

Mission of Divine Mercy

September, 2002 AD

ANGELIC PROPERTY

"Holy Angels, help us!" is a frequent cry of our Community. Their intercession has been particularly visible recently in the providential gift of some housing for the coming year.

This spring we had been praying to the Holy Angels to help us find a more stable and contemplative living situation while we begin to establish our Community and our apostolate here. In early May generous parishioners offered us the free use of some buildings on their property for the immediate future. Interestingly, the name of the owner of the property means "Angel" in Polish. And, indeed, as one enters the driveway a life-size statue of an angel stands watching over the land.

The property itself, though just a few miles from town, is out in the country. A long sweep of field and trees going

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ABIDING IN JESUS

Our Call to a Contemplative Life

"Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." [Jn 15, 4-5]

Contemplative and Apostolic

These words of Jesus help us to understand something that is not easy to comprehend for many

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Pastor Msgr. Eugene O'Callaghan surrounded by (clockwise) Maria Felicitas, Sr. Amapola, Br. Juan Pablo, Br. Moses, Fr. John Mary and Sr. Magdalene.

DISCOVERING HIS PRESENCE

"I loved it. There are no words to describe the feeling. I felt strange in a good way like someone was watching over me. I think this helped, it lifted a lot of burdens off my shoulders. I loved talking to Him."

— a local teenager

The looks of the one hundred and fifty or so teenagers milling around the auditorium reflected their environment: inner-city America. They did *not* look like a group that had any interest in spending quiet time in the church, nor in listening to someone dressed in a funny-looking long robe. We weren't sure how this was going to go.

As Fr. John Mary began to talk to them about the spiritual battle going on in today's world—a battle which they find themselves in the midst of, whether they know it or not—they became more and more attentive. Then, after showing them a brief video on Our Lord's presence in the Eucharist, any student who wished was invited to a brief experience (about 30 minutes) of encountering Our Lord in Eucharistic Adoration. Most of the students chose to come.

After a low-key guided experience of silent Adoration, they were invited to take a moment to thank Jesus for the evening and to fill out a brief, any-

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in our society today: **the contemplative life**. Our community is called to be an apostolic community; that is a community which shares God's mercy with the world through apostolic works, especially through the spiritual works of mercy. But we are called to be first a contemplative community.

That word "contemplative" might sound obscure, intimidating, or even elitist. But it means something **very simple**. It means that our priority is simply to "abide in Jesus", to "abide in His love" [cf. Jn 15, 9]. Living in intimate communion with Him, adoring Him. Far from being reserved to a small group of "elite", this loving communion with God is open to all His children.

This is why prayer, silence, and recollection are essential to our life. Our world is very focused on efficiency and productivity. Yet only love, Divine Love, can fulfill the longing of our hearts.

A Waste of Time?...

Dedicating time exclusively to union with God might **seem like a waste of time when there are so many urgent needs in the world**. Yet it is precisely because of these needs that union with God is so important; as Jesus says, "without Me, you can do nothing." Human activity that is not rooted in Jesus is fruitless for eternal life. It cannot get to the roots of the problems of our world, which are, ultimately, spiritual. The great act of mercy for the world today is to make known Jesus, the only Savior. We can only really do this if we abide in Him.

Prayer of adoration and intercession are central to our call. Real prayer of the heart, abiding in Jesus, bears fruit in mysterious but powerful ways. An impressive example of this is Moses, praying, interceding on the mountain, and obtaining through his prayer the triumph of his people in their struggle. [Ex 17, 8-11]

The Struggle

It is **not easy to maintain the contemplative life** in the midst of apostolic activities. Many communities have struggled with this. With many requests for activities and all that these involve there is always a danger that the contemplative life will be sacrificed.

We are struggling with that too. Begin-

ing a community; establishing ourselves in a new diocese; organizing new programs; adapting to new locations; all that is challenging. Many of you, our friends, have told us how important it is to you that we preserve this contemplative life. We want you to know that this is why we are not able to accept so many kind invitations; for instance, invitations to come to your homes. We need to preserve the quiet time spent with Him, and it is not always easy.

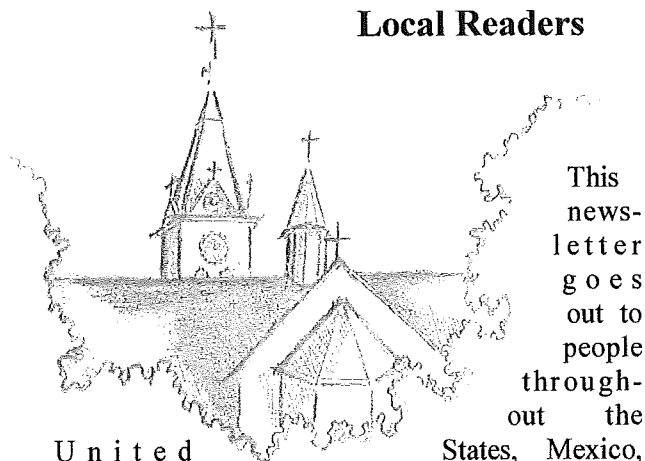
Limitations

This is also why we are **not able to accept all the apostolic requests that we receive**. First, we have to be careful not to bite off more than we can chew. Since our community is just beginning we have to be careful not to over-extend ourselves. Thus, sometimes even apostolates that we would like to take on we must decline.

Second, our apostolates should be in keeping with our mission and our contemplative spirit. For instance the "Encounter with Jesus" retreats that we give try to make available to everyone a deeper intimacy with Jesus. Many other requests that we get are very worthwhile, but they are not really our mission.

We share all this with you as our friends so that you can better understand our mission, and our limitations. ♦

Note To Our Local Readers



United States, Mexico, and elsewhere in order to update and inform them regarding our life.

Apologies to those of you for whom much of this may be redundant. In many cases you are part of this news. ♦

OUR EVOLVING SITUATION

This *Mission of Divine Mercy* began as an outreach of Catholic Solitudes. Catholic Solitudes, founded by **Fr. Patrick Meaney**, was canonically erected by **Bishop Rene Gracida** of the Diocese of Corpus Christi in 1994 as a "public association of the faithful".

The MDM is contemplative and apostolic, rather than semi-eremitical as is Catholic Solitudes. Thus, the question has been raised whether it should eventually become an autonomous community. This will be discerned with the competent ecclesiastical authorities. Please pray for us in this process, that we may be faithful to the Father's will.

We are particularly **grateful to Fr. Patrick** for his generosity, magnanimity, and prayerful insight in this process. ♦

Angelic Property

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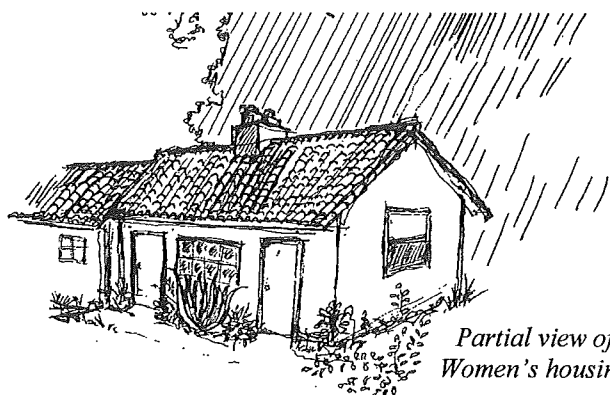


down to a creek-bed offers space, solitude, and silence ~ things we have been eager to re-capture since leaving the Ranch. The simplicity and quiet of a natural setting prove imminently hospitable to a contemplative orientation. This is something we have been seeking since we arrived.

The existing buildings at the property allow for the men and women to have separate kitchen and living quarters while sharing a meeting room, office, and chapel. (Archbishop Flores kindly granted us permission for the small private oratory, something that does require canonical approval.)

While the property was already astonishingly well-suited to our needs, some areas still required a significant stretch of work to become habitable and functional. This was when the human angels began to surface.... Storage areas had to be emptied; partitions put up; plumbing completed; floors sanded and re-finished; walls painted; wiring extended; air-conditioning ducts constructed, etc...

For several weeks volunteers have been going out on weekends to add their blood, sweat, and ideas to the project, while various kind-



*Partial view of
Women's housing*

hearted cooks have provided lunch for the laborers. Though the company has been good the work has been hard, hot, slow-moving and time consuming. **The generosity and perseverance of our "temp crew"** (captained by a local giant of generosity) has been remarkable.

And as for the owners themselves, suffice it to say that the material and personal resources donated as well as the inconveniences, irritations, expenses, and set-backs suffered by them are beyond cataloguing. We are glad that eventually they will be provided a recompense beyond what man can give.

The biggest challenge and the crowning achievement has been the emergence of a small, graceful oratory. This has been accomplished through the thoughtful design and reconstruction of a ground floor storage area with a mixture of both professional and volunteer help. (The input of the Parish's resident artist-engineer-designer has proven invaluable in this regard.)

After a brief pitched battle between a jack hammer and foot-thick concrete walls the concrete ceded pride-of-place and an alcove for a tabernacle was carved out. The stone walls were washed to remove dust, mold and stain; a new floor was laid; and then an altar derived from the trunk of an old oak tree was brought in. The result is a simple but dignified, prayerful sanctuary warmed by the tones and textures of materials native to the area.

We are especially grateful to the owners and all those who collaborated with them on the design and execution of this sacred aspect of the project. And to **all those who, in so many different ways, have helped prepare this home for us, we are profoundly in your debt.** And on your behalf we turn to the Lord.

To respect the privacy of the owners as well as the cloister of the Community we will not be receiving visitors at our property. ♦

HELP WANTED

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9:37-38). This is the case with this Mission of Divine Mercy. There are many requests and much work to do, way beyond what our little group can do by itself. Would you like to help in some way? This mission needs assistance and "laborers" of many different types. If you have any special skills which you think could be useful, or if you would simply like to donate some time to help in any way, we would be happy to hear from you. Please contact Pat Fox at 830-625-4254 or Rusty Brandy at 830-606-2031. ♦

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

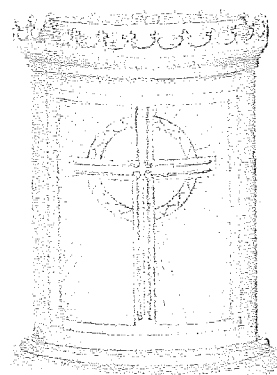
*"I will lead you to the desert,
and there I will speak to your heart"
(cf. Hos. 2:14)*

Our Lord was faithful to His word and did indeed "speak" in the hearts of those who participated in the three *Encounter with Jesus (EWJ)* retreats held this spring. The written evaluations filled out by all who have participated in this retreat—whether this past spring or previously—have been overwhelmingly positive. That is, positive about Our Lord's action; for our part we've had a few "glitches." During a retreat last February the men spent a very cold, and in some cases *sleepless* night, due to a thermostat problem. What impressed us was that we didn't find out about it until later. None of them complained about it!

Thankfully, though, the fruitfulness of the *Encounter* does not depend primarily on us. Since its beginning as a youth retreat in Monterrey, Mexico in 1995, it has been designed to be a weekend that offers the opportunity for a living encounter with **Our Lord Jesus** present in the **Eucharist**. The participants are introduced to **silent prayer** and **Eucharistic Adoration** in a way that is adapted to today's world.

Many people today—youth and adults—experience overwhelming suffering, sorrow, confusion, and discouragement. **They, we need Jesus.** Only Jesus can respond to our deepest needs and bring divine healing to the wounds of our spirit. Above all, we need not just ideas or feelings but a personal contact with Jesus Himself. The EWJ offers the opportunity to discover Him in **prayer of the heart** and through **His real presence in the Eucharist**.

But this encounter requires an act of supernatural **faith**. For this reason the format is simple and low key, striving to dispose those who come to make an act of supernatural faith. We try to avoid methods



Some liturgically-minded friends sighted a beautiful vintage tabernacle at a local religious goods store, and have donated it to the Community for our new oratory.

that cause a rapid enthusiasm for God which is intensely felt but then quickly passes. As Fr. John Mary often remarks, "If the Holy Spirit doesn't show up this retreat is a flop." Thankfully He does show up.

There are three *Encounters* scheduled for this fall: **Oct. 4-6** and **Dec. 13-15** at the Holy Spirit Motherhouse in San Antonio (for more information contact Rusty Brandt at 830-606-2031 or Pat Fox at 830-625-4254), and **Nov. 22-24 in Spanish** at the 7A Ranch in Wimberly (for more information contact Ana Veraza at 830-606-8017).

The EWJ is not designed to be "fun." It is instead demanding because it is a preparation for the demanding challenges Christians face today. Thus we do not seek large numbers, but rather persons truly searching; persons who are "thirsty" for God. ♦

Discovering His Presence (Continued from page 1)

mous questionnaire. As these forms were handed to us we saw a lot of smiles and even some tears. Reading the evaluations we realized why: Jesus, in a very brief and simple time of quiet Adoration, had touched their hearts in many ways—well beyond what anyone expected (see below a couple of the many examples).

Nor was this evening unique. We have had overwhelmingly positive responses each time that *Discovering His Presence* has been presented. Over the past few months we have presented it at Sts. Peter and Paul's and at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in New Braunfels; at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Seguin; and at Annunciation Parish in St. Hedwig. While the program is designed for both young people and adults—and we've had very positive feedback from both—we have been especially struck by Our Lord's action in the hearts of young people during such a brief time of prayer. The program is very simple and low-key. Yet Jesus seems to eagerly desire these moments when we come to adore Him, because thus far He has greatly blessed them.

In May Fr. Ken Dakin, president of the Archbishop's Presbyteral Council, had us present a summary of this program to these priests from throughout the Archdiocese, as a resource for pastors, their parishes, and CCD programs. For more information about this program please contact Sr. Maria-Amapola. ♦

Comments of Teenagers on *Discovering His Presence*

[The following are reprinted as they were written, without correction]

"I felt Jesus's presence. It frightened me, yet at the same time brought me to life again. I could feel Jesus forgiving me and believing that I will come to him in the end."

"It felt very strange, but in a good way. And for a brief moment when I was telling God all my burdens I felt as if he was standing beside me and had His hand on my head. I looked up quick. I did not see Him, but I knew He was there."

"I had never in my life had a chance to talk to God. I knew he was there but now I know He listens and He is a great friend to talk to. Thank you. I don't know how to pay you have showed me something that I will never forget."

"I liked that I was able to talk to God. At first I felt strange, but realized he was here to help me. After I spoke to Him I felt this big relief off of my chest, I started to cry, then stopped because I heard my heart beating and as if someone or something placed there hand over it."

"I felt like I really was talking to Jesus/God. I feel better and know that he'll help my family through with the problems we are going through. I know he'll help my friends and particular friends who are going through tough times."

HOW DO WE SUPPORT OURSELVES

That's a question we hear often. It's a good question. We sometimes wonder ourselves. We don't receive any salary from the diocese or anyone else. We don't have a regular, steady source of income.

Our income comes then from two principal sources. One is from our **ministry**, which is our "work". Much of our ministry functions on the basis of voluntary donations, so that no one is excluded for financial reasons.

The other source is simply **donations**.

Since we are such a new community, we don't yet have a large base of support. This is a real lesson for us in learning to trust that God will provide. It is a constant marvel to us to see how He has provided so far through the generosity of you, our friends and benefactors. And not only through money but through help of many different kinds.

We pray that **He Himself will repay you**. It sounds like a cliché, but it's true that your help makes it possible for this little mission to continue. May He bless you. ♦

ENTERING INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM



Some excerpts from our Holy Father Pope John Paul's apostolic letter on entering into this third millennium:

"It is important however that what we propose, with the help of God, should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer. Ours is a time of continual movement which ten leads to restlessness, with risk of 'doing for the sake of doing.' We must resist this temptation by trying 'to be' before trying 'to do.' In this regard we should recall how Jesus reproved Martha: 'You are anxious and troubled about many things; one

thing is necessary' (Lk 10:41-42)" (Novo Millennio Ineunte 15).

"It is prayer which ... constantly reminds us of the primacy of Christ and, in union with him, the primacy of the interior life and of holiness. When this principle is not respected, is it any wonder that pastoral plans come to nothing and leave us with a disheartening sense of frustration? We then share the experience of the disciples in the Gospel story of the miraculous catch of fish: 'We have toiled all night and caught nothing' (Lk 5,5). ...As this millennium begins, allow the Successor of Peter to invite the whole Church to make this act of faith, which expresses itself in a renewed commitment to prayer" (Novo Millennio Ineunte 38). ♦

ACTIVITIES

Hidden Work

The bulk of our activities are... **"invisible."** Most importantly there is **prayer** (see *Abiding in Jesus* article). There is also our own **formation**, especially as a community with new members. This means, among other things, giving time to **learning from Jesus** by studying Scripture, the teachings of the Church, spiritual classics like **The Diary of Saint Faustina**, etc... A further hidden occupation is time spent **discerning** how to live our religious life in our new situation in this Archdiocese, and **drawing up guidelines** for our community. As a new community it is vital to take this special time of "listening" to the Lord, to seek concretely how to live His will in our situation.

Divine Mercy Sunday

In addition to these "invisible" activities the past six months have seen a number of visible ones. One particularly dear to our hearts was the special celebration in honor of Divine Mercy Sunday. At the end of the celebration, when all the people there processed up one by one to stand, to kneel, or to bow before the **Image of Divine Mercy**—to touch or to kiss it—their expressions of love and reverence were overwhelming. So much so that when the men who had been holding the image—and thus witnessing their fellow parishioners response—returned to the sacristy they found themselves in tears. And while the Holy Spirit usu-

ally works in hidden, imperceptible ways, it was nice to catch this glimpse of the love for Our Lord that is the fruit of the Spirit's action.

Apostolates

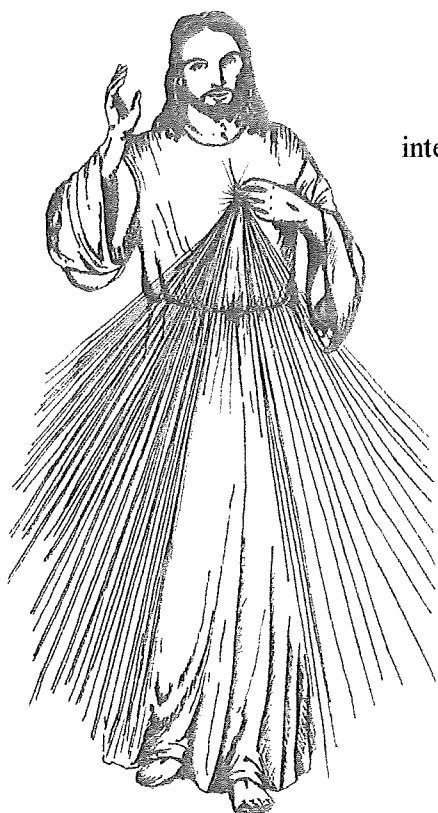
Some of our other apostolates have included:

- *Encounter with Jesus* retreats (see accompanying article)
- Two Lenten days of reflection
- *Discovering his Presence* evenings (see accompanying article)
- A weekly Holy Hour
- The 9:30am Sunday Mass at Sts. Peter and Paul's
- A regular ministry of confessions
- Spiritual direction and accompaniment
- Time spent creating a little MDM choir to sing for our different apostolates. (As none of us had ever even sung in a choir before, this has been an adventure.
- A weekly Saturday morning Mass and rosary in honor of the Blessed Mother.

New Projects

Among our new projects is a one-day **youth retreat**, prompted by the requests of **Msgr. O'Callaghan** and some local parishes. The first one will be a Sept. 14th retreat for the young men of **Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Seguin**. For

JOHN PAUL II CONSECRATES THE WORLD TO DIVINE MERCY



Jesus, I Trust In You

Delays in getting our newsletter out have happily resulted in the privilege for us of including this news....

On Saturday, August 17th, in the newly consecrated international Shrine to the Divine Mercy in Lągiwniki, Poland, the Holy Father made the following proclamation:

"Today, in this Shrine, I wish solemnly to entrust the world to Divine Mercy. I do so with the burning desire that the message of God's merciful love, proclaimed here through Saint Faustina, may be made known to all the peoples of the earth and fill their hearts with hope. May this message radiate... throughout the world. May the binding promise of the Lord Jesus be fulfilled: from here there must go forth "the spark which will prepare the world for His final coming." (cf. Diary, 1732).

This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. *In the mercy of God the world will find peace and mankind will find happiness.* I entrust this task to you, dear Brothers and Sisters....May you be witnesses to mercy!"

THE MISSION OF DIVINE MERCY

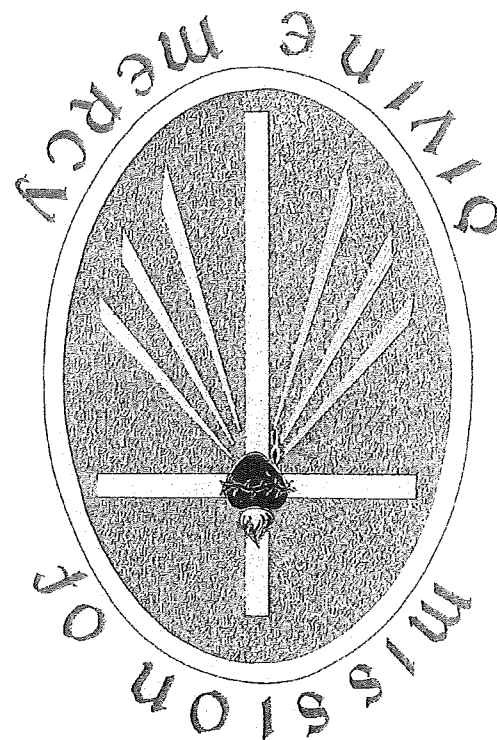
"Today I am sending you with My mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to My Merciful Heart... My hand is reluctant to take hold of the sword of justice. Before the Day of Justice I am sending the Day of Mercy."

These words of Our Lord to St Faustina speak of the urgent need of our confused, suffering world for His Mercy. They show the desire of His Sacred Heart to give His mercy. They also show our need to respond to His Mercy and to make it known.

Our little community of the "*Mission of Divine Mercy*" wants to be at the service of His Mercy for the world today, especially through spiritual works of mercy. The first way that we try to do this is by a life of interior union with Him in prayer and Eu-

charistic adoration, interceding for the world. Secondly, by helping others grow closer to Jesus, Lord of Mercy, through apostolic activities. These activities are particularly to help youth and adults deepen their prayer life with Him and grow in faith in His Eucharistic presence.

Mary is our beloved mother who helps us live this, in union with our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. Thus we seek to do Our Heavenly Father's will, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



The Mission of Divine Mercy
1346 A Hueco Springs Loop Rd.
New Braunfels, TX 78132

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Our New Address

The Mission of Divine Mercy
1346A Hueco Springs Loop
New Braunfels, TX 78132
(830) 629-5042
email@MissionofDivineMercy.org

**To respect the cloister of the Community as well as the privacy of the owners of the property, we will not be receiving visitors at our property. Please contact us by mail, phone, or e-mail.*

PRAYER AND MASS INTENTIONS

Prayer and the Holy Eucharist are at the center of our life. Don't hesitate to send us your prayer intentions. We inscribe them in the prayer book in our chapel and read them aloud before the Blessed Sacrament, entrusting them to our Savior. We are also happy to receive your Mass intentions.

OUR MAILING LIST

If there is anyone you know that would like to be on our mailing list, or if you would like to be taken off of it, please just let us know.

YOUR SUGGESTIONS

We're just getting started so please excuse the foibles of this little newsletter. We'd be happy to hear your comments and suggestions.

Activities

(Continued from page 6)

more information about this type of retreat please contact Br. Moses of Jesus. Also in the planning stage is a **group for all those who desire to be friends**—in whatever way—of this Mission of Divine Mercy. More information on that will follow. ♦