

# Mission of Divine Mercy

Paschal Season 2019



Maria Felicitas  
1947-2019

“Unless the grain of wheat  
fall into the ground and die....”



**Palm Sunday 2018**

## **HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE**

### **Holy Thursday (April 18)**

- **7:30 pm** - Mass of the Institution of the Eucharist
- Eucharistic Adoration following Mass
- **10:30 pm** - Vigil Ends and Mission closes

### **Good Friday (April 19)**

- **9:00 am** - Walking Way of the Cross
- After the Way of the Cross (roughly 11am) there will be:
- Veneration of a Relic of the True Cross at St. Joseph's Chapel and
- Confessions until **3pm**
- **2:00 pm** - Service of the Passion at St. Joseph's Chapel
- **3:30 pm** - Novena of Divine Mercy at St. Joseph's Chapel
- **5:00 pm** - Mission closes to public

### **Holy Saturday (April 20)**

- **9:00 am** - Meditation and Rosary in honor of Our Lady of Sorrows at St. Joseph's Chapel
- **9 - 11:00 am** - Sacrament of Reconciliation at St. Joseph's Chapel
- **10:00 am** - Novena of Divine Mercy at St. Joseph's Chapel
- **12:00 pm** - Closes to public

### **Easter Sunday (Apr 21)**

- **6:00 am** - Solemn Easter Vigil at St. Joseph's Chapel
- Festive breakfast following Mass

**Triduum Retreat  
at the Mission  
See page 12**

## Maria Felicitas and the Paschal Mystery

It seems fitting that our spring newsletter – our Paschal newsletter of dying and rising and mercy – should feature Maria Felicitas. A month ago from today, (I am writing this on March 11), none of us knew she was beginning her last day on earth.

At 8:30am on February 11, a sharp knock on my door from Mariela, Maria's sister, called me across to Maria Felicitas' bedroom. Maria was sitting on the side of the bed with Mariela supporting her on her right side. She wanted to stand up and I was supposed to help. For about twenty minutes it seemed we stood there with Maria Felicitas alternately straining to stand up and then resting and recouping her strength to try again. Despite all the weight she had lost she had strong sturdy bones and with her hanging like a rag doll between us we weren't able to lift her. Finally she gave up and lay back down on the bed. She did not get up again.

She now began the last nineteen hours of her life and a time of intense suffering.

Maria Felicitas had gone steadily downhill since the fall. Thinner, weaker, less and less energy. She was a stoic and didn't complain. But one could see her frustration at not being able to accomplish what she wanted to do, what – until recently – she'd been able to do herself.

On Christmas morning, bundled up, she left the house for the last time in order to go to Mass. That night she was present at our Community dinner for the last time and spoke barely a word. (We didn't know they were "lasts" at the time.)

Though pajamas and bathrobe were becoming her work clothes, at this point she was still getting up each morning, having her meals, working on her computer, and wielding her cell phone as her primary instrument of communication and command. Her main goal at that point was to make sure that all her responsibilities were covered; that she didn't leave the Community with any of her work undone. And she succeeded. Jobs were analyzed, organized, sometimes divided, and people assigned to fill each slot.

She had asked Our Blessed Mother to let her live long enough to accomplish



that. Towards the end of January she had said, “Now I can die.”

Maria Felicitas always had very clear ideas about what she wanted! And this extended to how she would depart this world. She wanted four things: 1. That her youngest sister Mariela come to help take care of her during her last weeks. 2. That she not be embalmed. 3. That her casket be a simple wooden box built by Dave Sommers and Crew. 4. That she be buried at the Mission.

In the end the Lord made each of these possible.

On that last day she began to suffer from intense nausea. A hospice nurse was with us by mid-morning and administered some anti-nausea medicine and a sedative. Neither seemed to even touch her pain. She seemed to have passed into a realm of suffering inhabited by herself alone. None of us could enter.

She had been uncomplaining with regard to her decline; bossy and demanding, yes, but still stoical with regard to discomfort. Now every exhalation was a moan, and the moans came every few seconds. And that was how it was for the rest of the day. Every few minutes Sr. Amapola would help Mariela to turn her in bed to see if that would relieve her suffering. But nothing seemed to. I went out to look for hospital gowns to replace the pajamas, and by late afternoon I'd asked Father John Mary to grant her the Apostolic Pardon: *“Through the holy mysteries of our redemption, may Almighty God release you from all punishments in this life and in the life to come...”* This pardon is administered only when death is imminent, though at that point we still didn't realize how close her death was.

By 6 p.m. the nurse had returned and administered a (small) dose of morphine. Again there was no evidence of relief and the groaning continued. By 11 p.m. that night the Director of Hospice was with us. He observed, called the doctor, and then administered a larger dosage of painkiller. Finally the moaning eased up and there seemed to be some relief for her. Her body seemed to relax and the moaning ceased.

The three of us had concluded that we would have to get her to the hospital the next day. Meanwhile Sr. Amapola had brought a big easy chair into the room to sleep in so that Mariela would not be alone with Maria Felicitas during the night. My turn was scheduled for 6 a.m. But my turn didn't come. At 3:30 Sr. Amapola knocked on my door and said, “She's gone.” Sr. Amapola had awakened and realized that she couldn't hear Maria's breathing; and when she checked Maria had indeed gone.

No one ever accused Maria Felicitas of being perfect. She had her faults and flaws and could be extremely difficult at times; she could, at times, be very hard on people. Yet it seemed to me that beneath that flawed surface one occasionally received glimpses of a soul that was luminous with innocence and purity and compassion; and with a wholehearted love for her Jesus and His Blessed Mother. *“Solo por Tu amor, Jesús Mio!”*

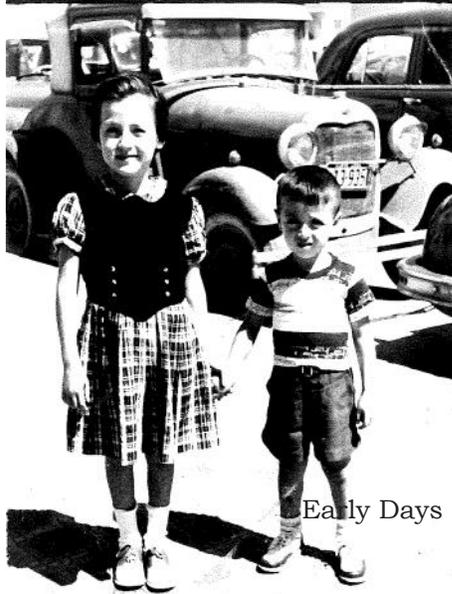
As I witnessed her agony on that last day I kept feeling like I was seeing Christ on the Cross; His loneliness, His helplessness; His agony. But also the redemptive power of that pain. I felt, we felt, that we were witnessing a very holy death.

And it was not a surprise later to learn that several members of the Community had received indications that she had gone from that final struggle directly into the Arms of God. Having witnessed her agony, it is immensely comforting to feel the assurance of her bliss; to feel the assurance that she has been born into Complete Love where she is completely understood, completely serene, completely free. I tell her that I am happy, sad, jealous. And I say, “Maria Felicitas, pray for me!”

Mother Magdalene



Parents' Wedding



Early Days

First Communion



Bortoni Family

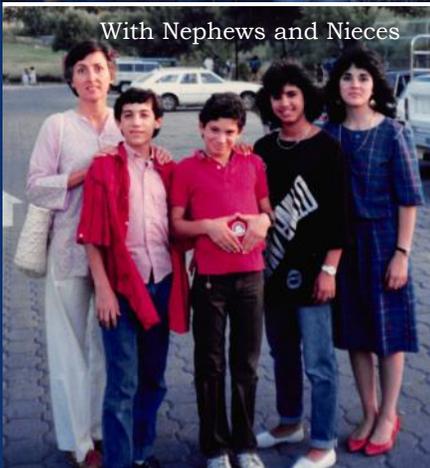


At the Ranch 1997—2001



# Journey of a Lifetime

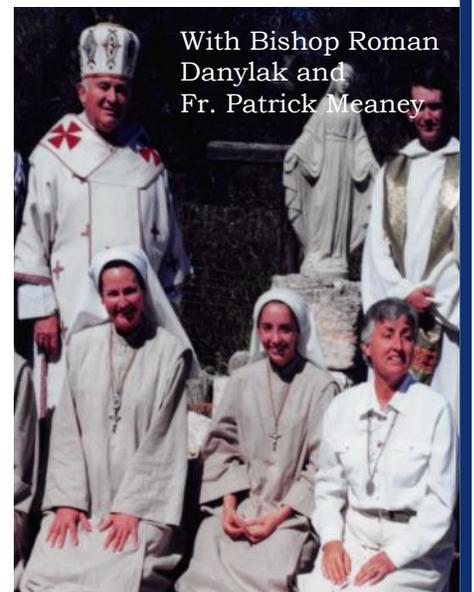
With Nephews and Nieces



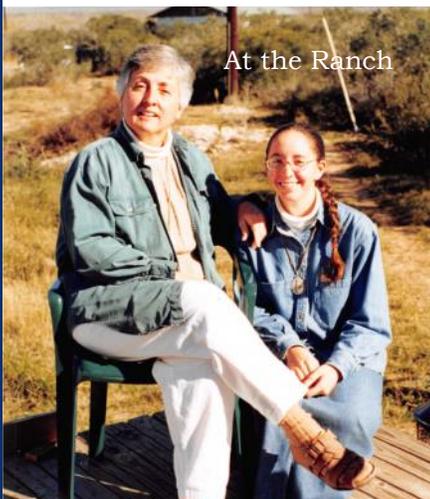
Young Urban Professional



With Bishop Roman Danylak and Fr. Patrick Meaney



At the Ranch



"Hey, I'm talking to you..."

## OUR NEW CEMETERY



As David Reed tells it, a few months ago he was heading up to St. Joseph's Chapel one afternoon and came upon Maria Felicitas parked in her car outside the Chapel, staring out over the hillside. Walking by he stopped and inquired, "Whatcha doin'?" And her reply, "I'm wondering where I'll be buried."

It is traditional for religious communities to have a private cemetery in which their members are buried.\* Our new cemetery is located on the hillside to the left of St. Joseph Chapel, just behind the Holy Souls Memorial. In fact, the Memorial acts like an entrance to the cemetery, as if the Holy Souls are saying "Welcome," to all who enter.

The need for a cemetery was some-

thing that we had been thinking about for a few years. We had asked John Weber, a retired civil engineer and friend of the Mission, for his help and expertise. In 2016 he began researching the legal criteria for a private cemetery while David Reed went through similar steps with the Archdiocese.

But early in 2017 the Tepeyac Hill project took off and consumed all of our time, thought and resources. So the cemetery project was put on the back burner.

Then in the fall of 2018 Maria had her periodic checkup with her oncologist. The diagnosis wasn't good. Cancer had reared its ugly head for the fourth time. Maria chose not to undergo more chemotherapy. Given her decision the doctor indicated in

November that she probably wouldn't live beyond twelve months.

The Mission community prayed that, if it be God's will, Maria Felicitas would somehow come through this bout of cancer as she had the ones in the past. But we also spoke with John Weber and asked him to revisit the plans for the cemetery.

Throughout January, Maria was growing significantly weaker. The timeline began to look much shorter. John spoke with Marcus Ethridge, of M.C. Ethridge Construction, who was handling the road improvement at the Mission. John explained the new urgency of the situation to Marcus and they began to draw up a working plan and gather resources for the cemetery. Suddenly it looked like the grave might be needed in weeks, not months.



Then on Monday, February 11, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, Maria unexpectedly took a dramatic turn for the worse and died the next morning around 3 AM. Fr. John Mary sent an email Tuesday morning at 6:00 AM notifying the staff of her death. But John Weber had already received a text message from Peter at 5:30 AM and the message was clear--- the Community needed the cemetery now. Was it possible?

John contacted Marcus and the two of

them decided they would do everything possible --- and depend on Heaven to help move earth ---to prepare a cemetery for Maria by Friday of the same week. Marcus, (who revealed later that, at that point, his company had more work pro-



jects than ever in their history) put everything else on hold and personally oversaw the creation of the cemetery. From Tuesday through Friday truckloads of building stones and dirt rolled through the Mission gates. And men on large heavy equipment worked each day past sundown.

At our Staff and Community meeting on Wednesday morning, Peter reported on the progress of the cemetery. The hour-by-hour transformation of the site was a *minor miracle* to anyone who had the time to stop up and see the work taking place. But Peter, who had been filling out paper work with John, cautioned that the other part of the equation was getting permission from the County Clerk's office which also had to make sure that permission was filed in Austin. This caused a pall of gloom to fall over the gathering. Getting permission from a government agency in time---that would require a *major miracle*.

Yet, there was no time to lose. Maria Felicitas' family would arrive shortly from Mexico, and decisions had to be made. Knowing that Maria fervently wished to be buried on the grounds of the Mission, we prayed that God would somehow help make that happen. We also asked Maria Felicitas to intercede.

Then later that same day, Wednesday afternoon, John arrived at the Mission, grinning from ear to ear. He had received the necessary permissions! Word went around the Mission like wildfire. It did indeed seem miraculous.

John recalls the day this way:

*I believed that the biggest rock in my road was going to be getting approval of all the paper work from the County Clerk. The day after Maria's death I got all my papers together and headed down the road. On the way I said the Rosary and with each Hail*

Mary I said, "This is for Maria." When I got to the County Clerk's office, I explained what I needed to the woman behind the counter. She got up and went into another office and when she came out she said, "Mr. Weber, one of the biggest hurdles is getting the two people who need to approve it in the same room. They just so happen to be finishing lunch in the back office and they have invited you to come in."

There is much more to this story, but to keep it short, the County Clerk and the Office Manager listened to my story, reviewed my papers carefully, gave me their approval and even walked back with me to make sure that the clerk who needed to file the papers with Austin did so expeditiously. I had worried about running into a bureaucratic wall, instead I was treated with humanity and compassion.

**Later that night I told my wife that God had taken the biggest rock in my road and turned it into beach sand and scattered it to the four winds. I just needed to trust Him. ♦**

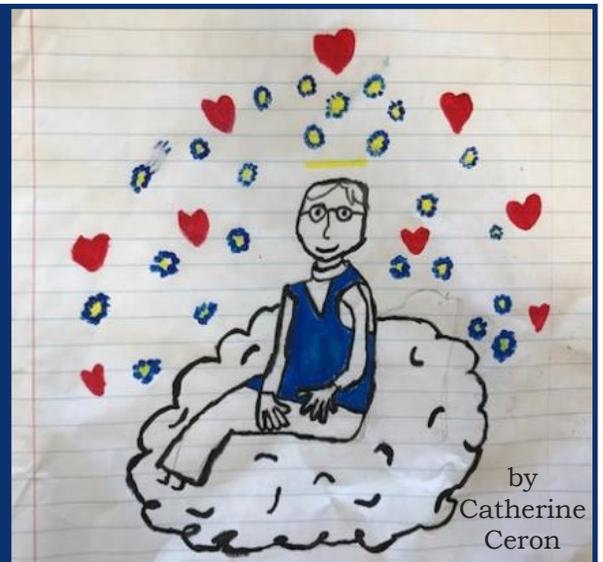


\* Several people have approached us over the years to ask whether, when the time comes, could they or a loved one be buried at the Mission? As much as we would have liked to be able to accommodate their wishes, the regulations for opening and maintaining a **public** cemetery are prohibitive for a small religious community like MDM. Recently however, we have been inspired to create a memorial area in connection with our new community cemetery and the Holy Souls Memorial. It is our way of uniting all our loved ones in the prayers of the Mission. See the announcement on page 14 of this newsletter. ♦

## THE POWER OF YOUR PRAYER

Though her last day was indeed hard, Maria Felicitas had been remarkably free of severe pain during her last few months. The hospice doctor had commented on this when he read her medical report. He said that it was the worst case of cancer he had seen.

"It's all the prayer," Sr. Amapola had said later. "She is being surrounded and shielded by the prayers of all her friends." ♦



by  
Catherine  
Ceron

## MDM REVEALS NEW LOGO



MDM has always been represented by both an Emblem and a logo. Have you ever wondered why? Well, probably not! But we are going to take the occasion of introducing our new logo to explain the significance of both.

In the simplest terms, the logo represents the more *human* part of the Mission and the Emblem represent the more *spiritual*. They serve different purposes.

Recently, with the help of a talented young graphic artist, Marina Nolen, MDM has developed a new logo that will replace the original. The new logo is a simple outline of the Teocalli placed in a navy oval.

Sr. Amapola explains the reason for the new logo. “Our old logo, which looked like a Spanish mission church, was created when we thought we would be building a church like that soon. But that never

happened. So the Mission logo has been a picture of something that didn’t exist at the Mission. We thought it was time to develop a new logo that truly represented the Mission property. This image of the Teocalli, our outdoor sanctuary on Tepyac Hill, does just that.”

Our logo denotes the physical, more human part of the Mission --- the land itself, the buildings, activities, staff and volunteers. In other words, all that aids the Community in our ministry to draw down God’s grace for those who come here physically or in spirit. The logo can be used on signs, objects and various printed materials and electronic communications. It can be printed on clothing like work shirts, T-shirts and ball caps that can be worn by staff, volunteers and others.

The Emblem is very different; it is sacred, and worn by the Community members on the front of our habits. We felt it was inspired by the Lord for our little MDM. It is a simple image that denotes the spiritual aspects of the Mission: Faith,



Humility and Obedience ---and represents the offerings that each one makes in union with Christ's Offering on the Cross.

The elements that make up the Emblem are:

The **Cross of Light** that signifies the Light of the New Evangelization. The blinding Light that will chase away the Darkness.

The **Sacred Heart with Flames** is a sign of Christ's love and mercy, and of His direct intervention and actions on our behalf. The Fire signifies His Love that consumes all that is not of God, and makes us an acceptable pure offering of love to the Father.

The **Thorns, Wound and drops of Blood** signify the suffering that He endured for us, and in which we may be asked to participate. They are visible signs of the price of true Faith, true Obedience and true Humility.

The Emblem is only used in certain instances. It is worn only by Community members who carry it as a visible sign of God's promises for all. It can also be used for holy cards and medals, and on printed communications that are part of the Community's ministry of spreading God's message of Love and Mercy: words for the hearts of His children. It can also be used in electronic communications in the same way.

Together, the Emblem and logo help to convey the totality of MDM's work and ministry. ♦

## A SIMPLE WOODEN BOX

Dave Sommers received an early morning phone call on the Tuesday morning of Maria Felicitas' death. Sr. Amapola explained to Dave that Maria had wanted to be buried in a simple wooden casket, and she wanted Dave to make it.

Like any good Marine, Dave accepted the assignment and then figured out how he would accomplish it. This was Tuesday morning. It needed to be finished by Friday morning. And his To-Do list included many other items in order to accommodate the weekend's funeral. He quickly contacted Steve Magdich and Bill Wylie and explained the task.

Given time, this team would have liked to have prepared a "really special" coffin for Maria, but with approximately three days to learn the requirements of and actually construct the coffin, they stayed with a very simple, sturdy construction.

Once finished, a handmade quilt was placed in the casket and a Miraculous Medal was placed at its head. ♦

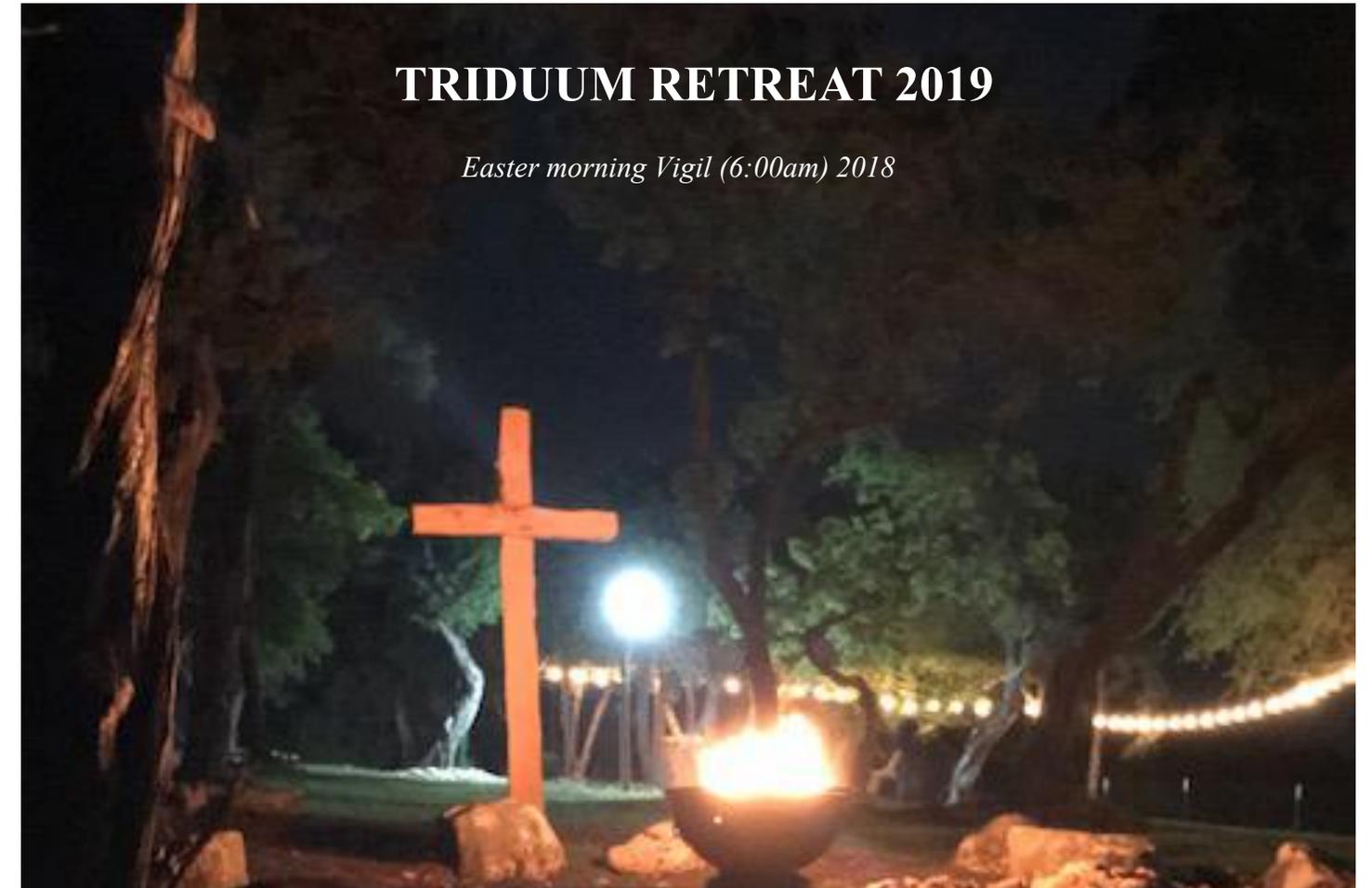


“...He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more....”

Rev. 21:4

# TRIDUUM RETREAT 2019

*Easter morning Vigil (6:00am) 2018*



**T**his is a very simple retreat that begins the evening of Holy Thursday and concludes Easter Sunday morning. **There are no talks.** There is a simple orientation on Thursday evening. The retreat concludes with breakfast on Easter Sunday.

The retreat consists in each individual living with us the liturgical services of these days (see the Holy Week Schedule on page 2), which are also open to the public. We encourage retreatants to spend the rest of the time in silence, taking full advantage of the Mission grounds and meditating on the mysteries of these hours with the help of the Holy Scriptures, the Diary of St. Faustina, and *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* by Maria Valtorta. (For more information on this please see our website.)

Retreatants are free to come and go as they wish within the indicated hours.

But we encourage them to live the retreat in its entirety as much as possible, so as to accompany our Lord during His Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection. During certain hours the Mission will be open only for retreatants.

The only meals included in the retreat are a dinner on Holy Thursday and a public breakfast on Easter Sunday morning. For all other meals retreatants are welcome to bring their own food or go to local restaurants. Snacks and beverages will be made available to retreatants throughout the retreat. Unfortunately, we cannot offer lodging. In the past, people coming from far away have stayed at local hotels.

The cost: \$15

For more information and to register please call Mariano and Sarah Granados at (830) 302-9707 or visit our website [www.missionofdivinemeracy.com](http://www.missionofdivinemeracy.com). ♦

## ST. THOMAS PARISH

Every year on Divine Mercy Sunday we hear the Easter Gospel of St. Thomas. Jesus, risen, dispels the doubt of His Apostle; wins from him a profession of faith and adoration – ***“My Lord and My God!”***; and then closes with a powerful and heartening Benediction that stretches down through the ages to all His frail Children: ***“Blessed are those who have not seen but have believed.”***

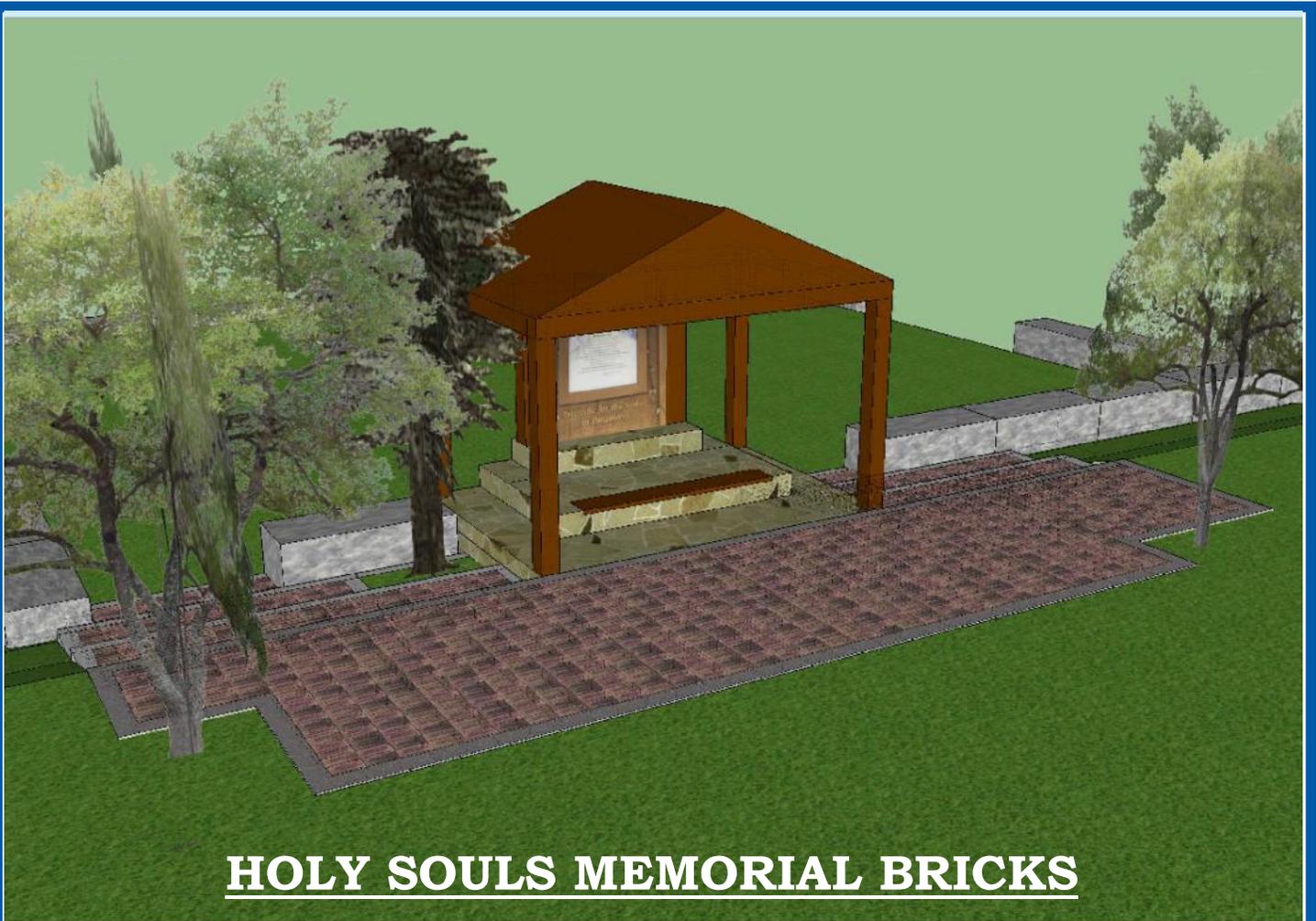
We have a special affection for this wounded Apostle who appears each year in the Gospel of our Patronal Feast. And so it was a providential grace for us when we purchased this land to learn that our neighborhood parish was that of St. Thomas the Apostle.

This past fall, in the wake of the loss of their Pastor, the Archbishop asked Fr. John Mary, along with Fr. Carlos and Fr. Kris of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, to provide for the sacramental and pastoral care of the members of St. Thomas Parish.

While this has required some re-alignment of energy and events at the Mission, we are happy to have this opportunity for a closer spiritual connection with our friends at St. Thomas. At Mass with them and with the Apostle we seek the mercy of the beating Heart of Jesus.

***My Lord and My God....***





## HOLY SOULS MEMORIAL BRICKS

A devotion to the Holy Souls has been part of MDM's ministry and spirituality from the beginning. We believe that the souls of those who have gone before us, whether in Purgatory or Paradise, are a strong intercessory force, and can be of great help to us. And if they are in Purgatory, it is our responsibility to work for their release through the offering of our sacrifices, prayers and Masses. Thus, between us and the Holy Souls is a relationship of profound mutual love and support.

Over the years people have asked us for a way to memorialize their loved one out here at the Mission. We have asked God to show us an appropriate means and we believe that He inspired us with an approach that would allow people to not just acknowledge their loved ones and support the Mission, but help remind and encourage all visitors to the Mission of our sacred obligation to pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

**Our idea is to create a handsome esplanade around the Holy Souls Memorial using bricks engraved with the names of departed loved ones. These Memorial Bricks will not only be a testament to the dearly departed, but a reminder to pray for them and all such souls.**

**Our plan is for the new esplanade to be put in place this spring or early summer, allowing for weather hold-ups and contractors' schedules. Initially, we will complete the esplanade using blank bricks which will be replaced by Memorial Bricks as they are purchased.**

The 4"x8" bricks are priced at \$350 a piece.

If you wish to purchase one or more bricks, please go to our website: [missionofdivine-mercy.com](http://missionofdivine-mercy.com) and look for the **Holy Souls Memorial Brick Campaign link.** ♦

## EYES ON THE PROMISE

APRIL 28

**W**e want to give you plenty of lead time this year to realize and to prepare for the great Promise of Divine Mercy Sunday, APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup>. **Mark it on your calendar as the Priority of Priorities.** Whether at the Mission or your own parish, look ahead to this great and shining PROMISE where the Blood and Water of His Mercy will rain down on us like Golden Drops and wash away our sin.

What is the unprecedented Promise of Divine Mercy Sunday?

***“I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, especially for poor sinners.***

***On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are opened.... The soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment.” (Diary, #699)***

Or as Mother Magdalene describes it:

*Divine Mercy Sunday is a Day out of space and time where we pass briefly through the doors of Eternity into the perfect love and innocence of the Kingdom. Where one day, by His Mercy, we hope to be.*

*We gather all the sin and misery of our lives, bundle it together, and then toss it into the Bonfire of His Sacrifice.*

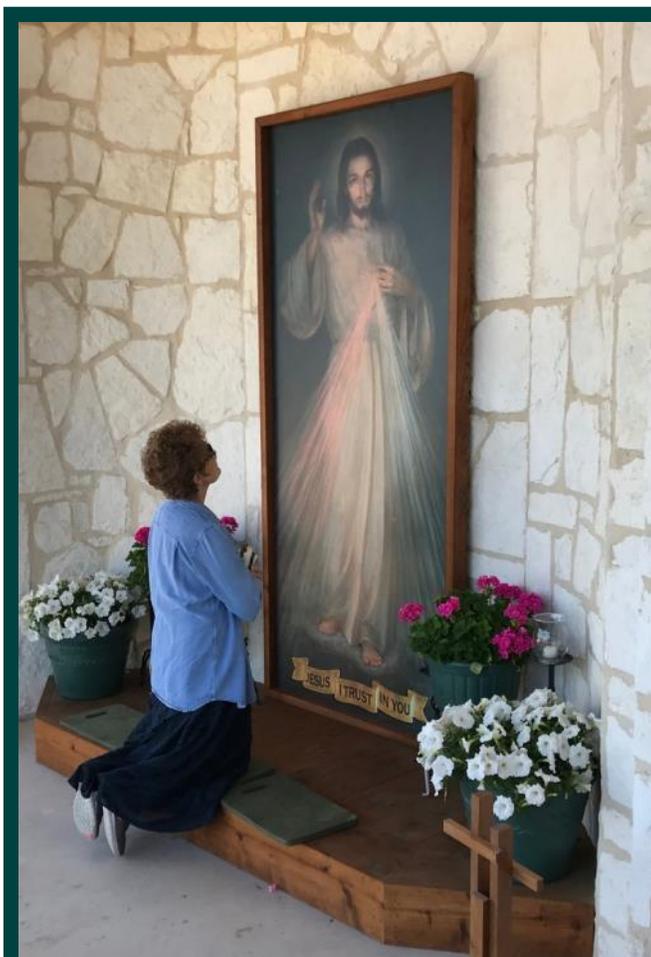


## Divine Mercy Sunday 2018





Mission of Divine Mercy  
P.O. Box 1759  
Canyon Lake, TX 78133



### DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY SCHEDULE

- **10:30 am** - Mission Gates Open
- **11:00 am** - Confessions Begin at St. Joseph Chapel (Confessions close at 2:00 pm)
- **1:30 pm** - Recitation of Chaplet at Teocalli
- **2:00 pm** - Mass begins at Teocalli
- **4:00 pm** - Veneration of Divine Mercy Image and Recitation of Chaplet
- **5:00 pm** - Announcement of Closing of Mission
- **5:45 pm** - Mission Gates Close