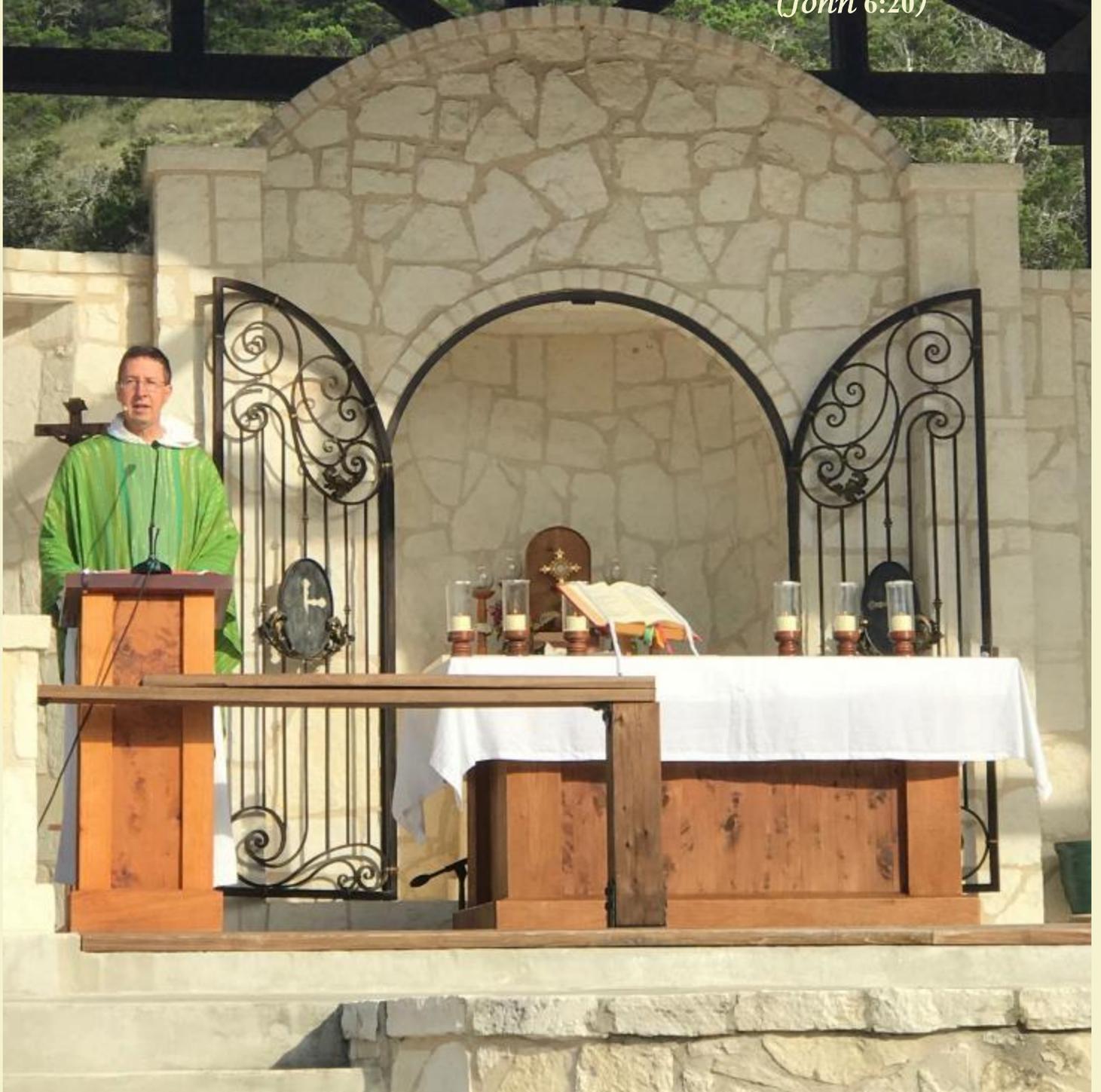


# *Mission of Divine Mercy*

Fall 2020

## *“Be not afraid...”*

*(John 6:20)*



“...our Community gathered quietly before the Lord in the Sisters’ private oratory in order to pray, to listen, to keep vigil. And to renew our submission to His Plan, His Will, His Call, no matter what.”

(Page 4)



**DAVE’S LAMENT:** *Dave Sommers sent this email to the Community near the middle of July while the Community was on its break and the Mission particularly quiet.*

As I drive around the Mission checking on the buildings and wells, there is this somber feeling that comes over me; it feels like an abandoned town. The O’Callaghan Center that saw the gathering of the faithful each weekend after Mass now stands silent and empty. Our little Chapel seems to weep with loneliness and the Tabernacles where Jesus rests are now crying for the return of His children. This is a very different time — the Mission has entered the desert, not knowing how long we will be there.

There are things I always used to complain about to Maria, but now miss seeing: the hand and nose prints of the little ones on the glass doors; the hot chocolate spills and the cookie crumbs on the floors and tables from the kids who all looked forward to the Sunday gatherings — and always made Monday morning clean-ups a challenge.

I visit St. Joseph’s Chapel and ask the LORD for healing from this virus attack, but in my heart I know it will not happen until mankind turns to HIM for help. HE has told us this but we pay no attention. I feel HE is watching our destruction with great sadness, and that the Blessed Mother is weeping for all Her children. This little Mission is a stronghold for HIS mercy, a place for people to come to be renewed in faith and grace. But there is no one here. I pray for the day when we can welcome everyone here again. ◆ SEMPER FI, Dave



# HOW UNEXPECTEDLY ONE'S WORLD CAN CHANGE

by Mother Magdalene

If nothing else, these last six months have been a lesson in how quickly and unexpectedly one's world can change.

One day you're living life as you know it; the next all is changed — and perhaps seems lost.

The white board in our Choir Room still bears a list of Lenten Hymns. On the third Wednesday in March we were preparing for the Sunday Mass. A few days later public Masses were cancelled, so those hymns were never sung. I didn't erase the list; I thought the lockdown would only be for a couple of weeks, a month at most. Now I'm simply wondering when it will change, and in which liturgical season.

For us, and doubtless for each of you, these have been strange months. Some of our challenges have been different from yours. We haven't had to suddenly find enough desk space for home-schooling children and remote-working spouses; for most of the Community members our offices have always been in, or attached, to our bedrooms. But like many of you, we have had to learn the intricacies of a ZOOM call (we actually use Microsoft Teams) in order to have staff and Community meetings.

And like so many small businesses, overnight our work was turned inside out. One day we were preparing for the weekend's schedule of Masses, arranging for the upcoming slate of retreats, and meeting for in-depth planning for all the logistics of Holy Week, Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday — by far our busiest time of the year — and then the next day word comes that every event must be cancelled, the gates must be closed, and, most strange of all, a public Mass is forbidden for the foreseeable future.

The shock that ran through every staff and Community member was palpable. The Mission closed? No one can visit? No Mass? No retreats? What are we supposed to do? How do we continue to serve people?

I remember that Fr. John Mary called an emergency meeting of staff and Community for Saturday morning March 14, the day after the directives came down. It felt like a war-room meeting, and it lasted for hours. We had to absorb all the new health directives from the state and county, along with the liturgical directives

from the archdiocese, and anticipate all their ramifications.

As I think back on it, there was never a question of not continuing our apostolates; it was just a question of how to carry them out given all the new restrictions.

**But the Big Question, the question we always arrive at no matter what the situation we are facing may be, was “What does God want us to do? What is His Will for us in this?”**

As you read through this newsletter you will see some of the ways we found to continue our ministry. New ways to reach out to people during these very difficult times, and new ways to make the Mission available to people as we gradually opened up again.

Just one example of how we had to adjust and re-think things was in coming up with a new way to offer the sacrament of Confession. Obviously, the period from Holy Week through Divine Mercy Sunday is a time when a very large number of Catholics want to make their Confession. And it was just at this time that opportunities for Confession were suddenly scarce; almost non-existent. Like all other churches, we were struggling with how to offer Confession while meeting all of the health requirements for distancing and sanitation, yet maintaining the spirit of the Sacrament and the privacy of the penitent.

First, we transformed the Fireplace Room at the O'Callaghan Center into a Confessional that allowed for sufficient social distancing, the placement of a large, full screen between priest and penitent, and provided ample ventilation. We set up sanitizing protocols. Then we devised a system that offered slots of time for which people could make an appointment online. (Fr. John Mary never viewed the list.) On arriving at the Mission, penitents were greeted at the gate [see “The Gate Guy”, page 10] and directed to the parking lot where Br. Mikael checked them in. They stayed in their cars until Brother indicated it was their turn.

Overall, this system has worked well. Because people are reserving a time slot, they know they will not get turned away after waiting in line, nor will the wait-time be excessive.



The Fireplace Room adapted for Reconciliation; humble design, profound Grace.

We have seen this as a *Paschal* time, a time of passage, of transition. Yes, we recognize that Satan is at work, causing isolation and suffering and anxiety, just as he was at work during Jesus' Passion. We see his malignant actions in some of the effects of the Covid situation and with all the unrest and violence in our country. But more importantly, we sense the Sovereign and Mysterious Providence of Our Father guiding and acting in these days and with infinitely greater power and purpose — even as He did during Jesus' Passion.

The Lord will bring us through this storm; He will not abandon His children.

We are living hard labor pains (Jn 16:21). But He, who “makes all things new” (Rev 21:5), whose grace over abounds where sin abounds, Who has proclaimed His Mercy precisely for these times, has surprises of grace and mercy in store for His children. He calls us to hope in Him.

**Jesus, we trust in You. Jesus, we hope in You. Jesus, help us to follow You, no matter what.**



Br. Mikael says that an unexpected benefit of the new system has been the chance to talk with people as they wait in their cars. Some people were old friends. But there also have been many people who were coming to the Mission for the first time, as word got around that Confession was available here.

During Holy Week, Confession hours were offered every day and filled up quickly. It was the same during the week between Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday. Fr. John Mary was struck by the number of people who voiced their gratitude for the opportunity that the Mission was providing. Because the system has worked well, we are continuing to offer Confession this way every Saturday morning for the time being, while the restrictions remain in place.

Another aspect of the Covid time that may echo your own experience is Community members taking the opportunity to turn our attention to various “shelved projects”. For example, Fr. John Mary has been working steadfastly on his book. Br. Mikael has been concentrating on his wood-working. And Sr. Amapola has been sorting through mountains of papers, notebooks and photos that Maria had accumulated.

But while we were adapting some ministries, and advancing on some in-house projects, there was a bigger change. What is usually our most intense apostolic season suddenly became a quiet, contemplative time. We were no longer on auto-pilot, moving through the familiar but labor-intensive Paschal Season. Instead our Community gathered quietly before the Lord in the Sisters' private oratory in order to pray, to listen, to keep vigil. And to renew our submission to His Plan, His Will, His Call, no matter what.



“...a quiet, contemplative time...”



# You have been chosen to live in this time.

*by Father John Mary*

**M**any of us have had some experience with natural disasters that strike quickly and hard, and then recede, leaving us to do the physical work of recovery. This disaster is not like that. This Covid situation has lasted much longer than any of us anticipated. As we prepare this newsletter we have been in the shadow of Covid for six months. And we are all worn down by its effects on our world.

It has caused physical, emotional and financial damage. We are also experiencing a lot of civil unrest and violence in our cities. And many of us may be feeling tired, angry or fearful, maybe close to despair.

As people of faith we have also experienced the unprecedented situation where we could not gather for worship for many months. And when finally we were allowed to return physically, it is often under unpleasant and restricted conditions. Even our singing has been silenced.

We have been chosen to live in this time. But how are we to live it? What is God asking of us?

We want to share with you, our friends, a few of our thoughts on this. Some of these thoughts you might remember from our weekly Meditations, but we feel they bear repeating.

## **DO NOT LIVE IN FEAR. TRUST IN GOD.**

Most importantly, we believe that God does not want fear or anger or despair to take hold of us. We must Trust in Jesus. Absolutely. He is in charge. We are His children and He takes care of His children.

You may be thinking “Yes, I try to trust Jesus — but sometimes my fear overcomes my trust.”

Imagine Satan rejoicing at our lack of faith and trust in God. How he might laugh and point to our fear and panic and say to God, “Do you see? Look how they tremble, they do not trust in You. See how they busy themselves in their fear. I have made them forget You!”

In this time of chaos, and uncertainty, we know by faith that all is in God’s Hands. Satan wants to hurt God’s children, in our bodies and especially in our souls. He wants to separate us from Our Father. But nothing escapes Our Father’s plans. He makes all things work to the good for those who love Him, as St. Paul writes (Ro 8:28), even the attacks of the evil one.

And He gives us powerful weapons for fighting back against Satan’s tactics. He gave each of us a Guardian Angel whose sole job is to watch over us, to protect us physically and spiritually.

Jesus also gave us His Mother to be our Mother (Jn 19:26-27).

You might seek especially the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe during these difficult times. Remember Her words to Juan Diego, "...do not fear this nor any other illness nor any other afflicting, piercing thing. Am I not here, I who am your Mother?"

And is Jesus not here for us? Jesus who is our Savior and our brother? (Mk 3:35)

Jesus says to us now, "**Be not afraid.**" (Jn 6:20)

These aren't just words, these are His words.

### **THE CHURCH IS DESTINED TO FOLLOW ITS MASTER**

As Catholics have always done in times of trouble or anxiety, you might wish to turn to Mother Church for comfort — only to find that, at the moment, she seems terribly weakened.

The Church has been living a great crisis of faith for many years now, as evidenced by the terrible



scandals that have wounded it, causing so many to leave the Church, having lost their Catholic faith.

But even this sad situation is still, mysteriously, in God's Hands. The Catechism tells us that the Church, Christ's Mystical Body, is also called to follow Jesus in His Passion and Crucifixion as part of her Paschal Mystery.

Christ's death and burial were devastating for His disciples. It seemed to be the end. But it was leading to a new beginning. Because He was going to act. And no force, of man or demon, could stop Him from acting when He decided to.

*"Now when these things begin to take place, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Lk 21:27-28)*

Is this our time "in the tomb," awaiting His light? Unable to do so many things. Needing to wait.

Is God not purifying our faith during this trial? Preparing us for a new beginning?

## MASS AS SACRIFICE

You might be thinking that it would be easier to hold onto your faith if you could at least go to Mass, or go to a Mass that didn't feel so strange, with all the restrictions in place.

Yes, both of these situations can give us a feeling of deprivation. Can make us feel that Satan is advancing. But with faith, we can beat Satan back, and turn our deprivation into a powerful sacrifice that we offer back to God.

In fact, very recently someone was sharing with us about how sad they had been feeling about attending Mass with all the new restrictions, particularly in not being able to receive Holy Communion on the tongue. They were feeling sort of cheated and deprived.

But then a realization — we would say a grace — came to them that helped them see the situation in a new light.

*“I suddenly remembered having heard the Mass described as the Holy Sacrifice: that His Sacrifice on Calvary is made mysteriously present at the Holy Mass.”*

*“And I realized that my focus had been on ‘What am I getting out of the Mass?’ rather than on ‘What could I give?’ I thought about Jesus making the Ultimate Sacrifice on Calvary to save souls and reunite us to the Father, and that now I had an opportunity to make a personal sacrifice. It was like a little revelation! I can't tell you how much that changed my attitude about attending Mass during this time.”*

**The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us “The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: the Victim is one and the same.” (#1367 Catechism of the Catholic Church)**

All these extra sacrifices of participating in the Mass right now are hard on us. But they also are an opportunity. An opportunity to “supercharge” our participation, to say to Jesus, that we are offering these sacrifices to Him and with Him, to save souls. Like Simon of Cyrene, it is our personal opportunity to help Him carry the Cross and save souls.

## LIVING FOR GOD AND FOR EACH OTHER

Instead of feeling deprived and fearful, we can look at ourselves as being called to live in an extraordinary time when we are given the opportunity to demonstrate to God and to others our deep Faith and trust in Him.

We need to help each other to trust and abandon ourselves to Him; living these days with Him, in the Mystery of His Will and Action.

He is in charge, despite all appearances. And He will not abandon His children. He will not leave us bereft.

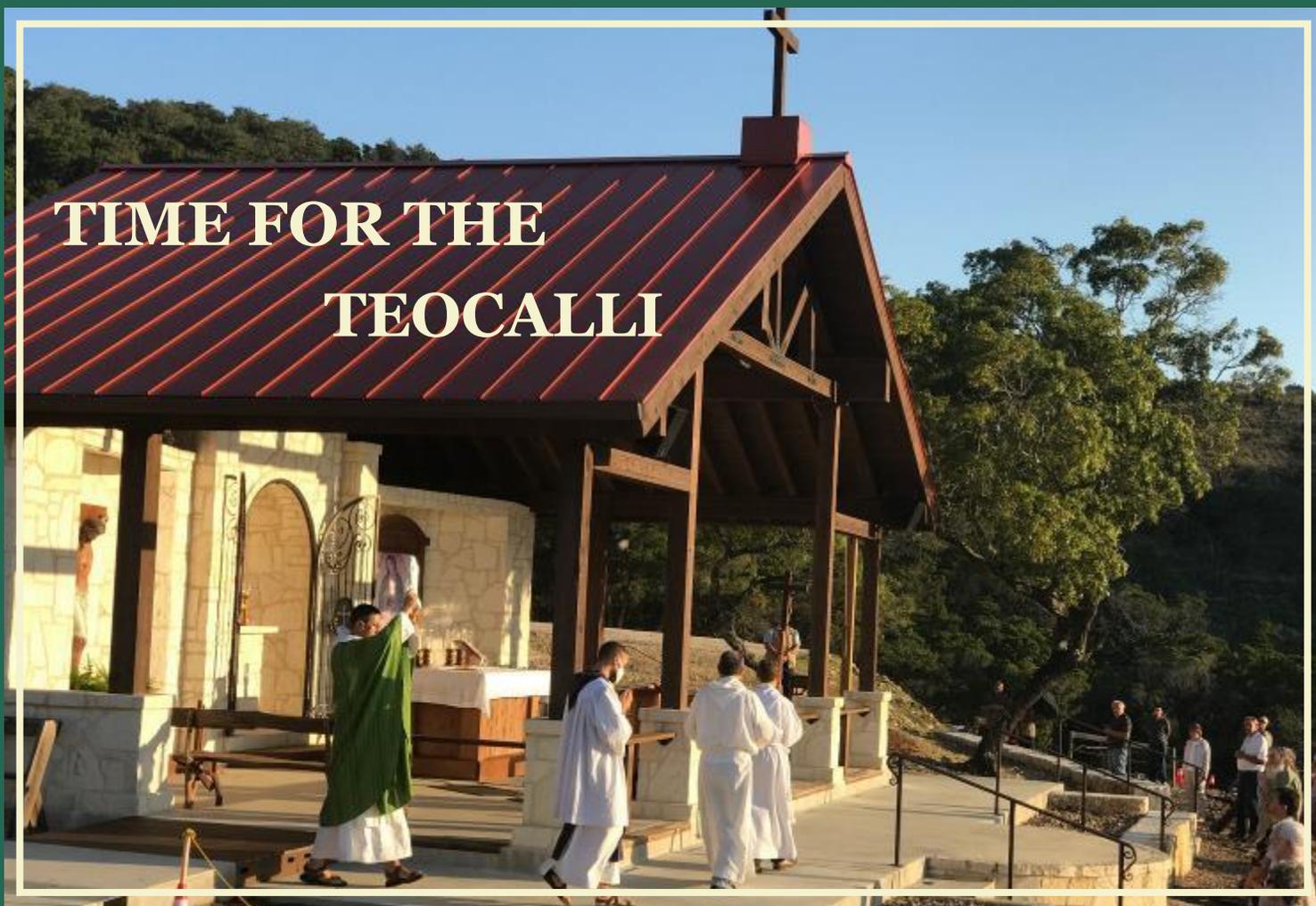
Let us offer to Him this time.

And be at peace.

## JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU FAITH, SO THAT GOD CAN ACT



# TIME FOR THE TEOCALLI



## THE TEOCALLI'S BRIEF HISTORY

In the Spring of 2017, we began construction on the Teocalli, an outdoor sanctuary. We had been needing a place for larger outdoor Masses and gatherings. We felt the Lord was telling us that now was the time to do it, and that He even gave us indications for where it should be located. We now call that location Tepeyac Hill, after the site of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The first Mass celebrated at the Teocalli was on Oct. 13, 2017, the 100th anniversary of the Miracle of the Sun at Fatima. In 2018 and 2019, we celebrated Divine Mercy Sunday at the Teocalli, with congregations of approximately 700 people both times.

As we approached the autumn of 2018, a staff member suggested that we hold Saturday morning Mass at the Teocalli, using the window between the heat of summer and the cold of winter, to get more comfortable with the challenges of celebrating Mass there. But in a highly unusual set of circumstances, it rained every Saturday morning for nearly two months. We took that as a clear indication from

God that it wasn't yet the time to put the Teocalli into regular use!

## MASS IN TIME OF COVID

As we entered 2020, we began to plan for this year's Divine Mercy Sunday. Then March came, and everything changed — including the unprecedented shutting down of churches.

When the regulations loosened at the end of May, and Sunday Masses were permitted, congregations were severely limited by the number of people that could fit inside a church while allowing for social distance. St. Joseph Chapel is already on the small side; it would not accommodate many people.

What to do? Bingo!

The Teocalli, our outdoor sanctuary on the hillside, offered almost unlimited space for social distancing and the sanitizing effects of the sun's UV rays. In fact, very little survives the Texas summer sun.

We started Mass in late May, and the first couple of Sundays rain threatened — but didn't fall. Mass continued through June. Susannah spoke her vows at the Teocalli on May 31, the Feast of Pentecost. The Mission was closed the first half of July, but Mass resumed on July 19 and continued through August and into the fall.

A hillside in Texas is not the easiest or most comfortable spot for Mass. Getting to an 8 AM Mass at the Mission means that many people have to get up by 6 AM or earlier. We begin Mass at 8 AM to avoid the worst of the heat, but it can still get pretty hot. People come early to get the shady spots. Everyone has to bring their own seating and kneeling pads. They have to lug everything from the parking field and allow extra time for walking the extra distance — including the last stretch which is uphill. Once there, the congregation battles ants and sticker burrs, and rocks that roll under your feet.

Of course, there is St. Anne's Pavilion, which represents our high rent district. It offers real shade, a nice breeze, seating for those with special and particular needs, and is much appreciated by those needing easy wheelchair access.

Father John Mary, who has been heard to apologize for offering "the longest Mass in Texas," is very conscious of the potential danger of the heat and the new guidelines, and has worked to shorten the Mass without detracting from the reverence.

With people scattered across the hillside, getting the sound out has been a major challenge. But after a couple months of struggling with a make-do system, we finally have a fine new professional sound system installed that carries Fr. John Mary's voice to every ear without having to strain to hear. Due to the Covid regulations, there is as yet no choir, but Sr. Amapola's nicely amplified voice fills the hills with the sound of her music.

[An interesting fact is that all electricity on the hill is provided by solar panels on the roof of St. Anne's. The electricity that the panels produce is stored in batteries below St. Anne's.]

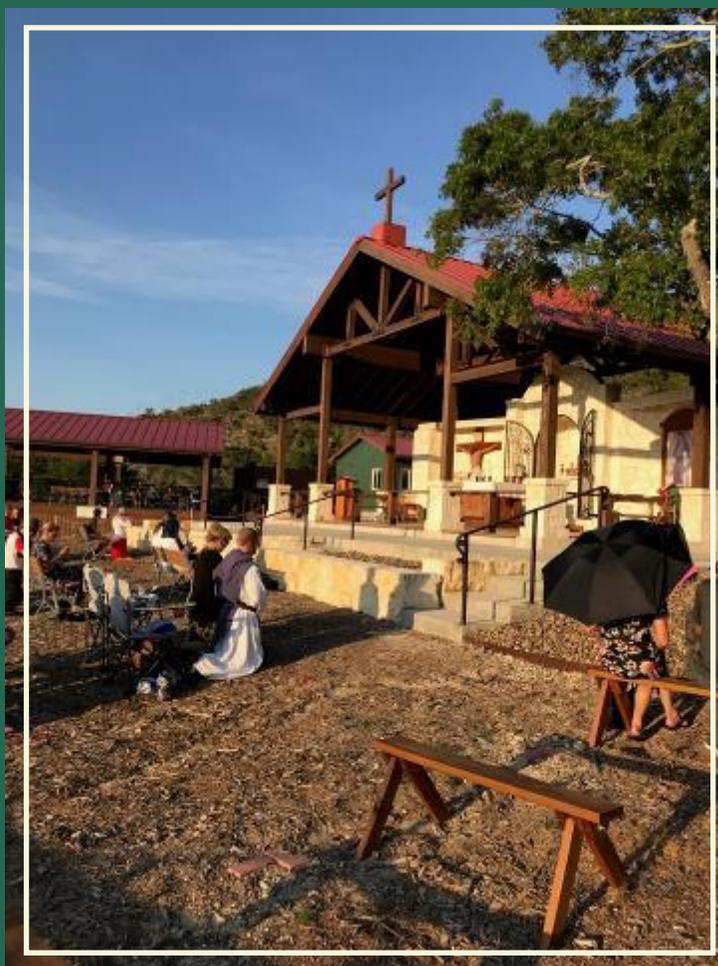
One plus of our outdoor Mass, as parents have noted, is that there is plenty of space for children to roam and cry without disturbing others!

There is also another plus, the undeniable beauty of Mass in the natural setting of Tepeyac Hill. As one congregant said, "I love it! The peace of the early morning, the sense of attending Mass while surrounded by God's creation. I confess I might have a hard time getting used to being back inside."

## HOW LONG?

We don't know how long we will continue to have Sunday Mass at the Teocalli. It depends a great deal on the lifting of the Covid restrictions and the coming of the chilly winds of winter. It has been proposed that we could raise funds by selling MDM stadium blankets — that's a joke, folks.

Attending Mass at the Teocalli is a challenge. But at the end of each Mass, when Fr. John Mary thanks everyone for making the sacrifice and the effort to be there, you feel both proud and privileged to be among those who have risen to the challenge.



## THE GATE GUY

When we first started our new Confession process, we needed someone to greet people at the gate and direct them on. Mike Norris, a long-time friend of the Mission, volunteered — and quickly filled another need that needed filling.

When the Covid crisis began, we had to close our Sacramental Shed, which has long been self-serve, while we figured out how to meet the new regulations. However, the lockdown brought on a greater demand for Sacramentals. We brought a supply to St. Raphael's and filled orders for people to pick up during the week, but many people couldn't come out until the weekend.

Mike saw the need and began loading up the back of his vehicle with our Sacramentals: Blessed Salt, Oil, Candles and Holy Water. People coming or leaving from Confession could stop and pick them up — sort of a drive-thru Sacramental service.

Mike, who wears many professional hats, has been at his gate posting most weekends for the past six months, greeting people with his typical warmth and enthusiasm.

“Some people just wave as they leave, but a good many people stop to replenish their supply. Then there are a few people who aren't familiar with Sacramentals, and ask me how to use them. And I tell them what I do. I tell them I like to bless my wife and myself with Holy Water each day, and my children when they visit. That I use some of the Blessed Salt and Oil in my cooking. That you can sprinkle the Salt around your house or property to bless it.”

“People are leaving here, just so grateful for having been to Confession, and when they discover the availability of Sacramentals, it's like we have just given them this great gift.” **God bless you, Mike!**



## LIFE PRESERVERS!

The Community members want to thank all of our friends who remembered or went out of their way to support the Mission during the initial Covid-19 lockdown. Some of you called or contacted us to see if we were all right. Some of you sent special gifts, and many sustained their regular gifts to us — despite experiencing strains on their own finances. It has all been so appreciated and it has helped to keep us afloat. Thanks to you, we are surviving!

Like so many other “small businesses” the Mission was suddenly shut down; all retreats, public Masses, and activities forbidden. If it hadn't been for the faithfulness of our regular contributors, and a few surprising gifts, I'm not sure what we would have done. But once again, God provided — through you.

The Fall looks to be equally challenging with overnight retreats still forbidden, but we do hope to hold some day retreats. Please continue to keep us in your prayers and thoughts, as we navigate these choppy and uncharted waters. ◆

Peter



FROM PETER'S CHAIR...



## PRAYER MARATHON: An Idea Whose Time Has Returned?

*By Father John Mary*

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus....” (Heb 12:1-2)*

### IN THESE HARD TIMES

**T**hese are very difficult times that we are living. Times when it would make sense to pray more fervently. But just because it makes good sense, doesn't make it easy.

Sometimes we are drawn to prayer, and it consoles and inspires us.

But what about *when prayer is hard*, and we are having a hard time persevering in it?

Being able to come together with others for Mass or prayer is a big support. But the Covid restrictions have limited our ability to gather.

Given these challenges, I want to offer here a simple, *practical* technique to help us **persevere in prayer**.

Important note: This was a program developed working with young men between the ages of

13 and 18, peculiar animals all their own, for whom even their natural competitive streak can be leveraged for spiritual growth. You might wonder how such a program could help, say, middle-aged men and women, or senior citizens. Keep an open mind, and I think you'll see the basic principles are applicable and helpful to people in general.

### ST. MICHAEL SQUADRON

In our early years in New Braunfels at Sts. Peter and Paul parish, we had been tasked by Msgr. O'Callaghan with helping young men grow spiritually. In response, we started the St. Michael's Squadron aimed at young men in their teen years. Daily prayer is key for anyone who wants to grow closer to the Lord, but particularly at that critical age.

But daily prayer is *hard*. At any age. But particularly high school and middle school age.

How to develop the discipline of perseverance, when emotions are flying up and down and so many things are competing for their attention?

The young men certainly found that it was easier to pray when they came together for meetings. But that was only once a week.

We had to find a way to help them support and motivate each other even when they were separated. Then during a Squadron meeting, one member, Nick, was talking about the marathon he was training for. A light bulb went on in my head! That was a good image for perseverance. It wasn't hard to pray one day. But it was hard to persevere.

This was the origin of the St. Michael Squadron Prayer Marathon. We worked out a program, presented it to the guys, and they agreed to take it on.

Two things that were key to making the Marathon succeed were **tracking** and **teamwork**.

### TRACKING

A common challenge for daily prayer is not having a clear, attainable goal. Another is not being able to see if we are making progress.

*"I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Ph 3:14)*

To help with that, our Catholic Tradition has many aids for setting clear goals and tracking our progress. Think of Lent, where there is a defined time, forty days, and special practices. Or Advent, where we also count the four weeks before Christmas, with the help of symbols like an Advent wreath and Advent calendar. Or novenas, or programs of 33 days or 54 days, or 90 days. Or the Rosary or chaplets where we say a certain number of prayers.

St. Faustina provides another example. She sometimes kept a *log* for virtues or vices that she wanted to work on, noting the times she did them during the day.

Tracking helps us to focus our attention on something over *an extended period*. And it reminds us that something is *important*. Think of the difference in a basketball game if no one is keeping score of the baskets. It also helps with discipline and builds habits where we might otherwise on a given day quickly fall prey to the whims of our feelings, moods, or other distractions.



June, 2010



Our solution was to organize the guys into small teams, so that despite the lack of daily contact they were still striving as a team. It seemed to work. As I said, daily prayer is not easy for guys this age, but the sense of being part of a team gave them a real boost.

But it is not just young men who enjoy teamwork. It's amazing how much being a part of a team helps many of us to persevere. To take just one recent example, I've had a number of men cite the fraternal character of *Exodus 90*, a relatively recent (and rigorous) program of spiritual exercises for men, as a prime reason they were able to make it through the program successfully. We benefit so much from having our spiritual brothers and sisters support us and hold us accountable.

If you're able to find others, even just one other person, to team up with in prayer that can help in many ways. Even if, as was the case with the Squadron, you can't be physically together.

And during this time of Covid where physical isolation is affecting people emotionally and spiritually, the positive effects of forming a prayer team with even one or two other people is a powerful antidote to such isolation.

With the Squadron, to make this notion of teamwork more concrete, we built in a system where the points a member received each week was the average of his team's points. This was a way of expressing the truth that one's spiritual efforts, or their lack, help or hurt one's brothers and sisters. And it helped motivate the guys to encourage each other.

Is there a danger that we could do this simply not to let others down, or not to be embarrassed? Yes. As there is a danger of going to Mass or a prayer meeting for the same reasons. That doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. We should always strive to *purify* our motives, but that doesn't preclude harnessing the power of peer support and fraternity.

## VALUE

It takes work to do this. But prayer itself is often a battle. Over the years of running the Prayer Marathon and getting feedback from the guys, we saw that there seemed to be a real correlation between the Marathon "score" and the health of their spiritual efforts. And when someone's points would start to go down for a few

We can't measure the *quality* of our prayer. Our sense of how good, or how poor, our prayer is may be very different from how the Lord sees it. But we can track the *time* we devote to it. And that is a key sign of our effort. We recognize that fact in other important areas of life, from exercising for health to studying for academic and career advancement. Obviously, our spiritual life is different, but not so different that we can't leverage this simple, very human technique in its service.

(For more details on the mechanics of the Squadron Prayer Marathon, see "Prayer Marathon Primer" on page 15.)

## TEAMWORK

Tracking your prayer time can, of course, be done by yourself. But there is an element that makes it more powerful: teamwork.

One of the advantages of living in a religious community is the regular support it provides for one's prayer life. At MDM, we come together daily to pray; if one person is not motivated, the fact that the others are there expecting him helps encourage him. Lay people often find similar support by joining prayer groups and Bible studies, or perhaps attending daily Mass. A natural community of prayer arises that facilitates one's own efforts.

But the Covid situation has isolated us from this support.

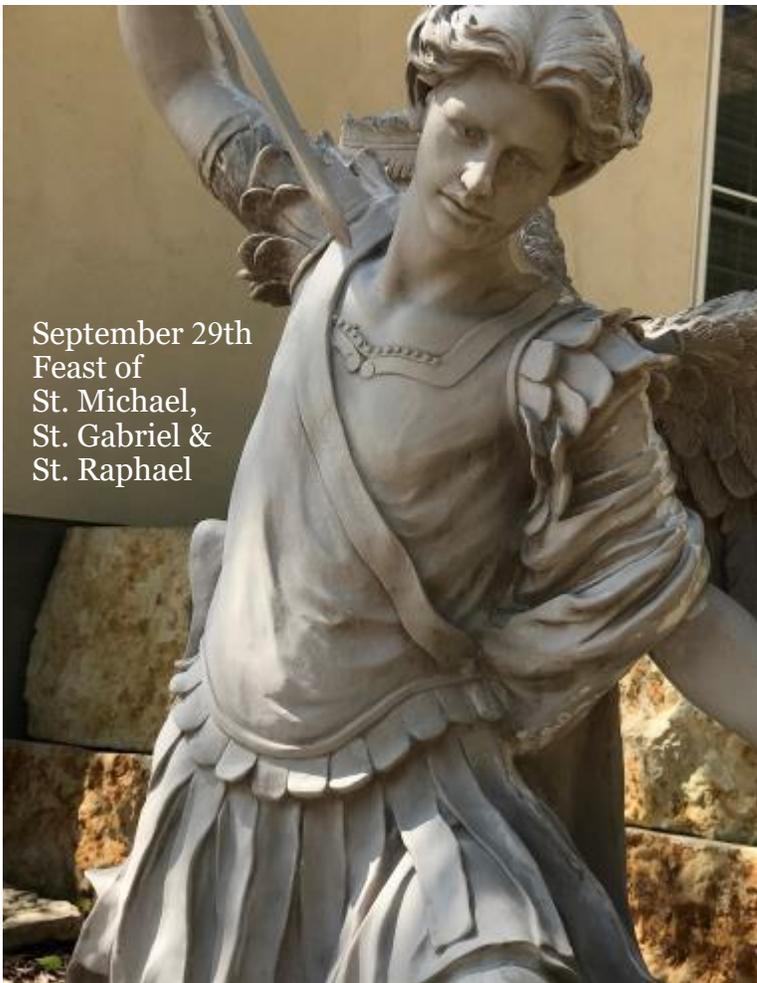
For the Squadron, the fact that they were separated during the week was also a challenge. How could we encourage a sense of fraternity and teamwork with so little contact?

weeks, it was an early warning system that there was a problem and he needed some help.

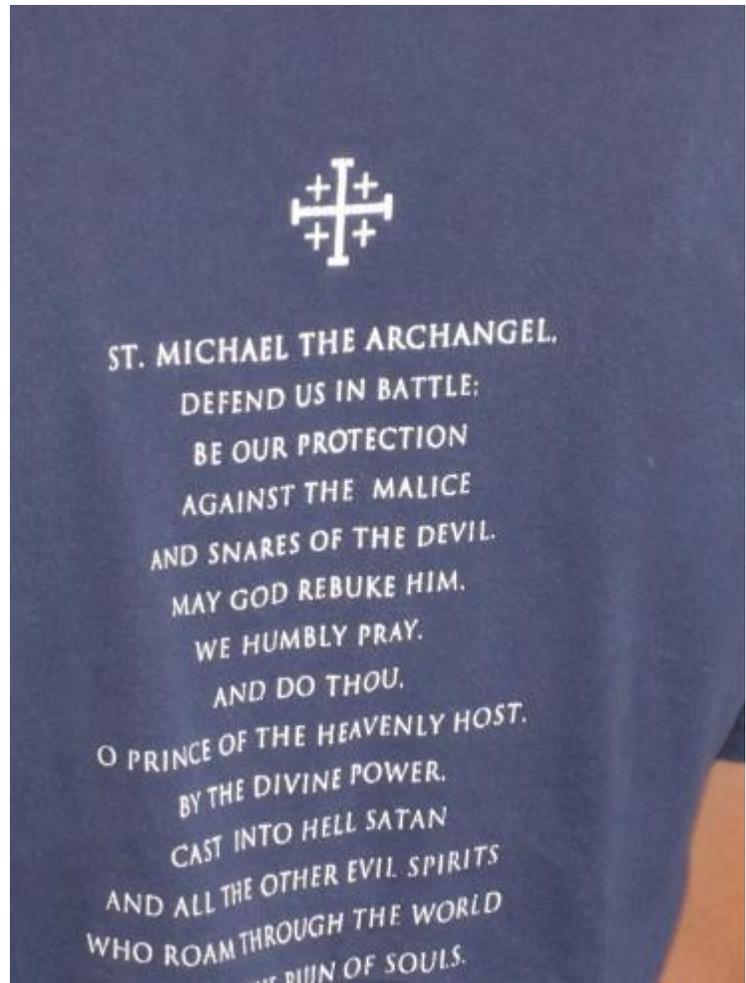
Obviously, we can't reduce the mystery of union with God in prayer to a score. No more than we can reduce that mystery to a physical gesture like genuflecting or making the Sign of the Cross. But even as those gestures take advantage of our physical human nature to help orient us to the sacred, so we can take advantage of some simple human techniques to help us persevere in prayer. That perseverance is especially vital in these difficult times.

Let us strive to persevere and so be able to say with St. Paul:

***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Tm 4:7).***



September 29th  
Feast of  
St. Michael,  
St. Gabriel &  
St. Raphael



# PRAYER MARATHON PRIMER

*So run that you may obtain [the prize]. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable (1 Cor 9:24 -25).*

There are a lot of options for adapting the Prayer Marathon to your situation and preferences. Below is a brief account of some of the nuts and bolts of the Squadron version as a reference.

## TRACKING LOG

Similar to what is used in athletic training, we created a daily log to record the guys' efforts. As with St. Faustina's log, you can decide just what you want to focus on and track.

Pen and paper is a simple option for recording. Or something more tangible like pebbles or marbles. Or you can be a little more hi-tech, using a spread sheet or various apps that track goals and habits. Regardless, it's helpful if there is a visual way to see your progress.

## TRACKING SYSTEM

We used a point system for the Squadron. First of all, participants got points just for signing their weekly log, attesting that it was honest, and turning it in. Even if they had not prayed at all. This was to highlight two key notions:

- First, the value of tracking — even when the results were disappointing.
- Secondly, the importance of honesty — honestly recognizing one's failure was a key component to improvement.

Emphasizing those two notions helped the guys both to better understand the significance of the Marathon and to improve upon mediocre efforts.

We broke the prayer time into five-minute intervals. So even if they just spent five minutes in this effort, they could record it and sense they had accomplished something meaningful. Five minutes is not hard. And it is much better than nothing.

We also set a limit of twenty minutes a day. Of course, they could do more. But we didn't want to leave it open-ended. Having a concrete, attainable goal each day gave the guys a sense of daily closure. And we didn't want some hyper-scrupulous guy agonizing over whether he had

spent enough time, nor some hyper-competitive guy tempted to leave everyone else in the dust.

Perhaps your team won't be tempted in the same way, but we all have our strengths and weaknesses in the spiritual life — just work on adopting a system that both helps your prayer partners be motivated to pray and maximizes the likelihood of them sticking with it.

## HOW TO PRAY

For many of the Squadron, daily prayer was something new, and so we gave them some guidance for how to pray. But you, of course, could choose what types of prayer you feel called to. It could involve adoration, or the Rosary, or the Chaplet, or reading Scripture, or the Liturgy of the Hours, or simply quiet time with the Lord.

## SETTING GOALS

The purpose of the Prayer Marathon is to develop perseverance and fidelity in prayer. For most of us, having realistic goals aids that effort. For the Squadron, we had daily, weekly, monthly, and even longer-term goals. And we had different levels of achievement, named after the nine levels or "choirs" of Angels (we weren't named the St. Michael's Squadron for nothing), to recognize major goal accomplishments. Each level might take six months to a year, so that helped the guys realize this was indeed a marathon not a sprint. Some of them persevered for over five years, beginning in middle school.

As with any effort, good goal setting should steer clear of wishful thinking and rather be guided by an honest and realistic assessment of capabilities and limitations.

## REWARDS

The true reward of an active prayer life is deeper union with the Lord. But the Lord has taught us to mark special occasions with festivity and celebration. For the Squadron, we marked a major milestone in the Prayer Marathon by conferring a medal or a special shirt in a little ceremony. For your prayer team, it might be having someone host a festive meal, or having dinner at a favorite restaurant, or, these days, the ever-popular glasses raised at six feet apart. ♦

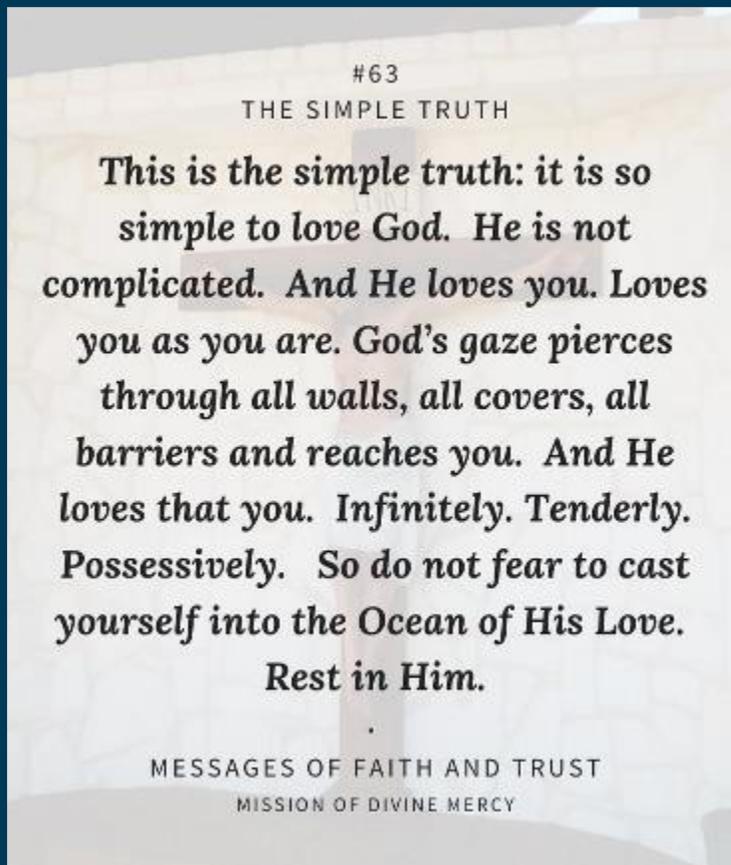
## TESTING POSITIVE FOR FAITH & TRUST

Something positive resulting from the Covid crisis is the posting of our **Messages of Faith & Trust**.

Until very recently MDM has not engaged with social media, except in a very limited way. We have had a Facebook page, but the only thing we posted there with any regularity was our weekly Meditation. However, when we had to close the Mission gates, when we couldn't invite the public to our Masses, or hold any retreats, we began looking for what ways God might want us to minister when people couldn't come to us.

What could we do to reach out to people with spiritual nourishment and encouragement, when they were feeling particularly lost and bewildered?

We decided to share some of the fruit of our Community's prayer life. We called these brief posts: **Messages of Faith & Trust**. We posted them daily on our website and Facebook page, and even initiated an Instagram page.



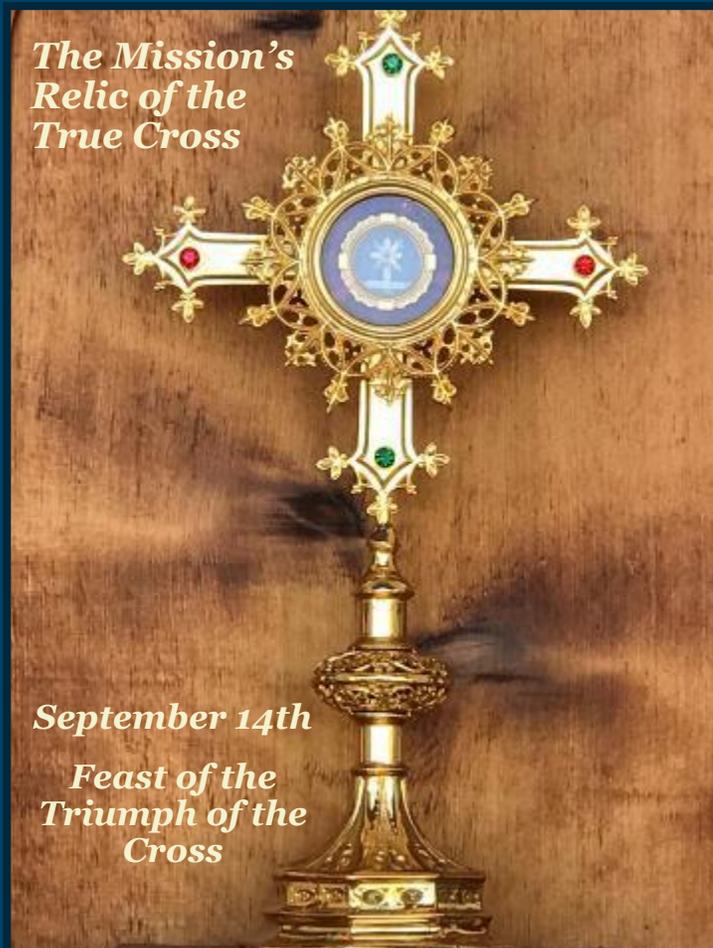
This was the first message that we posted:

*For all of God's storm-battered children. Trust that He understands what each of you is living now, and how each of you is suffering. He understands you. He loves you. During this difficult time, He wants to form you in a truer living Faith. A more purified Faith that trusts Him beyond all human reason. Trust Him.*

We posted them daily until the end of May, when it appeared that things were beginning to open up, and we could once again invite people to our weekend Masses at the Mission.

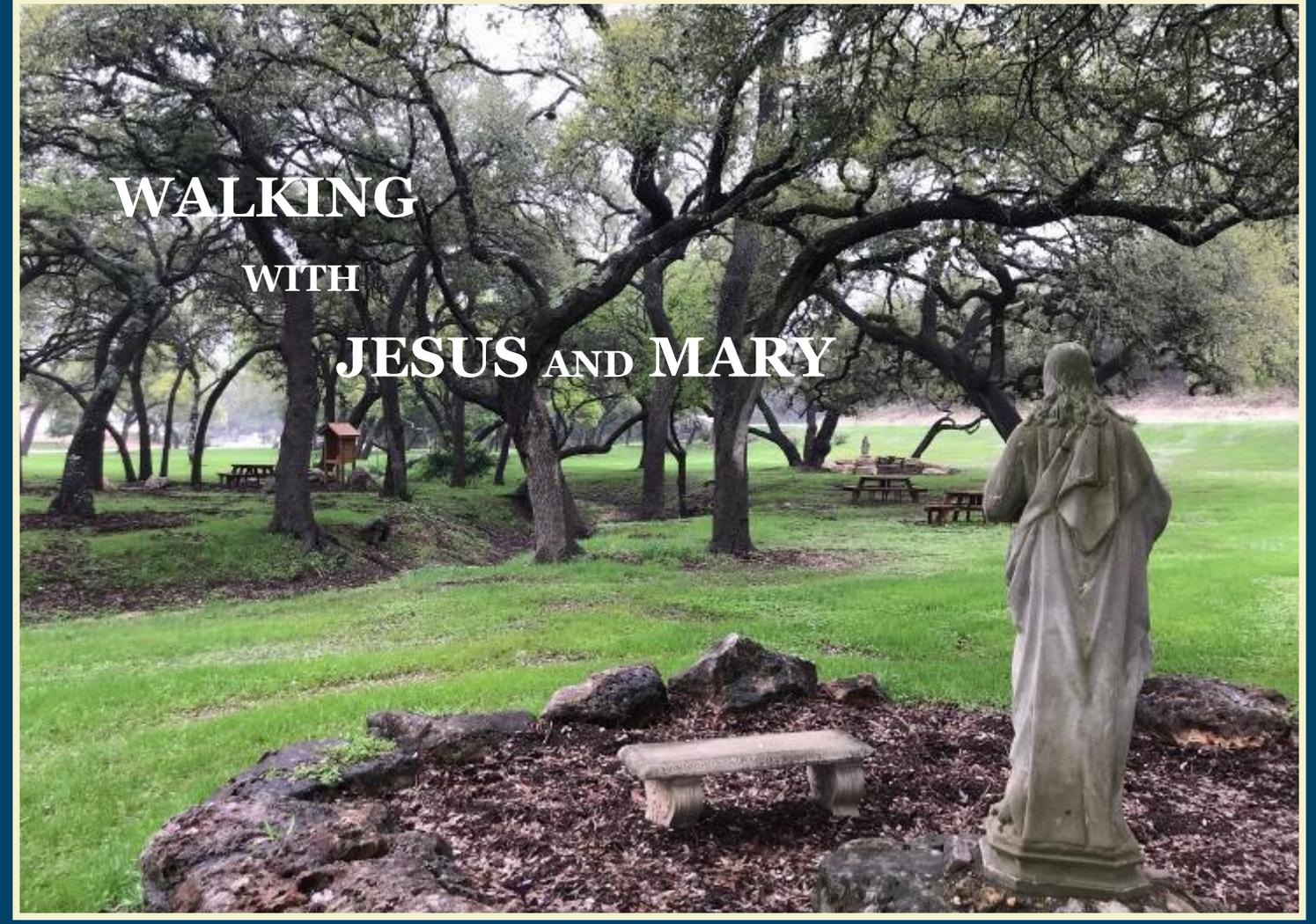
Needless to say, the messages didn't create a big splash in the social media world, but they connected with some people who have contacted us to see if we had any more to offer.

We have decided to begin posting them again on Mondays and Wednesdays, on Facebook and Instagram. They also appear on our website blog. If you are interested, you can find all the published **Messages of Faith & Trust** archived on our website.



*The Mission's  
Relic of the  
True Cross*

*September 14th  
Feast of the  
Triumph of the  
Cross*



# WALKING WITH JESUS AND MARY

## Making a Personal Pilgrimage

**A**t a recent staff and Community meeting we were dealing with the unhappy reality that we would not be able to have any *Encounter With Jesus* or other overnight retreats for the foreseeable future due to current archdiocesan regulations. We were brainstorming for ways that permitted people to make use of the Mission while still being Covid compliant.

A day or so after the meeting, Dave Sommers sent this email:

I have been thinking about our discussion, about how to invite people to take advantage of the peace and sanctity of the Mission during these difficult times. **What if we offer it as a “WALK WITH JESUS AND MARY,” an opportunity to walk and talk to Jesus and Mary about whatever is on your mind. Sort of a personal pilgrimage.**

We could give them a map identifying each of the prayer stations, and include appropriate readings and prayers to accompany it. They could choose which to visit. We could encourage silence as they move around the Mission, and identify locations such as St. Joseph Chapel, Blessed Sacrament Chapel and the Teocalli as special sanctuaries. And they could take advantage of the Sacramental Shed. It should not be difficult to comply with Covid regulations, given all our open space and distances between the locations.

We thought this was a great idea! And we are offering it to you. We invite you to make a personal pilgrimage here at the Mission. Currently hours are Tuesday through Friday between 9AM-5PM. Please stop at the office at St. Raphael's for our Pilgrimage Prayer pamphlet.





## Rodeo Clowns

Texas is a rodeo state. And rodeos have rodeo clowns.

The job of the rodeo clown is to run out into the arena when the rider is unseated and to draw the attention of the bull while the rider is removed from harm's way.

When Br. Daniel spoke of his vocation at his First Commitment ceremony a few years ago, he said the image of a rodeo clown came to mind. At first the congregation was a little puzzled, but then he continued:

*The Clown represents his MDM vocation; the bull is the Enemy; and the Rider is each one of us who are living in these times of such fierce attack.*

So recently, when we found this beer, we said, "Br. Daniel, this one's for you!"



The beautiful 19th century Cathedral of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Unfortunately during our visit, it was closed due to the Covid restrictions.



But, the top of Greene Peak was open for Mother Magdalene...



...and Susannah.

## COMING SOON TO A CELL PHONE NEAR YOU....

Our world changed in March. As a result, we have been trying to find more and better ways to communicate with more people in this situation. Even though the Mission is not a parish, we have recently adopted the “MyParish” app (available for free in the app store) as another way of communicating with you. Along with daily readings for Mass, and a great library of traditional Catholic prayers, the MyParish app will carry Fr. John Mary’s homilies, the weekly Meditation, the Messages of Faith & Trust, and our newsletters.

The MyParish app will also allow us to push out messages to you regarding last minute schedule changes. This feature will be particularly useful for weather or virus related changes. If you have the MyParish app loaded on your smart phone and you have the Mission of Divine Mercy selected as one of your “parishes,” then you can receive these timely messages as “push” notifications.

*We encourage all of you to load the MyParish app.*





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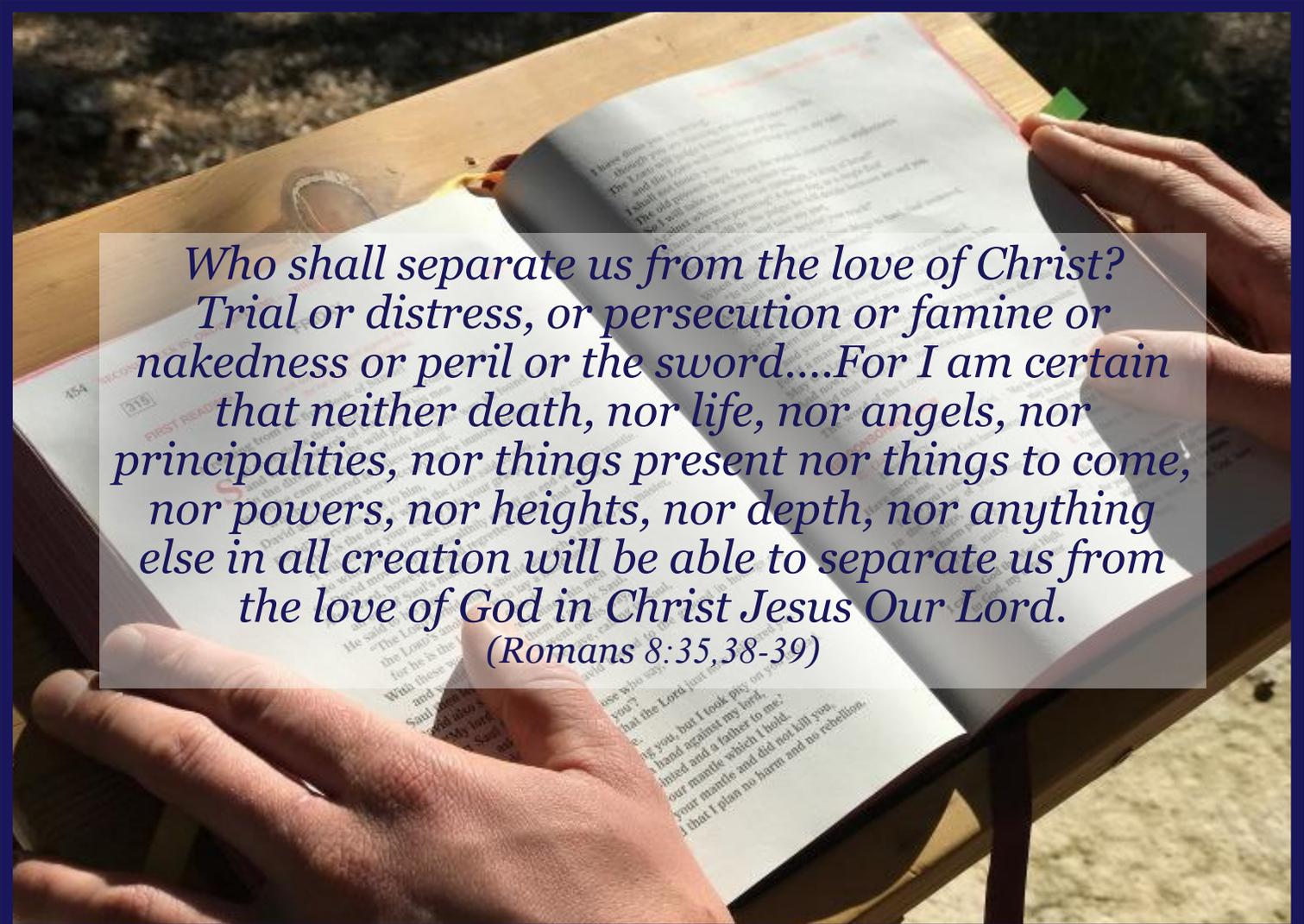
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*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?  
Trial or distress, or persecution or famine or  
nakedness or peril or the sword....For I am certain  
that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor  
principalities, nor things present nor things to come,  
nor powers, nor heights, nor depth, nor anything  
else in all creation will be able to separate us from  
the love of God in Christ Jesus Our Lord.  
(Romans 8:35,38-39)*