say "YES." Contact Kathleen at (856) 768-9228 if you are interested in joining a PFMC pilgrimage. What a wonderful Christmas present to give to another.

USE the ENCLOSED ORDER FORM for a RELIGIOUS ARTICLE, BOOK or PAMPHLET GIFT

It has been said that a religious Christmas gift should be included with every secular one.. Please look over our selection of books, rosaries, statues, and religious articles, and choose one additional gift for each family member or friend. Stop in the Center and browse around the gift room. You will be pleasantly surprised by the many things we have to help your Christmas giving bless another.

FALL CLASSES HAVE BEGUN

Dean Pulcini has begun his Wednesday evening seminars on Introduction to Scripture. The seminars are held in the Great Room of Epiphany House at 61 Cooper Road, Voorhees, NJ. They begin at 7 PM and end about 9 PM. We welcome you to join us for this semester's most interesting, informative, and challenging seminars. Build up your Faith, and learn about the origins of the Bible, and History of the times. Please call 856-768-9228 for more information.

RETREAT CONFERENCE - MARCH 8, 9, and 10, 2002



Father Robert DeGrandis and Father John Hampsch will conduct the 11th Annual PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE. It will be held at the Hilton Hotel, 2349 West Marlton Pike, Cherry Hill, NJ. This is a 14 floor hotel on NJ Highway 70 at Cuthbert Road near the Cooper River. This hotel is about four miles west where the PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE was held for the past five years and that much closer to Philadelphia. NJ Transit bus routes stop at this hotel and it is not far from the Garden State Race Track stop on the AMTRAK route between Philadelphia and Atlantic City. The conference, food and room facilities are tremendous.

You have 2 steps to guarantee your room and a seat at this RETREAT CONFERENCE.

1. Please make your hotel room reservations NOW by calling 1-856-663-6666 or call 1-800-HILTONS. We

have 300 rooms reserved and already almost 150 rooms are already booked. Rooms for 1 to 4 persons are \$89 per night with rollaway beds at a flat \$15 one-time set-up fee for the duration of your stay. The rooms are large and come with 1 King Size bed or two double beds. There are several entire floors of non-smoking rooms so make your desires known with your reservation. If we book 300 rooms before 2/8/02 they may open more of the over 400 rooms to us. We'd like to secure most of the hotel rooms for the RETREAT CONFERENCE so we can have a truly RETREAT environment.

2. Fill out the appropriate reservation form on the four-page information sheet within this issue of *The PILGRIM* or made available through prayer groups and parishes. Send the form with payment information to book your RETREAT CONFERENCE reservation with the PFMC. We accept Visa, MasterCard and Discover credit cards as well as personal checks or money orders.

Please note that the four page information sheet provides reservation forms for the RETREAT CONFERENCE, the YOUTH TRACK which runs simultaneously with the RETREAT CONFERENCE, and the 3 DAY EXTENSION (3DX) to the RETREAT CONFERENCE.

Call 856 768-9228 if you need addition information.

DOROTHEA DeGRANDIS SUDOL - 3 DAY EXTENSION (3DX) "HEALING OF MEMORIES" - March 11, 12, and 13, 2002

Join Dorothea DeGrandis Suldo and her brother, Father Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J, for the 3-DAY EXTENSION (3DX) to the PFMC RETREAT CONFERENCE. This dynamic duo is such a gift to all that want to enter into Gods generous heart and ask for healing in their lives.

Make your reservations for your room at the HILTON and with the PFMC NOW. The process described above for the RETREAT CONFERENCE is followed for the 3DX with the only difference being use of either the 3DX registration form if only coming for the 3DX or showing the desire to be present for 6 days on the main RETREAT CONFERENCE registration form.

Dorothea was born in Lowell, MA. She has been involved in the Charismatic Renewal since August 15, 1970. She has served as a core Group Member in her home parish of Saint Michael's Roman Catholic Church in Lowell. During the early stages of renewal she held and led weekly prayer group meetings. From 1970 to 1977, Dorothea was involved in lay Witness Missions as a team member and also in Faith at Work." She is a member of the Association of Christian Therapists. Dorothea has given numerous workshops and seminars on Healing, Inner Healing and the Charismatic Gifts of the Holy Spirit. They were held in the Eastern United States (including New Jersey, Connecticut and New York), Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Dakota, Florida, Texas, Wisconsin, Indiana, California, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Ohio, Michigan, Canada, England, Scotland, Australia, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the West Indies.

She has also given Days of Renewal, Weekend Retreats and Leadership Training conferences. Dorothea has been a guest on many regional television and radio talk shows." As the guest speaker she has spoken to Women Aglow Chapters" throughout the country. She has been a main speaker at Regional Charismatic Conventions in Boise, Idaho; Wichita, Kansas; Great Falls, Montana and Memphis, Tennessee.

A gifted teacher as well as a dynamic and captivating speaker, she has produced many audio tapes and albums. She has written three books on her many experiences and one on her own inner healing experiences.

Dorothea leads her own Inner Healing Ministry. She has worked extensively and continues to work with her brother Father Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J., in his Healing Ministry. We have had them work together at previous PFMC annual RETREAT CONFERENCE events and look forward to this 3DX.

PETITION / DONATION SLIPS

All returned petition and donation slips like those found in "The PILGRIM" will be taken to Medjugorje and prayed over at each day's Holy Masses. They will then be taken back to Rome, where they will be left in the office of the Holy Father. Each day the Holy Father takes all petitions he gets and prays for them at his daily Holy Mass. Thank you and God bless you.

Kathleen

IN SEARCH of the REAL MARY

Every century and culture has interpreted Mary in different ways. You could almost drown in the various ways that the Christian tradition has honored Mary! Consider the paintings, sculptures, icons, music, liturgies, feasts, spiritual writings, theologies, official doctrines. George Tavard wrote a book recently, and his title gets it exactly right: *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary*.

It seems that the image of Mary has allowed the Christian imagination to think very creatively and very differently about understanding Mary. But now it's our turn, we the generation alive today. How should we consider Mary (or Miriam, as she would be known in Hebrew) in the 21st century?

Recognizing Mary of the Gospels

We know very little about Miriam of Nazareth as an actual historical person. In this she is in solidarity with the multitudes of women through the centuries, especially poor women and poor men, whose lives are considered not worth recording. We must also be respectful of her historical difference from us in time and place. She is a first-century Jewish woman; she is not a 21st-century American. And that difference must be respected.

The four Gospels portray her in very different ways, reflecting their very different theologies. At first glance, Mark comes across as having a negative view

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the Philadelphia and Newark Archdioceses as well as the Camden,

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

of Jesus' mother. She arrives with other members of the family as Jesus is preaching and they call to him. When the crowd tells Jesus his mother is asking for him, he replies, 'Who is my mother and brother and sister? Those who do the will of my father are mother and brother and sister to me' (see Mark 3:31-35). And Mary remains outside. Mark does not seem to have a positive view, at that point, of Mary as a disciple. Matthew's view of Mary is rather neutral by comparison. He places her in the genealogy of the Messiah, in line with four other women who act outside the patriarchal marriage structure, thereby becoming unexpectedly God's partners in a promise-and-fulfillment schema. In Matthew's Gospel, though, Mary doesn't speak, and all the focus on the birth story is around Joseph.

Luke describes Mary as a woman of faith, overshadowed by the Spirit at Jesus' conception and at the beginning of the Church at Pentecost. She is the first to respond to the glad tidings to hear the word of God and keep it. This is a pictorial example of Luke's theology of discipleship. It's a very positive view of Mary from which we have mostly gotten our tradition.

Finally, John has a highly stylized portrayal of the mother of Jesus, and that's all he ever calls her. He never names her. She is pierced twice in John's Gospel, at the beginning and at the end, at Cana and at the cross. And again she is there embodying responsive discipleship to the word made flesh.

As with the Gospel portraits of Jesus, these diverse interpretations cannot always be harmonized. But each is instructive in its own way.

To glimpse the actual woman behind these texts is difficult. Now we get help from new studies of the political, economic, social and cultural fabric of first-century Palestine. New studies are enabling us to fill in her life in broad strokes.

Much of this knowledge of the circumstances in which she lived has resulted from the contemporary quest for the historical Jesus. But it serves us as well for a quest for the historical Mary. So let's go questing for Miriam of Nazareth—a Jewish village woman of faith.

Mary as Jewish

As a member of the people of Israel, Mary inherited the Jewish faith in one living God, stemming from Abraham and Sarah onwards. She prays to a God who hears the cry of the poor, frees the enslaved Hebrews and brings them into their covenant relationship. Given Jesus' clear knowledge and practice of the Jewish faith

in his adult life, as reflected in the Gospels, it is reasonable to assume that Mary, with her husband, Joseph, practiced this Jewish religion in their home, following Torah, observing Sabbath and the festivals, reciting prayers, lighting candles and going to synagogue, according to the custom in Galilee.

Later at the end of Jesus' life, Luke depicts Mary in her older years as a member of the early Jerusalem community, praying with 100 other women and men in the upper room before the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. What we see from this—and most scholars think that that's a historical glimpse—is that Mary participated in the early Christian community in Jerusalem. Now in the light of the death and resurrection of Jesus, this gathering of disciples believed that the Messiah had come. But in no way did they think that this was a cause to leave their religion; they kept going to the Temple, and so forth.

For many years, they preached the good news to their fellow Jews trying to get them to understand the promise of God has been fulfilled, before finally being persuaded by Paul and others that the gospel was meant for gentiles too. To use a term coined in scholarship, Mary was a Jewish Christian—the earliest kind of Christian there was. This was before Christianity split off from the synagogue. She was never a Roman Christian, never a gentile at all. So it does no honor to her memory to bleach her of her Jewishness. We've done this ethnically by turning her swarthy Jewish complexion into fair skin and blonde hair and blue eyes. But we've also done this religiously by turning her deeply rooted Jewish piety into that of a latter-day Catholic. She wasn't.

Mary, a Peasant Woman

Mary lived in a Mediterranean rural village, Nazareth, whose population consisted largely of peasants working the land and craftsmen who served their basic needs. Married to the local carpenter, she took care of the household. Now how many children were in that household? Well, her firstborn son, Jesus, obviously lived there, but we also read in Mark's Gospel that the mother and the brothers and the sisters lived together in Nazareth. And these brothers are named in Chapter Six: James, Joses, Judas and Simon. His sisters Mark leaves unnamed, as typically happened with groups of women in the New Testament.

The apocryphal gospels explain that these are Joseph's children by previous marriage. But however many were in the household, we would know that in her setting, her days would ordinarily be taken up with the

hard, unrecompensed work of women of all ages: to feed and clothe and nurture her growing household. Like other village women of her day, she was probably unlettered, illiterate.

The economic status of this family is a matter of some dispute. Scholars like John Meier place them in a blue-collar working-class arrangement, while others such as John Dominic Crossan assign them to the peasant class, desperately struggling under the triple taxation of Temple, Herod and Rome.

Either way the times were tough. This village was part of an occupied state under the heel of imperial Rome. Revolution was in the air. The atmosphere was tense. Violence and poverty prevailed. We owe a debt to Third-World women theologians who have noticed the similarities between Mary's life and the lives of so many poor women, even today. Notice how the journey to Bethlehem in order to be counted for a census accords with the displacement of so many poor people today separated from their ancestral homes because of debt and taxation.

Notice how the flight into Egypt parallels the flight of refugees in our day—women and men running with their children to escape being killed by unjust military force. Notice how Mary's experience of losing her son to death by unjust state execution compares with so many women who have had their children and grandchildren disappear or be murdered by dictatorial regimes. Mary is a sister, a *compañera*, to the suffering lives of marginalized women in oppressive situations. It does Mary no honor to rip her out of her conflictual, dangerous historical circumstances and transform her into an icon of a peaceful middle-class life dressed in a royal blue robe.

Woman of Faith

Mary walked by faith, not by sight. As one theologian once said, "She did not have the dogma of the Immaculate Conception framed and hanging on her kitchen wall." Scripture tells us she asked questions. She pondered things in her heart. And she went on faithfully believing even when grief stabbed her to the heart.

She had a relationship with God that was profound. Now in those days, people's hope for the coming of the Messiah included the hope that he would liberate the suffering poor from oppressive rule. Luke's infancy narrative gives a particular twist to our memory of Mary's faith by placing her in a key position of partnership with God to bring about this historic

occurrence. The Annunciation scene, as biblically analyzed today, depicts her being called to the vocation of being God's partner in the work of redemption on the model of the call to Moses at the burning bush.

It's a prophetic call, a call of vocation to be a partner with God in this great work. Mary gives her free assent, thus launching her life on an adventure whose outcome she does not know. She walks by faith, not by sight. Indeed her very pregnancy takes place through the power of the Spirit.

Mary's virginity has been used to disparage women who are sexually active, as if they aren't as perfect as Mary the virgin. But again this event actually sounds a powerful theme for women. Sojourner Truth, the 19th-century freed slave, was speaking once in a hall where a group of black-clad clerics were arguing that she should not even have the right to be on the stage. She noticed their mumbling and said to them, "Where your Christ come from, honey? Where your Christ come from? He come from God and a woman. Man had nothin' to do with it."

Business as usual, including patriarchal marriages, is superseded. And God stands with the young woman pregnant outside of wedlock, in danger of her own life. God stands with her to begin fulfilling the divine promise. Now Mary's faith-filled partnership with God in the work of liberation is sung out in Luke's Gospel in her magnificent prayer, the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55). It's the longest set of words placed on the lips of any woman in the New Testament.

Oddly enough, it is a prayer omitted from most traditional Mariology. Here's the scene: Mary is newly pregnant; Elizabeth her cousin, an older woman, is six months pregnant; Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband, has been struck dumb for his lack of faith; and so there's no male voice to inject itself into this scene. The house is quiet of men. Mary arrives. Elizabeth, filled with the Spirit, embraces her and sings out, "Blessed art thou among women." And also filled with the Spirit, Mary breaks into a new prophetic language of faith. She sings a song in the pattern of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and Hannah, other great hymn-singers in the Old Testament, and she launches into divine praise. Her spirit greatly rejoices in God her savior.

Mary of the Magnificat

Though Mary is poor and lowly, and a culturally insignificant woman, the powerful living holy God is doing great things to her. And God does this not only

to her but to all the poor: bringing down the mighty from their thrones; exalting the lowly; filling the hungry with good things and sending the unrepentant rich away empty. And all of this is happening in fulfillment of the ancient promise and in her very being. For she embodies the nobodies of this world, on whom God is lavishing rescue.

In this song she sings of the future too, when finally, peaceful justice will take root in the land among all people. This is a great prayer; it is a revolutionary song of salvation. As writer Bill Cleary once commented, "It reveals that Mary was not only full of grace but full of political opinions."

Miriam's song has political implications—socially radical ones at that. With a mother like this, it's no wonder that Jesus' first words in Luke proclaim that he has come to free the captives and bring good news to the poor. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree!

So Mary lived in solidarity with the project of the coming Reign of God, whose intent was to heal, redeem and liberate. It does no honor to reduce her faith to a privatized piety. Worse yet, which sometimes happens in traditional Mariology, is to reduce her faith to a doting mother-son relationship. She hears the word of God and keeps it. What I'm suggesting is that before Jesus was born she had her own relationship to God that wasn't focused on Jesus. Even after his death and resurrection, when she is now part of the community proclaiming him as the Messiah, her pattern of faith is still that of Jewish hope: God's Messiah who now has come will come again soon and bring this justice to the land as a whole.

She hears the word of God and keeps it. And in this too she is, as Paul VI called her in *Marialis Cultus*, our sister in faith. We can begin to see the potential in other Gospel scenes. As we remember her and keep foremost the idea that she is a Jewish peasant woman of faith, then we can interpret the other scenes in the Gospels where Mary shows up and where we are presented with the dangerous memory of this very inconsequential woman in her own culture and historical context. With a heart full of love for God and for her neighbor, Mary of Nazareth gives us this tremendous example of walking by faith through a difficult life.

Our partner in hope

We began by asking, what would be a theologically sound, spiritually empowering and ethically

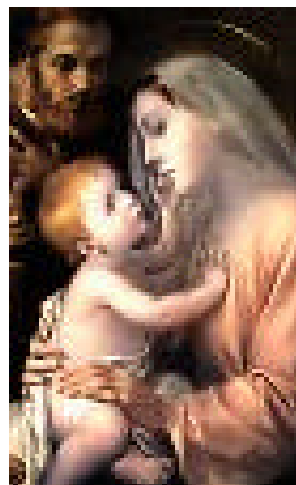
challenging view of Mary, mother of Jesus Christ, for the 21st century? My answer has been to suggest that we remember Mary as a friend of God and prophet in the communion of saints. Let her memory inspire and encourage our own witness.

We ought to relate to Miriam of Nazareth as a partner in hope, in the company of all the holy women and men who have gone before us. This can help us reclaim the power of her memory for the flourishing of women, for the poor and all suffering people. It can help us to draw on the energy of her example for a deeper relationship with the living God and stronger care for the world.

When the Christian community does Marian theology this way, our eyes are opened to sacred visions for a different future. We become empowered to be voices of hope in this difficult world. Like Mary, we will be rejoicing in God our savior and announcing the justice that is to come

(by Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J.)

THE MATERNITY of MARY



Cardinal Newman wrote a touching and remarkable comment about the impact of Mary's maternity. To Newman it was plain that Jesus was so close to Mary that he must even have physically looked like her.

He imbibed, He absorbed into his divine Person, her blood and the substance of her flesh; by becoming man of her, He received her lineaments and features, as

the appropriate character in which he was to manifest Himself to mankind. The child is like the parent, and we may well suppose that by His likeness to her was manifested her relationship to Him. —Ian Ker, *Newman on Being a Christian*

Mary passed on to Jesus his physical features, as Newman strikingly attests. Her motherhood went beyond that as she formed his human character. Mary trained and educated him as any mother brings up a child. Her virtues would have an impact on him. All of us realize that our mother's influence is recognizable in

us and we can reasonably conclude that Mary's influence was evident in Jesus.

Mary was more than merely the biological mother of the Lord Jesus. Mary's task in the Incarnation was not over after the event in the stable at Bethlehem. Birth was followed by education. Mary exercised a continuous formation of the young Jesus as he grew from infancy to childhood to the teen years to young manhood.

The New Testament does not tell us how this happened. There is only one brief glimpse given by Luke 2:41-52 in the narrative of the losing and finding of the boy Jesus in the Temple. Mary acts like a typical mother, with the emotions of loss and anxiety and with the maternal demand to know why her son would go off without telling her and Joseph.

It is interesting that Luke cites her words and not Joseph's. "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety" (2:48). These are words we expect a mother to say. Mary is not shy about asserting her maternal authority. It flows from her love, of course. Why should she not have worried about him? The passage closes with words about Jesus continuing to grow in wisdom and grace before God and all others.

Aside from this brief anecdote, we know nothing else about what happened between mother and son all those years. Her maternal training style, her motherly witness of virtues, her approach to parenting is not recorded for us. Nonetheless, we should not forget that it happened. Mary was indeed mother of God. But she was also a human mother of a son who had a human upbringing, however that occurred.

I share this reflection with you because I believe that just as Mary knew how to be a mother of Jesus, she knows how to be our mother, too. She raised him in a household of faith. She had the remarkable experience of forming him in a human and spiritual sense while at the same time contemplating his mystery. How this happens is not revealed to us.

This should move us to be eager to have Mary offer us her maternal care. Ask Mary, as I do, to mother us in faith, hope and love of the Lord Jesus. When your heart is anxious, turn to Mary and say, "Mary, put my heart at peace." "When your mind is too busy, look to Mary and pray, 'Mary, settle down my mind.'" "When you want to grow and deepen your life, look to Mary and beg, 'Mary, just as you helped Jesus grow in wisdom and grace, help me also to advance on the spiritual path which God has laid out for me.'"

(by Alfred McBride, O.Praem. from the book "[Images of Mary](#)" available from the PPMC. A Norbertine priest and a popular lecturer and writer, Father McBride served as a high school teacher, novice master, university professor, president of the University of Albuquerque and spiritual director.)

FIVE FEATURES of GOOD MARIAN THEOLOGY

In 1975 Pope Paul VI wrote an apostolic exhortation on Mary, *Marialis Cultus (To Honor Mary)*. He began that letter by saying that he observed that, for many modern people, devotion to Mary was not only problematic, it was on the wane. He suggested that one of the main reasons for this lay in the fact that our approach to Mary reflected outdated ideas of the Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation period of the Church, views of Mary that are unappealing to contemporary people. He named, for example, the way that some theology presented Mary as timidly submissive and said that this is repellent to the piety of modern women.

Then he said the Church is not bound to these older images of Mary, some of which are showing the ravages of time. This is his language. He ended up by calling on the whole Christian people and their pastors to be creative in doing for our age what our ancestors in the faith did for their age, namely develop an appealing view of Mary suitable for our own culture. To do this he suggested that such a theology would have five characteristics. It would be:

1) Biblical

Marian theology should be rooted in the testimony of Scripture.

2) Liturgical

It would be in tune with the great liturgical seasons. He named especially Advent, where Mary joins the Church in expecting the birth of the Messiah, and then Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit of the Church.

3) Ecumenical

It would be in harmony with the agreements we have reached with fellow Christian Churches. Rather than being a dividing point between Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism, it would be a unifying point.

4) Anthropological

By this term, Paul VI meant that it would be aware of the changing role of women in society. As women take leadership in various aspects of society, we cannot expect women or men to appreciate a Mary who is presented as a passive and subservient woman.

5) Theological

This means it would have God at the center with Mary placed in relation to Christ and to the Church.

(americancatholic.org)

MADE FLESH

Jesus Christ, God's Word
made flesh and come among us,
is God's greatest, manifested
goodness to us."

(George Maloney S.J.)

THE TRUE MEANING of CHRISTMAS

There was once a man who didn't believe in the incarnation or the spiritual meaning of Christmas, and was skeptical about God. He and his family lived in a farm community. His wife was a devout believer and diligently raised her children in her faith. He sometimes gave her a hard time about her faith and mocked her religious observance of Christmas.

One snowy Christmas Eve she was taking the kids to the Christmas Eve service at church. She pleaded with him to come, but he firmly refused. He ridiculed the idea of the incarnation of Christ and dismissed it as nonsense. "Why would God lower himself and become a human like us?! It's such a miraculous story!" he said. So she and the children left for church while he stayed home.

After they left, the winds grew stronger and the snow turned into a blizzard. As he looked out the window, all he saw was a blinding snowstorm. He sat down to relax before the fire for the evening. Then he heard a loud thump, something hitting against the window. And another thump. He looked outside but couldn't see. So he ventured outside to see. In the field near his house he saw, of all the strangest things, a flock of geese! They were apparently flying to look for a warmer area down south, but got caught in the snow

storm. The snow had become too blinding and violent for the geese to fly or see their way. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter. They just fluttered their wings and flew around in circles around the field blindly and aimlessly.

He had compassion for them and wanted to help them. He thought to himself, "The barn would be a great place for them to stay! It's warm and safe; surely they could spend the night and wait out the storm." So he walked over to the barn and opened the barn doors for them. He waited, watching them, hoping they would notice the open barn and go inside. But they just fluttered around aimlessly and didn't notice the barn or realize what it could mean for them. He moved closer toward them to get their attention, but they just moved away from him out of fear.

He went into the house and came back out with some bread, broke it up, and made a bread trail leading to the barn. They still didn't catch on.

Starting to get frustrated, he went over and tried to shoo them, run after them, and chase them toward the barn. They only got scared and scattered into every direction except toward the barn. Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn where there was warmth, safety, and shelter.

Feeling totally frustrated, he exclaimed, "Why don't they follow me! Can't they see this is the only place where they can survive the storm! How can I possibly get them into the one place to save them!"

He thought for a moment and realized that they just won't follow a human. He said to himself, "How can I possibly save them? The only way would be for me to become like those geese. If only I could become like one of them! Then I could save them! They would follow me and I would lead them to safety."

He stood silently for a moment as the words that he just said reverberated back to himself in his mind: "If only I could become like one of them -- then I could save them." He thought about his words, and remembered what he said to his wife: "Why would God want to be like us? That's so ridiculous!" Something clicked in his mind as he put these two together. It was like a revelation, and he began to understand the incarnation. We were like the geese -- blind, gone astray, perishing. God became like us so He could show us the way and make a way available to save us. That is the meaning of Christmas, he realized in his heart.

As the winds and blinding snow abated, his heart became quiet and pondered this thought. He understood what Christmas was all about. He knew why Christ had come. Suddenly years of doubt and disbelief were shattered, as he humbly and tearfully bowed down in the snow, and embraced the true meaning of Christmas.

(author unknown)

THE DOLL

I hurried into the local department store to grab some last minute Christmas gifts. I looked at all the people and grumbled to myself. I would be in here forever and I just had so much to do. Christmas was beginning to become such a drag. I kinda wished that I could just sleep through Christmas. But I hurried the best I could through all the people to the toy department. Once again I kind of mumbled to myself at the prices of all these toys. And wondered if the grandkids would even play with them.

I found myself in the doll aisle. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a little boy about 5 holding a lovely doll. He kept touching her hair and he held her so gently. I could not seem to help myself. I just kept looking over and wondered who the doll was for.

I watched him turn to a woman and he called his aunt by name and said, "Are you sure I don't have enough money." She replied a bit impatiently, "You know that you don't have enough money for it. The aunt told the little boy not to go anywhere that she had to go get some other things and would be back in a few minutes. And then she left the aisle.

The boy continued to hold the doll. After a bit I asked the boy who the doll was for. He said, "It is the doll my sister wanted so badly for Christmas. She just knew that Santa would bring it." I told him that maybe Santa was going to bring it. He said No, Santa can't go where my sister is...I have to give the doll to my Mamma to take to her." I asked him where his sister was. He looked at me with the saddest eyes and said "She was gone to be with Jesus."

My Daddy says that Mama is going to have to go be with her. My heart nearly stopped beating. Then the boy looked at me again and said, "I told my Daddy to tell Mama not to go yet. I told him to tell her to wait till I got back from the store."

Then he asked me if I wanted to see his picture. I told him I would love to. He pulled out some pictures he'd

had taken at the front of the store. He said "I want my Mamma to take this with her so she don't ever forget me.

I love my Mama very much and I wish she did not have to leave me. But Daddy says she will need to be with my sister." I saw that the little boy had lowered his head and had grown so very quiet. While he was not looking I reached into my purse and pulled out a handful of bills. I asked the little boy, "Shall we count that money one more time?" He grew excited and said "Yes, I just know it has to be enough." So I slipped my money in with his and we began to count it. Of course it was plenty for the doll. He softly said, "Thank you Jesus for giving me enough money."

Then the boy said "I just asked Jesus to give me enough money to buy this doll so Mama can take it with her to give to my sister. And he heard my prayer. I wanted to ask him for enough to buy my Mama a white rose, but I didn't ask him, but he gave me enough to buy the doll and a rose for my Mama. She loves white roses so very, very much."

In a few minutes the aunt came back and I wheeled my cart away. I could not keep from thinking about the little boy as I finished my shopping in a totally different spirit than when I had started. And I kept remembering a story I had seen in the newspaper several days earlier about a drunk driver hitting a car and killing a little girl and the Mother was in serious condition.

The family was deciding on whether to remove the life support. Now surely this little boy did not belong with that story. Two days later I read in the paper where the family had disconnected the life support and

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the young woman had died. I could not forget the little boy and just kept wondering if the two were somehow connected.

Later that day, I could not help myself and I went out and bought some white roses and took them to the funeral home where the young woman was. And there she was holding a lovely white rose, the beautiful doll, and the picture of the little boy in the store. I left there in tears, my life changed forever.

The love that little boy had for his little sister and his mother was overwhelming. And in a split second a drunk driver had ripped the life of that little boy to pieces.

(Source unknown)

SAINT NICHOLAS BLESSING PRAYER



Saint Nicholas, holy patron of children, Bishop of the East, we invite you to come among us and to grant us your holy blessing

Help us in this busy season not to miss the miracle of the coming of Emmanuel in the days of preparation as well as on the feast itself. Help us not to be blind to the gifts of getting ready.

Protect us from insincerity. May every greeting we send be signed with love, friendship and prayer. May our greetings so written, be fun to open and treasures to keep.

Kind Saint Nicholas, protect us from shopper's fatigue. Show us how to take delight in the marketplace, now transformed in beauty, lights and music. Save us all from anxiety over what to give so that we may concentrate on how to give.

Stand by the stepladder as we decorate our homes and trees and lives. May our decorations not be mute, but rather singing symbols, sacred signs of the evergreen coming of the Lord of Life. Help us to remember that mistletoe, holly and all other ornaments of the season were sacred signs to ancient believers.

But most of all, jolly saint of toys and sweets, help us to stay youthful, humorous, playful and dream-filled as we prepare together for the coming of Christ with Advent longing!

Saint Nicholas, pray for us.

AMEN

ADVENT

I live my Advent in the womb of Mary.
And on one night, when a great star swings free from its
High mooring and walks down the sky
To be the dot above the Christ's i,
I shall be born of her by blessed grace.
I wait in Mary-darkness, faith's walled place,
With hope's expectance of nativity.

I knew for long she carried me and fed me,
Guarded and loved me, though I could not see.
But only now, with inward jubilee,
I come upon earth's most amazing knowledge;
Someone is hidden in this dark with me.

(Jessica Powers)

VOCATIONS - NAZARETH HOUSE



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

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION or APPLICATION MATERIALS, CONTACT:

Father Joseph Szolack, szolack@camdendiocese.org,
Director of Vocations, Diocese of Camden,
Nazareth House, 300 Cuthbert Boulevard,
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002
(856) 910-4930 or FAX: (856) 662-8917
or visit: <http://www.beapriest.org>

THE ORIGIN of the MANGER SCENE



In his *Spiritual Exercises*,¹ Saint Ignatius of Loyola recommends that we meditate about the life of Our Lord by vividly imagining the circumstances. He advises, for example, meditating about the city or the stable where

Jesus was born—how roomy, how narrow, how low, how high was it, and what kinds of things filled.”

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

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

Mass was celebrated at midnight with the manger serving as the altar. Thus the Infant Jesus became present again in the manger just as in the stable in Bethlehem twelve centuries before, but this time under the species of bread and wine. God confirmed His pleasure through a miracle. As Saint Francis, assisting in the Mass as a deacon, took the statue of the Infant Jesus in his arms, it came to life and smiled at him, as He stroked the bearded cheeks and rough cowl of Saint Francis with His tiny hands. This was the first celebration of the manger scene in the West.

(from “**TRIUMPH OF THE HEART**” Christmas Edition 1996 - Issue #2 , J. Jorgensen, Der hl. Franz von Assisi, Munich, 1935)

THE HIDDEN CHRIST

I went into the Christmas cave;
There was no Child upon the straw.
The ox and ass were all I saw.

I sought His stable where He gave
His goodness in the guise of bread.
Emptiness came to me instead.

Filled with my Father’s words, I cried,
You hid Yourself? And all
the living answered to my call.

I found Him (and the world is wide)
Dear in His warm ubiquity.
Where heart beat, there was Christ for me.

I went back to the Christmas cave,
Glad with the gain of everywhere,
And lo! The blessed Child was there.

Then at His feasting board He gave embrace.
He multiplied His good and fed in me
The multitude.

(Jessica Powers)

THE BIRTH at BETHLEHEM

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

Joseph was an eyewitness to this birth, which took place in conditions that, humanly speaking, were embarrassing—a first announcement of that self-**Phil. 2:5-8)** which Christ freely

HOLY MASS TIMES

If you ever think you will miss Holy Mass because you don’t know the times of Holy Mass in the area that you are located, call 1-800-MASS-TIMES or 1-800-627-7846.

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accepted for the forgiveness of sins. Joseph also witnessed the adoration of the shepherds who arrived at Jesus' birthplace after the angel had brought them the great and happy news (cf. **Lk. 2:15-16**). Later he also witnessed the homage of the Magi who came from the East (cf. **Mt. 2:11**).

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

JUST BEING

Thank you, God, for loving me
the me that was meant to be.

You brought me out of darkness and pain
And showed me how to live again.
You let me through the darkest night
when I yearned only to take flight.
You taught me how to sing and play
to rejoice in each new day.
You are my sole reason to live
when I know I have only me to give.
When the world is dark and gray
you help me face each new day.
You are my strength in times of fear
For I know you are always near.
You know me best of all
when I stand and when I fall.
You lift me up when I am down
and make a smile out of a frown.
You give me hope when I feel none
You've taught me to walk in the Son.
You are never far away from me at all
and always answer when I call.
Best of all you let me be me
the me that was meant to be.

AMEN

("Holding Hands with God" edited by Ronda Chervin)

CORPUS CHRISTI NOVENA

Lord, our God, Your Son has entrusted to us in the Eucharist a pledge of His love.

We bring You the gift You have given us, the sacrifice of reconciliation, and ask You to accept us, together with Your Son. Fill us with His Spirit.

May He take away all that divides us. Make Your Church throughout the world a sign of unity and an instrument of your peace.

Gather people of every race, to share in the One Eternal Banquet with Jesus Christ the Lord.

The PILGRIM

(Adapted from the Eucharistic Prayer for Masses of Reconciliation II - Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Bensalem, PA)

A CHRISTMAS QUERY

LORD, why did You choose to be born as a wayfarer, in an unfamiliar region, in a stable and in such cold conditions, so that Your mother had nowhere to lay You except in this manger? Why be born where there was neither bed, nor fire, nor pillow?

This is how you wanted it to be, O my Lord; this was your disposition, and so may your will be done. The direst poverty is here, and the deepest humility. What a lesson you have taught us from that manger! The manger and the stable denounce all gilded houses and spacious palaces; those swaddling bands of yours condemn silken garments; your infant cries pass judgment on the world's empty pleasures; your mother's poverty puts rich banquets and dainties to shame. Happy those tears, for they have been a healing balm for our wounds; happy the swaddling clothes which have bandaged our hurts; happy that cramped manger, which has won us access to the breadth and spaciousness of heaven; happy your weeping, which has gained eternal joys for us; happy your penury, which has earned us the kingdom of heaven!

These are my riches, these the merits to which I can lay claim in the sight of God. My confidence lies not in any achievements, any service I can offer as from myself, but in these hardships you have undergone. These are my offering to God, and through them I hope to win glory.

(Saint Thomas of Villanova, OSA - Christmas Sermon)

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

There is one Christmas Carol that has always baffled me. What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

I recently was sent this and it sounded plausible. From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly. Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics. It has two levels of meaning: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol

has a code word for a religious reality that the children could remember. The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.

Two turtledoves were the Old and New Testaments
Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love. The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation. Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit--Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership, and Mercy. The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes. Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit--Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self Control.

The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments. The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples. The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed. So there is your history for today. This knowledge was shared with me and I found it interesting and enlightening and now I know how that strange song became a Christmas Carol

(internet-e mail Bernadette)

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Child of Bethlehem, House of Bread;
Man of Jerusalem, City of Peace.

You have loved us without limit or condition;
In our greatness and in our misery,
In our brokenness and in our pain,
In our folly and in our virtue;
May your hand be always upon us,
And may your heart be within us
So that we too
May become bread, peace, healing, wholeness
For one another.

(IHM Prayer Group)

THE GIFT

It's just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past 10 years or so.

It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas --- oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it - overspending, the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma --- the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else. Knowing he felt this way, I decided on year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way.

Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was wrestling at the junior level at the school he attended; and shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church, mostly black. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury that the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. And as each of their boys got up from the mat, he swaggered around in his tatters with false bravado, a kind of street pride that couldn't acknowledge defeat.

Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, "I wish just one of them could have won," he said. "They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them." Mike loved kids - all kids - and he knew them, having coached little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That's when the idea for his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church.

On Christmas Eve, I placed the envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done and that this was his gift from me. His smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year and in succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on.

The envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning and our children, ignoring their new toys, would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their Dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents.

As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the envelope never lost its allure. The story doesn't end there. You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree, and in the morning, it was joined by three more. Each of our children, unbeknownst to the others, had placed an envelope on the tree for their dad. The tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing around the tree with wide-eyed anticipation watching as their fathers take down the envelope.

Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit will always be with us. May we all remember Christ, who is the reason for the season, and the true Christmas spirit this year and always. God bless.

(internet)

ANTIPHONS for the CANTICLE of MARY

Wisdom, O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show your people the way to salvation.

O sacred Lord of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai mountain: Come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free.

O Flower of Jesse's stem, you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; kings stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you. Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid.

O Key of David, O royal Power of Israel controlling at your will the gate of heaven: Come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom.

O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice; Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.

O King of all the nations, the only joy of every human heart; O Keystone of the mighty arch of man, come and save the creature you fashioned from the dust.

O Emmanuel, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Savior of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God.

(Evening Prayer, December 17-23)

MY CHRISTMAS GIFT TO JESUS

I have many things, they all come from Thee
 I want to give one back, it's from inside of me
 What I want to give is my cold heart
 Please place it in Thine, never to part
 Take it and warm it in the Heavenly Flame
 Of the furnace of Thy Sacred Heart, this heart that's
 the same
 One that was pierced out of love for mankind
 Let it enter Thy side, travel to Thy Heart, let it find
 This ocean of Mercy and Love, to melt in its fire
 Never to be separated from Thy Sacred Heart is my
 desire
 I ask my Heavenly Mother to wrap my heart with care
 Under the Heavenly Christmas Tree, please place it
 there
 With a little tag saying, from Mother to Son,
 There are many hearts that love Me, inside you'll find
 one."

P. Pio

THE BURNING BABE - A CHRISTMAS POEM

As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow
 Surprised I was with sudden heat which made my
 heart to glow;
 And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
 A pretty Babe all burning bright did in the air appear:
 Who, scorched with excessive heat, such floods of
 tears did shed
 As though his floods should quench his flames which
 with his tears were fed.
 'Alas!' quoth he, but newly born, in fiery heats I fry,
 Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire
 but I!
 My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding
 thorns,
 Love is the fire, and signs the smoke, the ashes shame
 and scorns;
 The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals,
 The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled
 souls,

For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their
good,
So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood.”
With this he vanished out of sight and swiftly shrunk
away,
And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas
day.

(by Blessed Robert Southwell, S.J.)

THE GIFT BEHIND THE GIFT

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

Probably nowhere is the true spirit of giving expressed more clearly than in O. Henry’s celebrated short story, **‘THE GIFT OF THE MAGI.’** Set in Manhattan during the early years of the present century, it tells the story of a young couple whose love for one another is so deep that it brings them to sacrifice their most cherished possessions for the sake of the other. At the outset, the couple is described as hard working, but struggling, with little money to spare for any of the typical holiday cheer. As Christmas approaches, each one wonders privately what he or she can give to the other as a gift. The husband has nothing of any worth but a gold watch that had been his father’s and ; the wife, nothing but her long, beautiful hair. As the tale unfolds, each goes off separately and sells what little he or she has in order to buy an expensive set of combs for his wife; the wife cuts her hair and sells it in order to buy a platinum fob chain for her husband’s watch. In the end, the couple is much worse off materially than at the beginning: the husband has a chain without a watch; the wife has a set of combs with very little hair to take care of. From a spiritual perspective, however, they are much closer than ever before. Each realized what the other has sacrificed in order to make the other one happy. Each recognizes the gift of self behind the actual material gift that was given. The platinum chain and the combs become symbols of their love for one another and help them to understand the true meaning of giving. Both

are grateful for their gifts and together celebrate Christmas in a way they never had before.

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

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

SUPPORT ETERNAL WORD TELEVISION NETWORK (EWTN)

If you enjoy the programming on EWTN Radio and Television, please send in regular and sacrificial contributions. EWTN Radio can be heard locally on AM 1570 from Doylestown, PA.

For whatever reason, Mother Angelica has had to make special appeals for support. We need to have a healthy and communicating EWTN.

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 four-page order form enclosed in this issue or loaded on the Internet Web Site, <http://www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith>, for a partial listing of items that can be obtained from the PFMC through donations. If you wish to order, please fill out your order request, make out a check or complete the information for use of a credit card and mail to PFMC, 61 Cooper Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043-4896.

If you do not have an order form, call us at 856-768-9228 with a FAX number or mailing address and we will send you an order form. If you know what you want and we carry it, you can order over the telephone using your credit card. Please come and see the PFMC. We know you will enjoy what you see and find a way of helping out.

Thank you and God bless you,

Kathleen and the Volunteer Staff

DONATIONS by CHARGE CARD ACCEPTED



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

BLESSED OIL

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

Read the articles in the November and December 1994 issues as well as the Bible readings for the Holy Week Chrism Mass about Blessed Oil and Oil of Gladness. If you no longer have these articles or never received them, you may request copies from the PFMC.

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.

BULLETIN NOTICES for PFMC AREA EVENTS

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

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

The PILGRIM

THURSDAY 2:15 PM to 2:45 PM "Put on the Armor of God" RADIO PROGRAM on WTMR, AM-800

Kathleen and Keith Werner host a weekly program with In His Sign (HIS) Radio Network <http://www.inhissign.com>. This half-hour is sponsored by the Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC), A Religious Association, Inc. There is prayer, scripture, discussion of Ephesians 6: 11-17 and, following announcements, call-in time, discussion with callers, healing prayer and summary. The call-in number is 856 962-8178.

PFMC CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

Come and join us in Christmas sharing to browse the Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC) displays of books, religious articles and statues from 11 AM to 6 PM, Saturday, 15 December 2001. There is new material from the pilgrimage to Medjugorje via Rome. Meet the PFMC volunteers, see the facilities, and consider joining in our volunteer work, especially as we now prepare for the Annual Retreat Conference in March, 2002. Call 856-768-9228 for directions or visit <http://www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith> for a map and directions to 61 Cooper Road, Voorhees, NJ.

2002 RETREAT CONFERENCE

The Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC) has moved its 2002 RETREAT CONFERENCE (2002 RC) to the Hilton Hotel, Cherry Hill, NJ.

The 2000 RC theme is "I HAVE LOVED YOU WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE" (Jeremiah 31:3).

Father John Hampsch, C.M.F. and Father Robert DeGrandis, S.S.J. so enjoyed working together with us that they have already agreed to work together to give us a dynamic 2002 RC. They will speak on "Healing and Suffering in our Faith."

The featured speaker on Saturday night will be Michael H. Brown; author of "Final Hour" "Trumpet of Gabriel" and many other exceptionally well researched books on the signs of the times.

Father Michael Semana, founder of the World of Hope Foundation, will return for a concert Saturday evening as well as his very generous work with the youth and young adults in the Youth Track (YT).

The dates are Friday through Sunday, March 8th, 9th, and 10th, 2002, with a 3-Day Extension (3DX) on

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, March 11th, 12th, and 13th, 2002. The Metuchen Diocese Charismatic Music Group REFUGE”will be back to provide the weekend music. Al Barbarino has agreed to EMCEE for the Weekend and to provide background music for the 3DX. Other musicians including VOYAGE”and Devin Riley have been invited.

Father Robert DeGrandis and his sister Dorothea DeGrandis Sudol will share the seminars and workshops of the 3DX on Healing of Memories -

Rooms may be booked at the \$89 rate for both the 2002 RC and 3DX as well as up to 7 days before or after the events. This rate and availability of additional rooms expires on 2/8/2002.

The regular room rate is currently \$119 per room per night and will probably go up by March of 2002.

For Hotel reservations please call NOW: 1-800-HILTONS or locally 856-665-6666.

For an information sheet with reservation forms visit <http://www.geocities.com/pilgrimsfaith> or call 856-768-9228.

Kathleen as well as all the PPMC Volunteer Staff

REFLECTION on the MESSAGE of 10/25/01

Dear children! Also today I call you to pray from your whole heart and to love each other. Little children, you are chosen to witness peace and joy. If there is no peace, pray and you will receive it. Through you and your prayer, little children, peace will begin to flow through the world. That is why, little children, pray, pray, pray, because prayer works miracles in human hearts and in the world. I am with you and I thank God for each of you who has accepted and lives prayer with seriousness. Thank you for having responded to my call.

I believe that words are too weak, too small and insufficient to express the desire and the love of the Blessed Virgin Mary for her children. Her purity and the greatness of her love cannot be contained in words. Each and every word has the power to hurt or to heal. Each and every word contains a spirit and a heart, but it also can transmit rudeness and emptiness.

We know that Our Lady's words come from a pure heart, pacified in God, filled with an untiring love. This is why this month's message wants to show us the way, the direction.

On the road, a sign is useless if we do not follow it. If we remain standing next to it, we will never reach our goal. Signs are there to help us not to get lost and thus reach our goal. It is the same with Our Lady's message - it wants to speak to us, to guide us, and we are those who will or will not follow. For more than twenty years now, Our Lady not only speaks to us, but wants to cry to each one's heart: Pray. We can easily find thousand of reasons not to pray, but there is one sufficient reason to pray: the joyful encounter with our Saviour. The fruit of our prayer is the love we are longing for, but maybe in a wrong way and in wrong places. We encounter less and less love in human relationships, more and more envy, backbiting, exploitation and lack of understanding. And we are surprised by it, and we ask ourselves how these kind of corrupted people can be human. Maybe we are not surprised enough as to why such a small number of people choose prayer. We are not surprised and we do not ask ourselves why there are less and less families who pray together, less and less families where members carry each others' burdens. We are not surprised much when someone blasphemes the name of God because we are used to this kind of poison. We are not surprised very much when families, parents in the family, are ashamed to pray in front of each other and in front of their children. Our Lady does not point out our wounds, which she knows too well - she wants to cover them with the purity of her love.

We ask ourselves why prayer is so difficult. Maybe because we do not believe in its power, perhaps better to say in the power of God who has no other possibility to reach and to save us, to deliver and to heal us. God can give us only what we ask him for. Peace can come only there where you open the door to it. Peace stands in front of your door.

Maybe we pray for peace, but we accept so easily all the sources of conflicts: negative thoughts, accusations, judgments and opinions, suspicions, backbiting and defamations. Peace has its price, but it cannot be bought like a thing in a shop. Peace is not a cheap thing; it demands a certain silence, sometimes even a heroic silence. The struggle for peace is a permanent struggle. Who ever wants to be a fighter for peace has to be ready to make war against himself, against his own negative tendencies, which bring forth fruits of death and destruction. It is necessary to put a

guard on one's mouth, in order to dwell in the presence of Him who gives peace and who is peace. Only through peaceful hearts can the Lord establish a kingdom of peace; first in our families, and then in the world. Let us do what we can, and God will do what seems impossible to us. If we do not do what is in our power, God will not force a hardened and cold heart.

I believe that Jesus was most hurt by people who did not take Him seriously. Our Lady said once that many have taken my messages seriously, but they have given up when they met difficulties and suffering. Jesus takes us seriously, Our Lady counts seriously on us; this is why she has remained with us for such a long time. As our Mother, she is grateful for all of those who seriously follow Her call. Let us not become tired in following Her words. Let us approach Jesus through Mary with an open heart. Let love attract us to God, and not fear. Let us approach Him before an affliction forces us to go towards Him. Let us wake up before a sudden distress or illness awaken us from our spiritual stupor.

Mary, thank you for your appeals, your words and your coming. Thank you for having obtained so many graces for all those who have opened their hearts, who follow the call of your heart with seriousness. Thank you, Mary, for all those who will, in visiting this place, make the experience of a new birth in the encounter with their Saviour. Thank you, Mary, for so many families who gather for prayer and nourish themselves at the source of life. Thank you, Mother, for so many hearts awakened thanks to the sacrament of Holy Confession and Holy Mass. Thank you, Mother, for not becoming tired with us. Do not become tired in calling us, even when we become tired and distant.

Father Ljubo Kurtovic, Medjugorje, October 26, 2001

JOHN PAUL II INVITES BELIEVERS to PRAYER and FASTING for PEACE

VATICAN CITY, NOVEMBER 18, 2001

Here is a translation of Pope John Paul II's address to pilgrims gathered today in Saint Peter's Square for the midday Angelus.

Dearest Brothers and Sisters!

1. The international scene continues to be disturbed by worrying tensions. We cannot forget the intense sufferings that have afflicted and still afflict so many of

our brothers and sisters in the world: thousands of innocent victims in the grave attacks of last September 11; innumerable people forced to abandon their homes to face the unknown and, sometimes, a cruel death; women, the elderly and children exposed to the risk of dying of cold and hunger.

In a situation made dramatic by the always-present threat of terrorism, we feel the need to cry out to God. The more insurmountable the difficulties and obscure the prospects, so much the more insistent must our prayer be, to implore God for the gift of mutual understanding, harmony and peace.

2. We know that prayer acquires force if it is coupled with fasting and almsgiving. The Old Testament already taught this and from the earliest centuries, Christians have accepted and applied this lesson, especially at the times of Advent and Lent. For their part, Muslim faithful have just begun Ramadan, a month dedicated to fasting and prayer. Shortly, we Christian will begin Advent, to prepare ourselves in prayer for the celebration of Christmas, the day of birth of the "Prince of Peace."

At this opportune time, I ask Catholics to make next Dec. 14 a day of fasting, during which to pray with fervor to God so that he will grant the world a stable peace, based on justice, and make it possible to find adequate solutions to the many conflicts that trouble the world. May what is saved from fasting be placed at the disposal of the poor, especially those who at present suffer the consequences of terrorism and war.

I would also like to announce that it is my intention to invite the representatives of the religions of the world to come to Assisi on Jan. 24, 2002, to pray for the surmounting of oppositions and the promotion of authentic peace. In particular, we wish to have Christians and Muslims come together, to proclaim before the world that religion must never be a reason for conflict, hatred and violence. Whoever really accepts the word of the good and merciful God, cannot but exclude from his heart every form of rancor and enmity. In this historic moment, humanity needs to see gestures of peace and to hear words of hope.

As I said 15 years ago, when announcing the meeting of prayer for peace, which was held in Assisi the following October: "It is urgent that a choral invocation be raised from the earth to heaven, to implore from the Almighty, in whose hands is the destiny of the world, the great gift of peace, the necessary condition for any serious endeavor at the service of humanity's real progress."

3. From this moment I entrust this initiative to the maternal intercession of Mary Most Holy, asking her to sustain our efforts, and those of the whole of humanity, in the way of peace.

We ask you, Queen of Peace, to help us respond with the force of truth and love to the new and overwhelming challenges of the present time. Help us also to surmount this difficult moment, which disturbs the serenity of so many people, and to work unhesitatingly to build, every day and in every environment, an authentic culture of peace.

(Zenit.org)

PRESS BULLETIN 168, 11/26/2001

PREPARE A PLACE for the GREATEST GIFT

We approach the time of Advent, a time of expectation and preparation.

It is a time of active expectation and preparation of our spirit for the greatest joy that ever happened to humanity –the coming of the Young Sun from above, Jesus Christ. In our daily life, we expect events that bring us more or less joy. We expect the end of the school year, we expect marriages, we expect people we love, we expect nice weather, a job..In our expectance, sometimes we become tired and lose patience and hope that our expectation may be fulfilled. Indeed, we have to know how to wait. Expectation has to be also a preparation, and not only a waiting with our hands crossed on our chest. This kind of expectation-preparation is asked from us in the time of Advent. If we want to receive the fruits of Jesus' birth, we have to expect His coming with the same attitude as Our Lady, who prepared her heart in humility to give birth to Him. This is precisely what we need - the modesty of Our Lady, her generosity and humility. We have to expect Jesus in the setting in which He was born.

Where was Jesus born? He was born in a manger, because only in the manger there was place for Him. Also this Christmas, he will be born only there, where he finds a place, where the paths have been straightened. Where Jesus finds a crib in human hearts –there Christmas will happen. We prepare ourselves during four weeks, because only those who are spiritually ready will hear the joyful cry of the Saviour of the world.

Volume 12, Number 12 – December 2001

Child Jesus brings a message that spurs us to work on a better world, a message that fills our hearts with kindness for the poor, the little and the rejected. If we want to be inheritants of this message, let us prepare our hearts to receive this gift.

Let us reject our heart of stone and receive a heart of flesh. In her messages in Medjugorje, Our Lady directs us all the time towards her Son. So let us be awake and seek the way to this Mystery hidden in the manger, to enter into the secret of hope, of faith and of love that Jesus brings to those who are able to receive them.

Fra Mario Knezovi

NUMBER OF COMMUNIONS AND NUMBER OF CONCELEBRANTS

During the month of October, 124,000 received Holy Communion and 2,660 priests concelebrated Holy Mass in Medjugorje.

“Totus Tuus” in Medjugorje

During the second week of October 2001, we noticed the presence of a group of young people in Medjugorje, who joined our daily House orchestra,” playing and singing during the evening prayer hours in the church. Totus Tuus”is a group of collaborators for the New Evangelization. A number of people from the Ruhrgebiet, Germany, were enthusiastic about the messages of Our Lady and wanted to do something for the Church. They started praying and fasting.

We started by going to visit prisoners. We met a priest, who worked with prisoners, mainly with young prisoners. With him, we prepared Holy Masses for the youth in prison. We also gave our testimonies. We then went to the streets. From time to time, a parish would invite us to give our testimony or to play and sing.

We organize regular pilgrimages to Medjugorje. More and more young people come with us. They are enthusiastic and they bring their relatives and friends. This is how the group has grown. Many young people want to give their testimonies about what they have experienced in Medjugorje. They want to evangelise.

In 1997, we decided that we had to choose our name. After prayer, we received the name Totus Tuus” – “Completely Yours.” The name Totus Tuus”expresses the Marian dimension: To live the message of

Medjugorje and to transmit them to others. We then, went to the Bishop of Paderborn and we presented our work and ourselves to him. He was enthusiastic and encouraged us in everything.

It is a group of young people and families who live in the world, throughout Germany. Members make a promise for one year to give their free time for the New Evangelisation. It is completely free, it is a decision, and it is the fruit of their desire. As candidates, we prepare ourselves for that, and after preparing, we can give our promise for one year. We all live normally in the world, working, studying, going to school...

We find time because we do not watch television, we do not play with the computer, we do not go for useless parties; we are occupied with Jesus and Mary. We have about 100 collaborators. We also have a circle of friends who help us in different ways, a few thousands of them. Our group is a movement of lay people, but we are accompanied by several priests. We simply live the messages. The messages of Medjugorje are what Church teaches."

Ten years of the "Wall of love"

On October 12th and 13th, 2001, the Humanitarian Organization "Wall of Love" celebrated the 10th anniversary of its foundation in Medjugorje.

"Wall of Love" was initially an association of mothers from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, created at the beginning of the war in Croatia. Their goal was to protect their children from evil and violence caused by war destruction, and to resist to hatred through prayer and love. Like all the pilgrim groups, this group included in its program the sacrament of Confession, Holy Mass and prayer on the Apparition Hill.

Public Statement by the Pastor Regarding Untrue Information About Medjugorje

Prompted by untrue information linked to Medjugorje, which is being spread in the world, the Parish Priest of Medjugorje, Father Branko Radoš wrote a public statement on October 26, 2001:

It is nothing new that some people are against truth, those who intentionally or unintentionally twist the truth. When it is the matter of Medjugorje, in recent times some untrue information surfaced. What especially troubles the numerous friends of the Queen of Peace from Medjugorje is the supposed statement

of Cardinal Vinko Puljic from Sarajevo at the Bishops' Synod in Rome; that Medjugorje was a source of disorder and disobedience in the Church in Herzegovina, and that there were Franciscans serving in Medjugorje who were disobedient.

For the sake of the truth it is my duty to say: In his talk at the Bishops' Synod which took place in October 2001 in Rome, Cardinal Vinko Puljic did not even mention Medjugorje in a single word. All those who want it can consult the original text of his talk. By the way, I highlight that all Franciscan priests serving in the parish of Medjugorje have been commissioned by the local Bishop.

I invite all the friends of the Queen of Peace to pray, so that the peace and truth of Jesus Christ the Lord may reign in this world."

On October 30th 2001, in an interview for "Slobodna Dalmacija," Cardinal Vinko Puljic Archbishop of Vrhbosna (Sarajevo) said:

The phenomenon of Medjugorje is under the jurisdiction of the local bishop and of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and it will remain so until the phenomenon reaches another dimension, until the supposed apparitions cease. Then they will be observed in another way. The actual situation is such that Medjugorje has to be observed on two levels: On the level of prayer, penance, something that is an act of faith. The apparitions and messages are on another level, which will be submitted to a very critical investigation."

Father Ghislain Ndongi, OFM, Provincial of the Franciscan Province of Saint Benedict the African, Lumumbashi (Congo)

On the feast of All Saints 2001, Father Ghislain Ndongi, OFM, Provincial of the Franciscan Province of Saint Benedict the African from Lumumbashi (Congo) came on pilgrimage to Medjugorje. At the end of his pilgrimage, he spoke about his experiences.

My coming to Medjugorje is a marvelous experience. There are so many things to see. I think that it is a very symbolic place, but also a very important and significant spiritual centre. According to what I have seen and heard, I think that something very strong is happening here. Wherever Our Lady appears, something strong is happening. I think that something very strong is being built here in the frame of the Church. My brothers in Africa know Medjugorje

through books, through informal information, which they receive in a very disorganized way. We have a brother native from here, Father Jozo Vasilj, and through him, we are hearing something about Medjugorje. We have no organized contacts with Medjugorje.

I have met the visionary Ivanka. I was deeply impressed. I appreciate her discretion. I think that this is a sign, which helps to understand the messages she carries. What I remember are the messages, which Our Lady confided to her to transmit to the world and to the Church: Prayer and conversion. I am impressed by what she said about people who, once during an apparition, touched Our Lady's veil, and their hands left some stains on it. This is a symbol of our world and of our humanity. As much as I understood, Our Lady calls us to change our way of living to make this stains disappear. This corresponds to Jesus' profound words when He says: "Be converted!"

I would like our people to come to Medjugorje, but Africa is far away. I decided to take the initiative to establish a strong contact with Medjugorje. We'll have to designate a person to be regularly in charge of it."

Monsignor Denis Croteau, OMI, Bishop of the McKenzie Diocese (Canada)

Monsignor Denis Croteau, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, bishop of the McKenzie diocese (Canada), came on a private pilgrimage to Medjugorje with a group of Canadian pilgrims from October 29 to November 6, 2001. He spoke about his impressions of Medjugorje.

I came for the first time to Medjugorje in April –the 25th of April to the 7th of May this year. I came as we say incognito; nobody knew I was a bishop. I had heard about Medjugorje and I knew that if I come as a priest, I would be in front with priests. I wanted to be with people, to see how people pray, to be just like anybody else, to give me a good idea about what Medjugorje was like. So, I stayed with the people. I came with a group of 73 pilgrims. Nobody knew I was a bishop. I was just a Christian. At the end, before we went back to Split to take the plane, I said: "Well, I am a Bishop," and people were very surprised because I didn't look like a bishop at all! I wanted to have a feel of Medjugorje as a Christian before coming back as a Bishop.

I read a lot of books, I listened to tapes, I had a fairly good information about the visionaries, the messages of Mary, and a bit of the conflict also. This is why I came incognito, to make my own mind about Medjugorje. And I was really impressed. I was so impressed that I went back to Canada and I talked to people and I said: "If you want to organise a pilgrimage, I would back you up, I would help you." So, we organized a pilgrimage and we came last Monday, on the 29th of October, and we are leaving the 6th of November. We spent 8 full days here and people really, really liked the experience of Medjugorje. They want to come back!

What impresses me the most and what impresses the people the most is the atmosphere of prayer. Personally, what impressed me the last time and this time, is that the visionaries don't stress neither big miracles, nor extraordinary things, nor the end of the world, nor catastrophes or disasters, but the message of Mary, which is a message of prayer, conversion, penance, to say the rosary, to go to the sacraments, to practice your faith, to practice charity, to help the poor and so on. That is the message. Secrets are there, but the visionaries don't make a big thing out of this. The message of Mary is prayer. And people pray so well here! They sing loud, they pray loud, it gives you a good feeling. It makes you believe that it's really true. I'll come back again, that's for sure! I give you my prayers and my blessing."

New Book: "Medjugorje - Réponses aux objections"

The book "Medjugorje - Réponses aux objections," Editions du Sarment, 2001, (Medjugorje –Answers to Objections), actually only in French, was written by Daria Klanac, a Canadian of Croatian origin, who organised more than sixty pilgrimages and accompanied several thousands of pilgrims. Her book establishes the truth in a clear, objective and documented way. She is drawing from the archives she assembled herself during several years, which consist of first-hand material. Daria Klanac answers to principal objections against Medjugorje and demasks methodically, with proofs and without polemics, false and defamatory arguments." (Editor - Editions du Sarment 2001).

<http://www.medjugorje.hr/ulazakenstipe.htm>

CALENDARS:

In *December*, the Church celebrates the Solemnities of **IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (8)** and **CHRISTMAS (25)**, the Feasts of **Our Lady of Guadalupe (12)**, **Saints Stephen (26)**, and **John, Apostle and Evangelist (27)**, **Holy Innocents (28)** and **Holy Family (30)** and the Memorials of **Saints Francis Xavier (3)**, **John of Damascus (4)**, **Nicholas (6)**, **Ambrose (7)**, **Damasus I (11)**, **Lucy (13)**, **John of the Cross (14)**, **Peter Canisius (21)**, and **Pope Sylvester I (31)**. Church calendars show **Hanukkah (10)**.

In *January*, the Church celebrates the Solemnities of **Mary, Mother of God (1)**, **Epiphany of the Lord (6)**, the Feasts of **Baptism of the Lord (13)** and **The Conversion of Paul (25)**, and Memorials of **Saints Basil the Great (2)**, **Gregory Nazianzen (2)**, **Genevieve (3)**, **Elizabeth Ann Seton (4)**, **John Neumann (5)**, **Raymond of Penyafort (7)**, **Hilary (13)**, **Anthony, Abbot (17)**, **Agnes (21)**, **Vincent (22)**, **Francis de Sales (24)**, **Timothy (26)**, **Titus (26)**, **Thomas Aquinas (28)** and **John Bosco (31)** as well as **Blessed Andre Bessette (6)**. Most Church calendars recognize **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday (16) (observed) (14)**.

AROUND the PFMC AREA

Please review the announcements on pages 4 and 5 and the Bulletin Notices on pages 18 and 19.

We need everyone to help publish information with prayer groups and in your Parish Bulletin.

For additional information, call the PFMC at (856) 768-9228. Please leave your area code with your phone number so that we may return your call. You may FAX your questions to (856)-768-9428.

The PILGRIM

Page 24

Volume 12, Number 12 – December 2001

Pilgrims of Faith Marian Center (PFMC), A Religious Association, Inc.

NON-PROFIT and IRS Code 501(c)(3) TAX EXEMPT

Keith and Kathleen Werner, Co-Directors

61 Cooper Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043-4963

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

If there is no time to read it all now, please put it with other reading material in a place where you can read at least an article per day until the next issue arrives. We operate on divine providence and the kind donations of those who can afford to support us. PRIESTS! Please note that HOMILY ideas have come from priests reading articles in 'The PILGRIM!'



PFMC PRESENTATIONS

Kathleen and Keith desire to participate in Altar Rosary Society, Legion of Mary, or other parish prayer group meetings with witness, and/or videotape or slide presentations, followed by a question and answer session. The experiences and continuation of the PFMC ministries for Our Lady in this time of manifestation of Our Lord's mercy and graces are shared at is no cost. Free will offerings are accepted. This is especially true for books, tapes, and religious articles, when they are made available in displays at the presentation sites just like they are at the PFMC which operates like a church book rack. Recipients are asked to donate at or above the suggested value on each article. Call the PFMC at (856) 768-9228.

INTERNET

Surf for the PFMC presence on the Internet at:



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

Keith and Kathleen and Family:

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

Send us interesting web sites and e-mails:

PFMCkmw@home.com