



Mission of Divine Mercy

From Father John Mary:

Dear Friends,

of us. For MDM the vocation of the Christmas Shepherds is a consoling reality. And the words of St Paul, **"I will... boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,"** become words that we lean on each day.

This advent letter is focused particularly on the **shepherds of Bethlehem**—poor, ignorant, unimportant, not particularly prayerful. Yet chosen by, and of infinite value to, the Lord. So there's hope for the rest

I wanted to reflect briefly on some of the steps our community has past couple of months. The Lord usually leads us by simple, non-steps. Often it is only afterwards, as we look back, that we see how imthey were and how much He is doing in a quiet way.

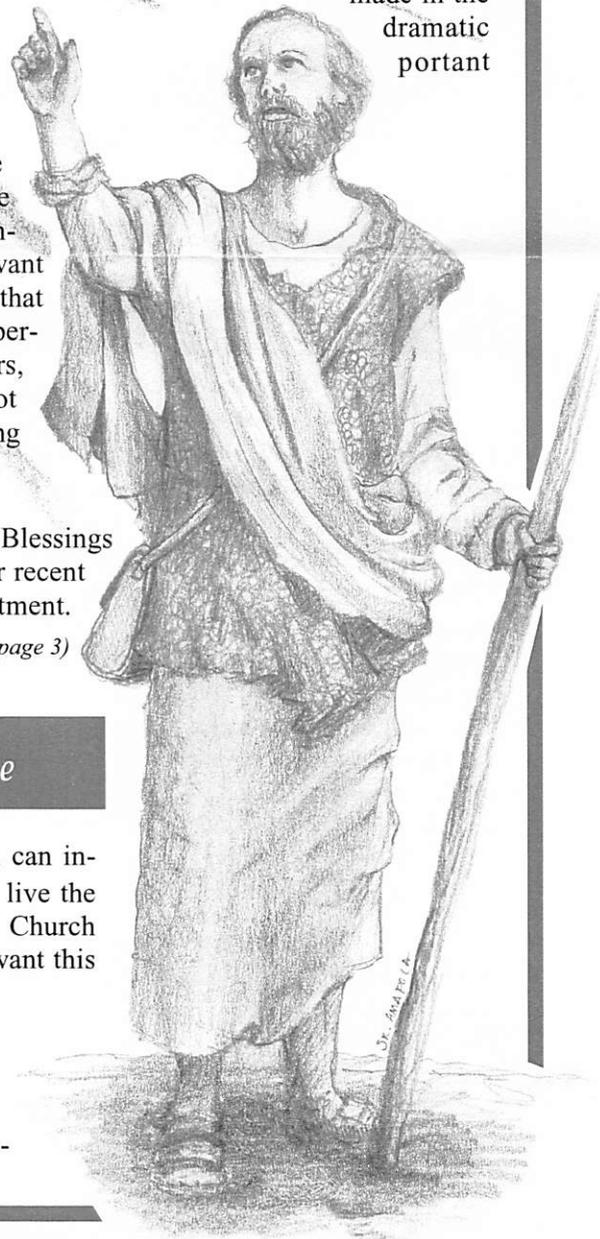
made in the dramatic portant

❖ One small step that I feel is the beginning of something great in the Lord's plan has been the first meetings towards the formation of the branch for lay people; the **"Friends of Christ, MDM"**. With our constant poverty of time we are beginning very simply. But we did not want to delay further in starting it. If MDM is to become the movement that the Lord wants it to be, the lay branch will be essential. These lay persons will no longer be just friends, but rather members, family members, of MDM. This is also open to those who, because of distance, cannot come to the monthly meetings here. If you are interested in receiving the monthly talks, please contact us.*

❖ **Maria Felicitas** is now in the last stage of her **cancer treatment**. Blessings on so many of you who have supported her in this time, especially her recent fleet of chauffeurs shuttling her back and forth from radiation treatment.

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* For more information contact Deacon Bob Gorman at (830) 629-0176



Advent...for Women *by Sr. Magdalene*

The holiness and beauty of the Advent and Christmas Season can inspire in us a deep yearning. We want, this time, to do it right; to really live the holiness of the Season. This time to savor the liturgical richness of the Church Calendar and to reflect it in the way we celebrate these feast days. We want this time to **anchor our joy in Jesus**.

But at the same time our vulnerability to the commercial images and cultural expectations of a mythic American Christmas suffice to keep us more obsessed, pre-occupied, and frustrated than ever. Because women seem uniquely burdened with a sense of responsibility for the hap-

(Continued on page 5)

Ant.

*An encouraging word from our new Archbishop
On the occasion of our November 19th Groundbreaking....*



Though not able to be with us in person, Archbishop Gomez graciously sent a letter to convey his blessing on, and prayer for, the groundbreaking for the new Retreat Center. A part of that letter follows:



“I pray that this groundbreaking will be a joyous event that will give you and all who support your mission the inspiration to move forward in faith. May those who come here in the future, be filled with the Grace of God so that they may pray with faith and obedience as Mary our Blessed Mother did, in a spirit of faith and obedience, “Thy Will be done.”

“May Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, grant you peace and joy,

*Most Reverend José H. Gomez, S.T.D.
Archbishop of San Antonio*

A Bert’s–Eye View

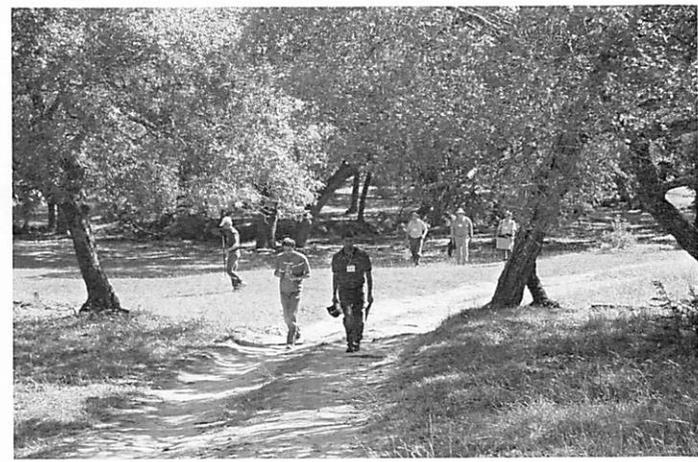
When he copied to us a two page letter he wrote describing the Men’s Encounter at the MISSION we got permission from Bert Childs to excerpt part of it for the newsletter.

This being the first EWJ scheduled at the new MISSION, and with facilities being next-to-nothing in terms of overnight accommodations, the Team and Production Crew struggled mightily to get things ready. In the last week before the retreat it seemed that all the powers of hell were unleashed against us and over half the Team/Crew were felled with one malady or another as the deadline approached. Nonetheless the survivors marched forward (prodded relentlessly by Tim Barker) and the Retreat took place as scheduled. What follows is a Bert’s-Eye view....

“...The differences between spending 44 hours largely cooped up in a three-room convent and spending it wandering through the Texas Hill Country in chamber-of-commerce weather can not be described in words.

That will not, of course, prevent me from trying.

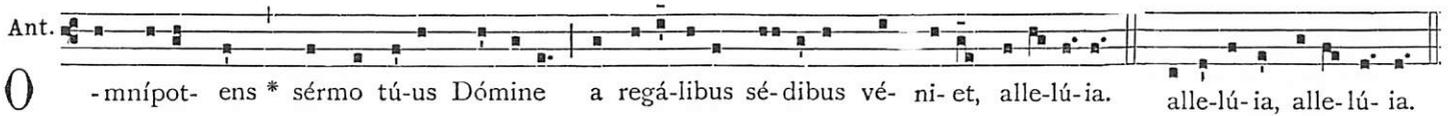
“The sleeping accommodation for the civilians was a huge 40 x 40-foot tent without sides, a large white canopy as it were, arranged for by Tim. He and the 25



Chamber of Commerce weather....

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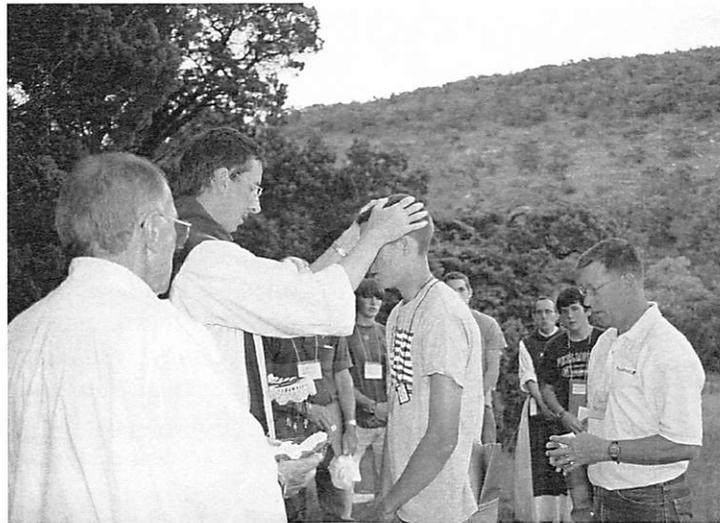


Dear Friends

(Continued from page 1)

With this illness she has been frustrated in not being able to respond to work at her regular tornado pace. But we sense that the Lord has been working deeply in her—and through her—in this trial.

- ❖ **Br Moses** has been commuting every Monday to the **Archdiocesan Seminary**, continuing his preparation in view of ordination. This has created a new bond between MDM and the Archdiocese. He has been touched by the friendship and support of both the staff and seminarians there. And he has been dedicating more time to the theology courses that he is studying here through the Distance-learning Program. This has been a real sacrifice for the community, as his presence and time to help in our own work has been lessened. But we believe it is well worth it if he can advance towards the priesthood.



Imposition of the Brown Scapular during the Encounter

- ❖ In the Project Update you will find news on the Groundbreaking ceremony for the new O'Callaghan Center that took place on Nov. 19. Named after Msgr. Eugene O'Callaghan in honor of the pivotal role he has played in making it possible for MDM to be established here, the Center will be the first step toward our permanent presence and retreat program at the Mission.
- ❖ This seems to me like a dream becoming reality. We sense that MISSION LA DIVINA MISERICORDIA is a place where the Lord wants to work marvels of Mercy that we can't yet imagine. The scope of the whole project is daunting. Much of the in-house work is falling on the shoulders of **Sr. Magdalene and Sr. Amapola**. We thank God

daily for the competent friends who have stepped forward to take on the lion's share of the technical planning and have given us the help and encouragement for this project to continue advancing.

- ❖ In October we had another historic event in our history: **the first Men's Encounter with Jesus out at the MISSION**. It comes at a providential time because the retreat center that we had been using in San Antonio is being sold. As Bert Childs describes in his letter, the men had to rough it. That was made easier though by the gorgeous fall Texas Hill-country weather that the Lord gave us. We were struck again by how much the beauty and peace of the natural setting at the Mission contributes to the experience of His Presence.

- ❖ A word of apology about the delay in getting **our website** up to date. With all that has been going on, work on it came to a standstill for a few months. However it is now up-and-running, even if in its initial and unfinished stage.
- ❖ On another note, a sweet lady came up to me after Mass recently. In the course of our conversation, she looked up and noticed my homemade haircut. "Did you cut your own hair?" she asked. "Yes." "Ahhh, that's nice," she said maternally. "It reminds me of Father So-and-so. He didn't know how to cut his hair either..."

I write this before Thanksgiving, when MDM will celebrate our 4th anniversary of arriving in New Braunfels. Despite our daily struggles, we have so much to thank God for as we look back on these years. So much has happened! And so much has happened because of you, our friends. Like the Shepherds who

(Continued on page 8)



P

U-er na-tus in Béthlehem, alle-lú-ia : Unde gaudet Je-rú-sa-lem, alle-lú-ia, alle-lú-ia. R̄. In cordis jú-bi-lo Chri-stum



A Special Christmas Reflection

by a Friend of MDM

We offer this as a gif to all our friends. We hope you can find a quiet moment to read it prayerfully and to unite yourself with the adoration of the shepherds. FJM.

Have you thought of who, after Mary and Joseph, were the first adorers on the earth? The first to receive the Little One of Bethlehem? Shepherds, the poor, humble shepherds were the first to go to adore Him.

Let's consider some characteristics of these simple men with humble hearts, who, like Jesus Himself, had very little material goods.

The first characteristic is Faith. They believed immediately the announcement of the Angel who told them that the Savior had been born. They believed immediately and they set off. Think about that: the Angel spoke to them and they believed. In the Eucharist it is Jesus Himself who says: "THIS IS MY BODY, THIS IS MY BLOOD, FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD". It is God-made-Man Who announces it to us. And He cannot be mistaken nor mislead us because He is God.

Faith is the first virtue and characteristic of all adorers. Like the shepherds, faith leads us to adore.

The second characteristic is self-forgetfulness. They didn't think: "I'm dirty, I'm badly dressed, I don't have anything to offer Him, I won't know what to say to Him." No. They just went in the obedience of faith and adored.

Third, according to some mystics, the little that they had they brought to the Child Jesus: bread, milk, honey, a little lamb. And we also, when we go and adore Him in the Eucharist, can bring Him the little we have, offering Him our silence, our love, our desire to be better with His grace.

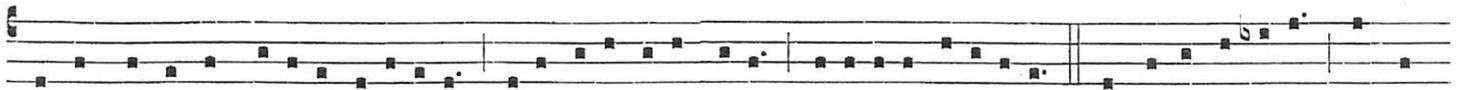
In the heart of the one who adores Him with love, the very Presence of Jesus imprints an indelible seal that brings Grace and Peace to this soul. "Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

As with the shepherds, God only needs your good will, your good disposition to adore His Eucharistic Presence. He will fill your soul with Peace and with graces that will be transforming, day by day, your life.

O Come let us
adore Him!



Per Gabri-é-lem núnti-um, alle-lú-ia, Virgo concépit Fí-li-um, alle-lú-ia, alle-lú-ia. R̄. In cordis jú-bi-lo Chri-stum



Assumpsit carnem Fi-li-us, alle-lú-ia, De-i Patris altís-simus, alle-lú-ia, alle-lú-ia. R̄. In cordis jú-bi-lo Chri-stum

Advent for Women

(Continued from page 1)

pininess of those around them (which can involve them in endless material preparations), while at the same time sensing their own soul's thirst for the One they are most neglecting.

Even 'ordinary time' prayer patterns seem to collapse in the face of irregular schedules and the need to achieve good cheer, well-chosen gifts, beautiful decorations, a delicious and memorable Christmas Dinner, and the warmth of perfect *bon homie* with family and friends. In the end one has the conviction of having failed both God and man.

Nor should we discount the reality of a heightened spiritual warfare that seems to mark the Christmas Season. In his book on his own experiences the Italian exorcist Fr. Amorth noted that in Italy the occult activity reaches a peak of malevolent intensity at Christmas time. "Not only in Italy," I thought. Is it any wonder that conflict, depression, and suicide accelerate categorically during this time?



What to do? Is there another way? I think there is....

The solution is not necessarily to radically alter one's plans. First, that usually involves others as well, who may—or may not—be able or willing to change. And secondly, our own will and ability to do so can be rooted more in our own ego than in the Lord's Grace. If so then we will fail and thus compound our discouragement.

Perhaps the secret this Advent is interior change.

"Nay rather have I stilled and quieted my soul. Like a weaned child on its mother's lap so is my soul within me." (Psalm 131)

The usual plans will probably remain, more or less, the usual plans. But they can be **lived** in a different way interiorly.

We can have within us Bethlehem of our heart: silent, still, stored away. And throughout the Advent and Christmas Season, unbeknownst to others, we can slip quietly in for a moment or two to drop tiny gifts at the feet of the Infant or to watch Him sleeping and receive the benediction of Mary's smile, the strength of St. Joseph's compassionate gaze. We ourselves can doze near the fire in the presence of that Sleeping Infant.

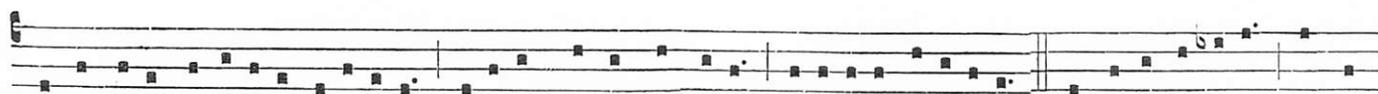
One can be at a cocktail party and pray quietly for the person one is listening to; one can bring to that Infant the girl at the cash register, the overbearing unresponsive spouse, the happy child of any age. there the impatience overcome, the loneliness accepted, the hurtful comment ignored, the contrition for sins past, the tears over faults and sins still present.

The circumstances in which we live this Season are frequently beyond our control. But within the most secret part of our being—the part open to God alone—we can arrive at Bethlehem. And there, like the Shepherds, we can slip repeatedly in to the cave to weep, to pray, to adore. ♦

(See FJM's P.S. on page 7)



Hic jacet in praesé-pi-o, alle-lú-ia, Qui regnat si-ne tér-mi-no, alle-lú-ia, alle-lú-ia. R̄. In cordis jú-bi-lo Chri-stum



6. Et Ange-lus pastó-ri-bus, alle-lú-ia, Revé-lat quod sit Dó-mi-nus, alle-lú-ia, alle-lú-ia. R̄. In cordis jú-bi-lo Chri-stum

A Bert's-Eye-View (Continued from page 2)



retreatants bunked there in whatever bedding they had brought with them. Some neglected to allow for seasonally chilly temperatures we get when we've been good, and awoke Saturday morning stiff and hypothermeated, leading Tim to remark that 'many are cold but few are frozen.' (ooh!)

"...Tim rigged a shower of two-by-fours nailed to trees and draped with tarps in the infield not far from the camp house and the yard faucet. A garden hose fed a single shower head and, paraphrasing Henry Ford, you could have any temperature water you wanted as long as it was cold. A few souls braved the well-water "rain locker", but most were getting a might gamey by Sunday afternoon....



"...Two extra special moments: The first came during the Marian devotion and blessing of the scapulars and rosaries on Saturday evening. With Father standing before the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the retreatants spread out on the hillside below him, the whole scene had a sort of Sermon on the Mount feel about it. And then in mid-sentence Father departed from his prepared text and called our attention to the rising moon, still pale in the daylight but big and round and a day or so short of being full, and he spoke extemporaneously about the moon's being a symbol of Mary,

and how he thought she would be pleased with this gathering at her shrine. His joy was contagious and every face in the crowd reflected it.

and how he thought she would be pleased with this gathering at her shrine. His joy was contagious and every face in the crowd reflected it.

"The second was during the Eucharistic procession Saturday evening. The day had run long, the schedule was shot to hell (can I say that?) shot to pieces and we were all a bit weary. Ken Bates had lifted an alb from the sacristy at SPP and come at my request, and he and I were carrying candles in escort of Father and Jesus. In the next to the last row in the Pavilion sat Mason Wehmeyer, Greg's 9-year old son who had been a late registrant. He had kept up with the big boys all day, climbing mountains and enduring, that is to say, enjoying the many talks, but his resolve had finally left him at this late hour. He was sitting cross-legged in his chair, head back, mouth open and sound asleep. Father John Mary gave him the full blessing, shorting him



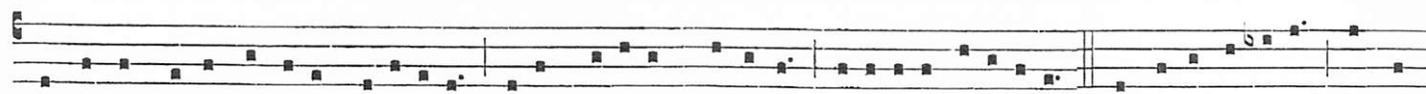
nothing, and all the while smiling broadly at the little pilgrim. It almost makes me weep now just thinking about it.

"So, the first ever Encounter With Jesus at the MISSION is in the books and everyone survived it. We missed you but felt you were with us in spirit.² ♦

"God speed, IHN

"Bert"

(We think that last line can be construed happily to include our readers.)



8. In-trán-tes domum ínvi-cem, alle-lú-ia, Novum sa-lú-tant Prín-ci-pem, alle-lú-ia, alle-lú-ia. R̄. In cordis jú-bi-lo Chri-stum

Odds and Ends

Project Update

Together with our Advent Newsletter we are including a section on the Project Update put together by Cathy Drolet. We hope in the future to make this a regular part of our Community mailings. Gracias to those who make it possible.

Website

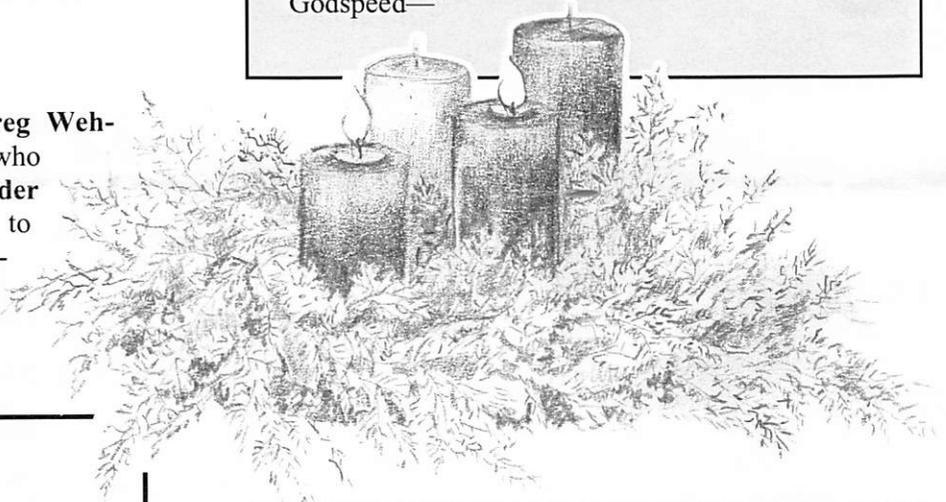
Our website is back up and working even though not completed. Please God it will be an efficient and convenient means to keep people abreast of events, schedule changes, and any significant MDM developments. The website is:

www.missionofdivinemeracy.com

We are especially grateful to **Greg Weh-meyer** and his The Good Design House who spear-headed this effort, to **Eric Schroeder** and **Erin Redford** at Cybergraphics, and to **Tim Drolet** for the good will, time and professional expertise that resulted in this site. ♦

From a Gentleman in DC comes this suggestion:

“Here’s an idea you might share with your friends as a way to help live the season of Advent. Why not make an outdoor Advent Wreath which is lit each evening at dusk and burns until bedtime. If several households in a neighborhood were doing it, it would become a visible, tangible sign of the approach of the Christ Child. Might also spark some good conversation with those who want to know what you’re doing. And it would provide a counterweight to the commercial pressure to begin Christmas decorations after Halloween. Godspeed—”



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A P.S. from Father John Mary:

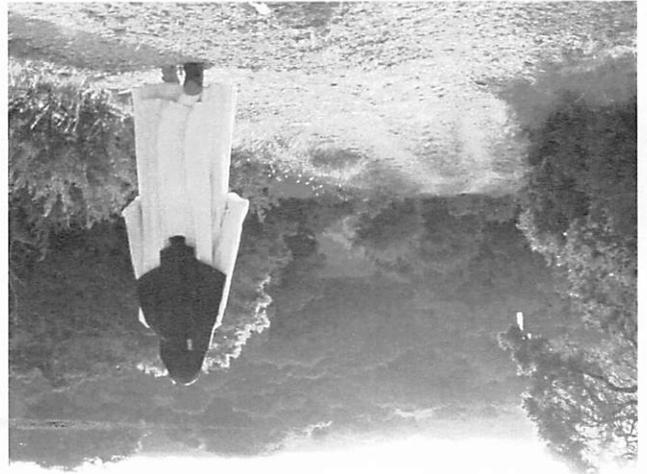
The one point I would add is that the first Christmas was precisely a case of things not going as planned. At Nazareth St. Joseph had worked hard to prepare a safe, warm home for Jesus to be born in and then all his plans fell apart. And he had to just adapt to what must have seemed a mess but for which, in God’s wisdom, there was a reason. Thus, the fact that our Christmas plans do not work out as we wanted, or sometimes fall apart completely doesn’t destroy our ability to celebrate Christmas, it calls us to live it more as God plans. ♦

One Mother’s Story

“The day was nice,” she said. “The turkey was roasting in the oven, people were relaxing, and the cooking was unhurried and pleasant. Then we sat down to eat and before you knew it we were all arguing with each other. We finished the meal in silence.”

“Dessert was served an hour later and this time I said, ‘Alright, before we eat we’re going to pray the St. Michael’s Prayer together. We did and then everything was fine. But I wish I had thought of that earlier....’” ♦

"O House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord." (Isaiah 2:5)



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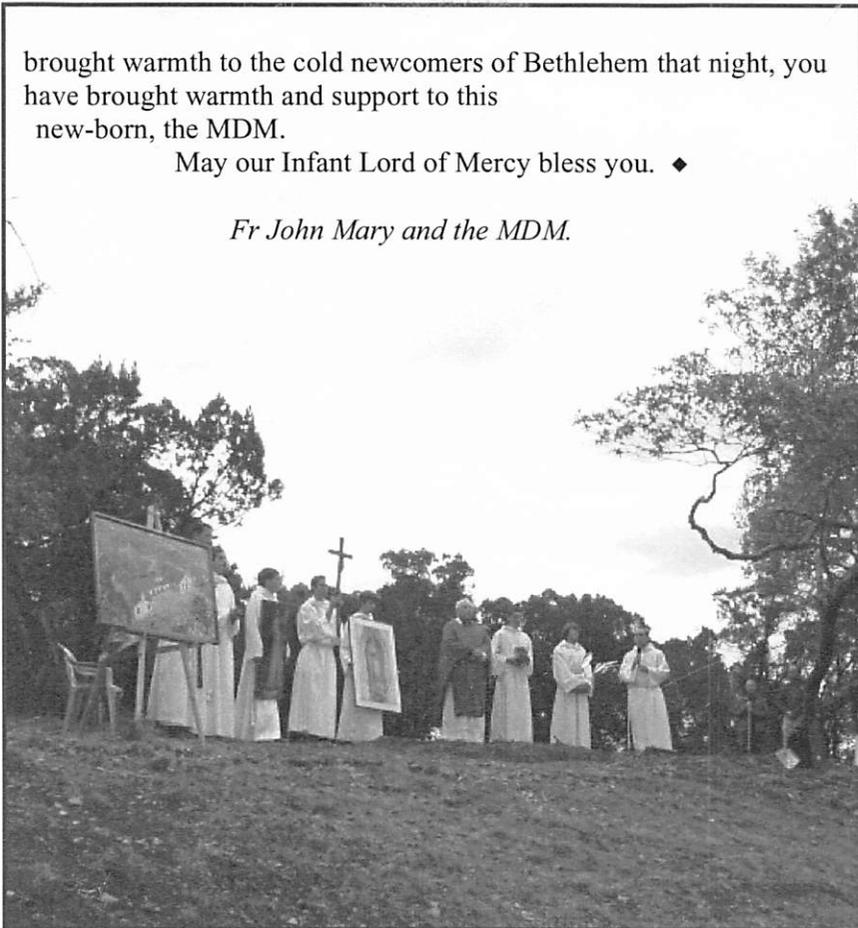
1346-A Hueco Springs Lp. Rd.
New Braunfels, TX 78132



brought warmth to the cold newcomers of Bethlehem that night, you have brought warmth and support to this new-born, the MDM.

May our Infant Lord of Mercy bless you. ♦

Fr John Mary and the MDM.



Project Update



Mission La Divina Misericordia

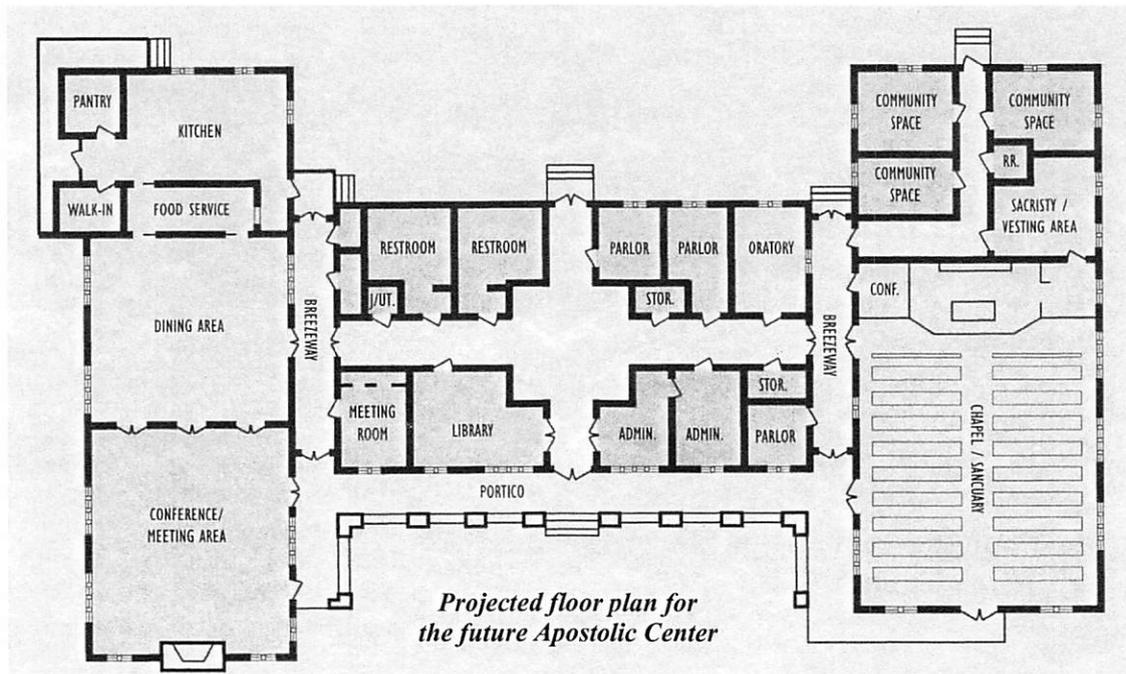
Sanctuary Monastery Retreat Center

“Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My Mercy.”

These words of Our Lord to St. Faustina reveal the reason for this whole project. There is *great suffering* in our world, and often in our own lives. The recent wave of disasters shows the fragility of our society. **Our Lord Jesus Christ** wants to pour out His Mercy on our suffering humanity. He asks for our trust, our cooperation. MISSION LA DIVINA MISERICORDIA is a *sanctuary of prayer* where many can come to experience that mercy. And where prayer and Eucharistic Adoration can reach out to all. We are beginning a big new step to realize this mission. This next phase calls for the construction of:

- **AN APOSTOLIC CENTER** with an initial chapel for 100 persons, a conference room, a kitchen and a dining room for 50 persons, along with offices, etc. We want to dedicate this center to our good friend and benefactor, *Msgr. Eugene O'Callaghan*.
- **LODGING FACILITIES** for 50 people, that will also permit us to have overnight retreats and accommodate guests.
- **INITIAL HOUSING FOR OUR COMMUNITY** with extra rooms to receive *new vocations*.

If you would like to help realize this Mission, there are many different ways to do so. On page 4 is more information about one of these ways, helping financially. God bless you for your support. — *Father John Mary*.





Mission of Divine Mercy Breaks Ground for New Facility

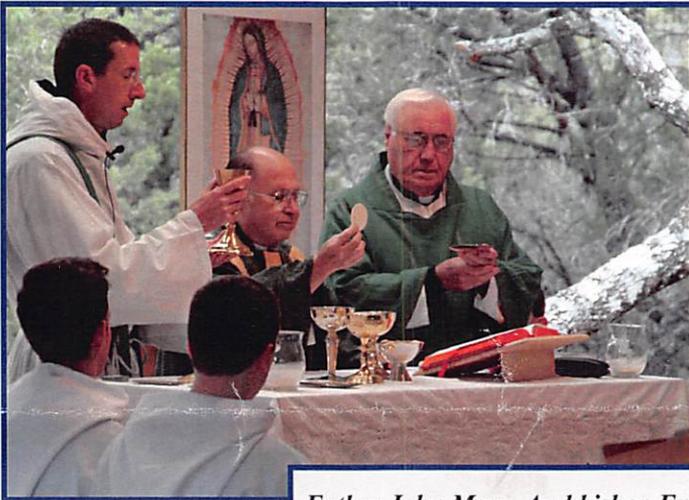
Nov. 19 was a day of prayer and providence marking the fourth anniversary of the Mission of Divine Mercy's arrival in New Braunfels, the one year anniversary of MISSION LA DIVINA MISERICORDIA and the groundbreaking of the Msgr. Eugene O'Callaghan Apostolic Center.

On a Texas Hill Country hilltop, the Mission of Divine Mercy (MDM) broke ground on the first major building of the MISSION LA DIVINA MISERICORDIA with Archbishop Emeritus Patrick Flores presiding the Mass.

Supporters of the community knelt on the cedar-mulch floor of St. Joseph's Pavilion during a Mass and then moved in procession down one hill and up the next, reciting the "Heart of Jesus" litany, to the site of the future retreat center.

The facility, slated for completion in early 2007, will host the Mission of Divine Mercy's retreats for adults and youth. It will also welcome retreats of other organizations, such as the ACTS retreats.

In a letter to the community, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez wrote, "...I pray that the Mission la Divina Misericordia will provide that sanctuary, that quiet place for people who seek the will of God in their lives."



Father John Mary, Archbishop Emeritus Patrick Flores, and Msgr. Eugene O'Callaghan Celebrating Mass at MISSION LA DIVINA MISERICORDIA

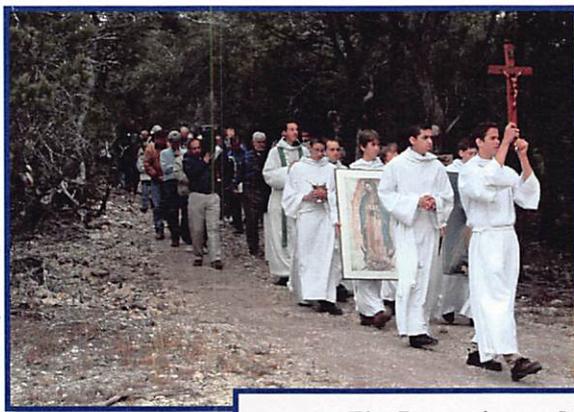
The Mission of Divine Mercy marked several milestones the weekend before Thanksgiving. It was on that date four years ago that the community first made its way from an isolated South Texas ranch near Hebbbronville to New Braunfels to begin a new ministry.

Father John Mary Foster, superior of the community, said they initially thought New Braunfels would be just a stopping point as they decided where to take their ministry.

But the parish of Sts. Peter & Paul Church embraced the group and Archbishop Flores gave them permission to minister in the diocese. The week before Thanksgiving

in 2004, the community closed on the purchase of what would become a sanctuary, monastery and retreat center on 126 acres at Canyon Lake.

"My hand was trembling," Fr. John Mary said of signing the purchase and mortgage papers on the land.



The Procession to Msgr. O'Callaghan Apostolic Center

"The retreat center will be named for Msgr. Eugene

O'Callaghan for the providential role he played in supporting the Mission of Divine Mercy," said Fr. John Mary. Msgr. O'Callaghan has been a priest in the diocese for 50 years and pastor of Sts. Peter & Paul for more than 20 years. In recognizing him, the MDM also

wants to honor the members of the local church.

“This is very humbling,” Msgr. O’Callaghan said after a presentation that preceded his ceremonial shoveling of dirt on the rocky hilltop.

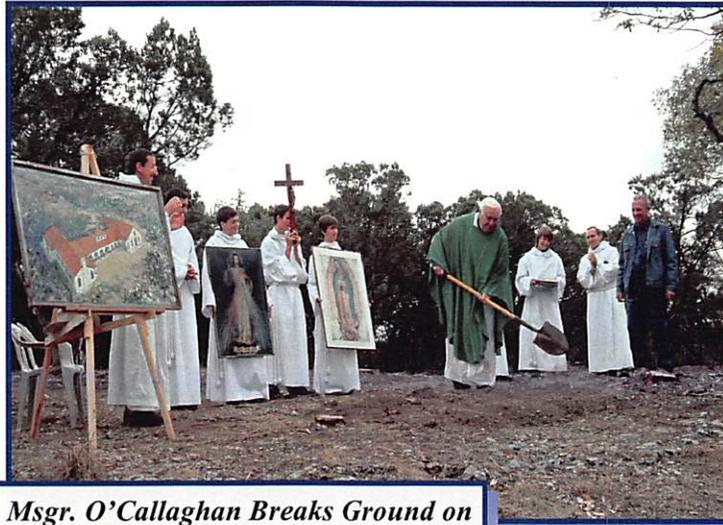
The apostolic center will have a chapel for 100 people, a conference room, offices, a kitchen and dining room to accommodate 50 people. An arched porch will run the length of the structure designed in the Spanish mission style.

This facility and the guest lodging will be paid for by a \$2 million capital campaign launched in November.

The first men’s

“Encounter with Jesus” overnight retreat held at MISSION LA DIVINA MISERICORDIA took place in October and the participants slept in tents. The MDM has led these silent retreats focusing on the

Eucharist for several years at a leased retreat center on San Antonio’s East Side, but the facility is being sold.



Msgr. O’Callaghan Breaks Ground on the New Apostolic Center

Dave Sommers, the MDM’s director of operations, said an old camp house on the Mission property serves as a makeshift kitchen and a small building in back has become much more than what it was intended.

“I’m told that not only is it a storage building and office, it is also our ‘world headquarters,’” Sommers joked with the more than 300 people gathered for the event.

After saying the Mass, Archbishop Flores lauded the monastic community for their ministry and for dedicating the apostolic center to his long-time friend Msgr. O’Callaghan.

Dick Koegle, who is spearheading the fundraising effort, stood behind a pulpit hewn from a massive cedar tree trunk to detail the “Bonds of Grace” campaign of donations and personal loans.

The loans will be for six years at a 4 percent rate of return.

Fr. John Mary said that though the project obviously needs money, it needs spiritual participation even more to make it successful. Donations of time to cut cedar, haul rocks and even make

tamales to raise funds – as one supporter is doing – go a long way to bringing the project to fruition.

“This can be, God willing, a powerhouse of prayer,” Fr. John Mary said.

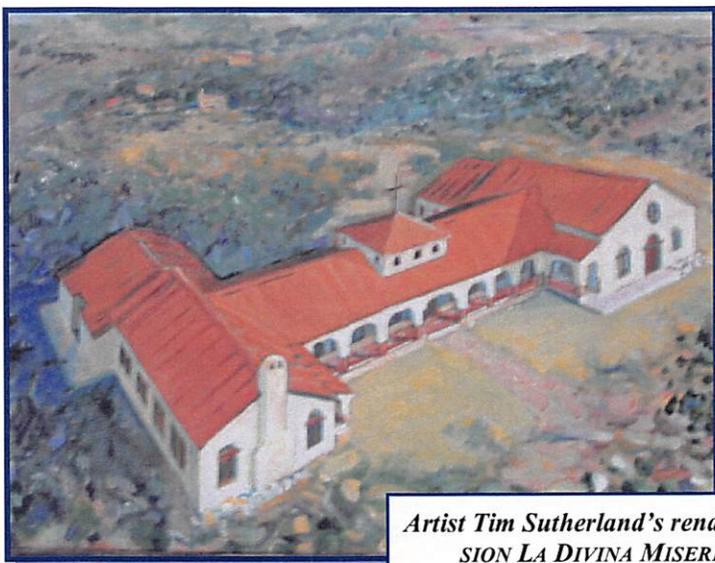
In closing Archbishop Gomez offered a prayer for all who will come to the Mission:

“May those who come here in the future be filled with the Grace of God so that they may pray with faith and obedience as Mary our Blessed Mother did, in a spirit of faith and obedience, ‘Thy will be done.’”

*By Travis E. Poling
Photos by John Greene*



The crowd gathered at the site for the new Apostolic Center....
(Photograph by Kathryn Lamke)



Artist Tim Sutherland’s rendition of MISSION LA DIVINA MISERICORDIA

A word from Dick Koegle, Chairman of The Bonds of Grace Capital Campaign:



A Capital Campaign fundraising program has been initiated in support of the Mission of Divine Mercy. This capital campaign has adopted the theme of "Bonds of Grace" in an attempt to focus efforts on the bond between Our Lord and His people.

Archbishop Jose Gomez, in a letter to Fr John Mary for the groundbreaking ceremony, wrote:

"When Jesus prayed, He often went to a place of solitude, on a mountain, in the desert, or in the dark shadows of a garden. In seeking a private sanctuary for prayer, Jesus prepared to respond to all that the Father required of Him...."

"Your vision of establishing a place for prayer, devotion, and community will hopefully someday provide a place to reflect on the love and mercy of God for many who come here. We live in a world filled with powerful distractions that keep us from those quiet conversations with a loving God for which our heart yearns."

We want to help provide this sanctuary that our Archbishop speaks of. Allow me to say a few words about the "Bonds of Grace" campaign.

Recently I advised Fr. John Mary Foster that I didn't have the financial resources to give MDM what they needed but that I could loan some of my savings for a period of time. I told Fr. John Mary that I would rather let God use my money than a bank! I also told him that it would be an honor if he would let us help in this way.

Temporarily sharing our financial resources to empower God's Will seems to be an inspired tool to help the Mission in a powerful way without worrying about taking immediate cash flow from individuals. Some have stepped forward already, in willingness to support a loan note program, while others have offered monetary gifts. The "Bonds of Grace Program", which includes the "Gifts of Grace" and "Notes of Grace", has been developed from these two financing concepts.

GIFTS OF GRACE - Contributions as direct gifts to further the construction project.

NOTES OF GRACE - A program centered on a loan of money to MDM for 6 years with an UNSECURED note instrument at 4% interest. I see it as a way of letting God use our money for a period of time.

I believe that we all will share in great blessings by responding to this request from above. With constant thanks for each of you.

Dick.

For more information please contact Don Maxwell at (830) 606.4115 or at dwmaxwell@satx.rr.com.