



Mission of Divine Mercy

Lent 2009, A.D.

During Lent, as we seek to accompany Jesus more closely, we encounter within ourselves a battle against evil. Jesus Himself taught St. Faustina how to fight and to be victorious. Though her situation differs from our own, His advice is very helpful for all of us.

SPIRITUAL BATTLE

My daughter, I want to teach you about spiritual warfare. Never trust in yourself, but abandon yourself totally to My will. In desolation, darkness and various doubts, have recourse to Me and to your spiritual director. Do not bargain with any temptation; lock yourself immediately in My Heart and, at the first opportunity, reveal the temptation to the confessor. Put your self-love in the last place, so that it does not taint your deeds. Bear with yourself with great patience. Shun murmurers like a plague. Let all act as they like; you are to act as I want you to.

Do not pour out your feelings. Be silent when you are rebuked. Do not ask everyone's opinion, but only the opinion of your confessor; be as frank and simple as a child with him. Do not become discouraged by ingratitude. Do not examine with curiosity the roads down which I lead you. When boredom and discouragement beat against your heart, run away from yourself and hide in My heart. Do not fear struggle; courage itself often intimidates temptations, and they dare not attack us.

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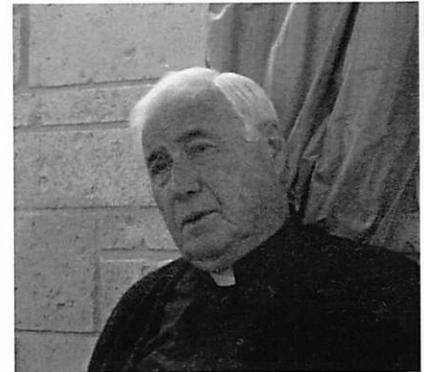


The big thrust of the fall was to revise our Youth Apostolate Programs. The goal was to free the Community from the direct material responsibility for that work so that we might be increasingly available for a more contemplative ministry. Several of our friends have stepped into the breach and this spring the new FAMILIES SEEKING DIVINE MERCY initiative has been launched. (See article on page 4)

November, the Month of the Poor Souls, 1) saw a solemn celebration of the **Feast of All Saints (Nov. 1)** and of **All Souls (Nov. 2)**; 2) our two **November Saturday programs dedicated to praying for the Poor Souls**; and 3) the inauguration of our **Memorial Book of Divine Mercy** at St. Joseph's Chapel where the names of those who have died can be recorded and recommended to our prayers.

This **December** for the first time we were able to celebrate our **Christmas Eve Mass at St. Joseph's Chapel**. For us, the candle-lit wooden enclosure and the presence of so many of our friends provided a beautiful setting for **that most sacred Feast of Our Infant God**.

We are very grateful to **Dave and his Silver Eagles** who quickly engineered and executed the winter walls at the Chapel in time for that Holy Season. Discussions are now being held as to the best way to make the structure of this Chapel practical year-round.



Msgr. O'Callaghan becomes grave and sad when he speaks about the loss of the Faith in his native Ireland.

January was a month of Priests.

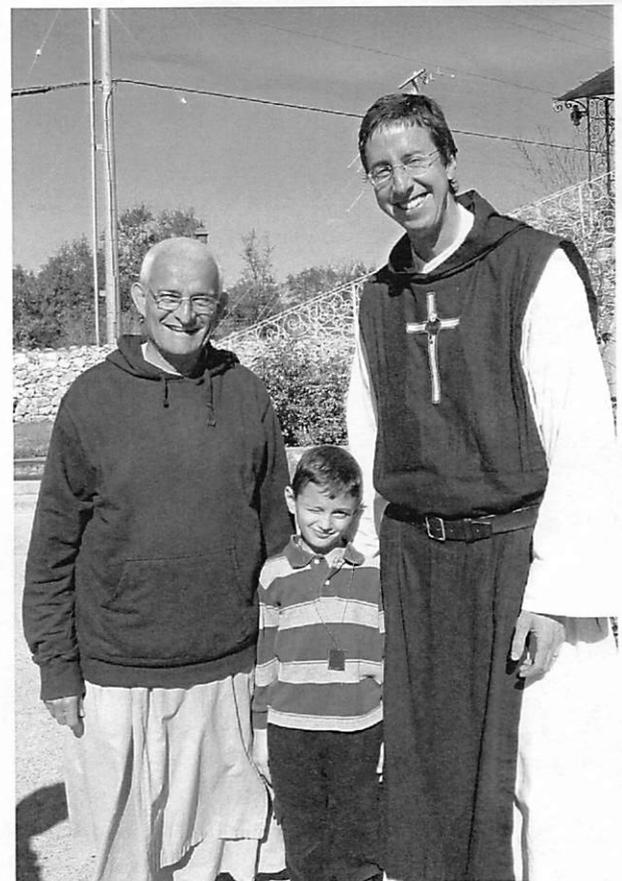
During his winter return to Texas we had, at times, the pleasure of having our beloved **Monsignor O'Callaghan** back with us. He was able to celebrate Mass with us at the Mission a few times and on occasion also to join us for dinner.

Our long lost **Brother Joseph**, now the newly ordained **Father Stephen Hoffman**, was also able to join us for a visit. He is now a Priest for the Diocese of Minneapolis-St. Paul and has been plunged into the life of a large busy parish



but seems up to the task at hand. Conversation ricocheted off the walls as we all tried to catch up on the events of the last few years.

Then, courtesy of our friends **the Scorpino Family**, Fr. John Mary and Fr. Moses welcomed a visit from **Father Dominique Faure**. Fr. Dominique is a member of the **Brothers of St. John**, the Community to which both of our Priests once belonged. He is stationed in India where he and the Brothers have an intense apostolate of prayer, evangelization, and charity. His work ranges from preaching retreats to the Missionaries of Charity and teaching at a university to helping children who suffer from AIDS. (He was just several





hundred yards from the beach when the terrible tsunami hit India's coast a couple of years ago.)

During January Fr. John Mary and Fr. Moses were also able to attend the weeklong **Archdiocesan Retreat for Priests**. Fr. **Andrew Apostoli, CFR**, whom many have seen on EWTN, preached a strong, simple message illustrated with interesting stories and anecdotes. It was a blessed time, they said, to be with the other Priests, praying, discussing, laughing. There was even time for some basketball, with **Archbishop Gomez** joining the game.

On the last Sunday in January we were able to celebrate our second annual **Mass in Honor of God the Father**. It is a special grace to be able to offer the Eternal Father the Perfect Gift of the Eucharist simply out of love for Him and in gratitude for Himself! Afterwards once again our Letters to the Lord ascended in flames to Heaven.

That Feast also inaugurated a **week of retreat** for our Community that focused on the more contemplative orientation that we feel called to. It was one of the best Community retreats, many of us felt, that we've been able to have since arriving in New Braunfels. The pace was slow, the days were quiet, and there was a

happy sense of the Lord dwelling peacefully in our midst.

On the First Saturday of February we had the distinct honor of receiving a visit from the **Odessa Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Fatima**. Few people realize that **Our Lady of Fatima is a special Patroness for our Mission**, and so we were glad to be given the opportunity to receive Her here. **Deacon Bob Ellis**, National Coordinator for the World Apostolate of Fatima, accompanied the Pilgrim Virgin and spoke on the significance of Fatima for today. Far from seeming dated, today's events make Her warnings and call to conversion more urgent – and more essential – than ever.

The second week of February was marked by **the death of, the Rosary for, and the funeral of our peerless friend, Bob Atwood**. His legacy is the witness that he gave of stalwart faith in the midst of suffering, of a holy death in the Lord, and of the strong hope of a future reunion in perfect joy. *Requiescat in pacem!* ♦



SPIRITUAL BATTLE (Continued from page 1)

Always fight with the deep conviction that I am with you. Do not be guided by feeling, because it is not always under your control; but all merit lies in the will. I will not delude you with prospects of peace and consolations; on the contrary, prepare for great battles. Know that you are now on a great stage where all heaven and earth are watching you. Fight like a knight, so that I can reward you. Do not be unduly fearful, because you are not alone.

(From the Diary of St. Faustina, No. 1760.)

Families Seeking Divine Mercy

By Dr. Paul Foster, Ph.D.

Families Seeking Divine Mercy (FSDM) is a new association of lay people who will oversee and run the youth ministry groups previously run directly by the Mission of Divine Mercy (MDM). Those groups include the **St. Michael's Squadron** for boys, the **Queen of Peace** group for girls, and the **Kerubim** group for home schoolers. The groups held their first respective meetings under the new umbrella of FSDM this past January, preceded by a Mass and special blessing from Fr. John Mary.

Heading up the new association are **Ken Grasso** and **Mark Menditto**, director and co-director, respectively. "We're pleased and excited about this new effort," said Dr. Grasso, who has two sons who participate in both the St. Michael's Squadron and the Kerubim. "These groups have been a real blessing for a lot of young people, and we're grateful to MDM for starting and leading them over the years. But as the burden grew, it just became necessary for the lay people to take on the responsibility."

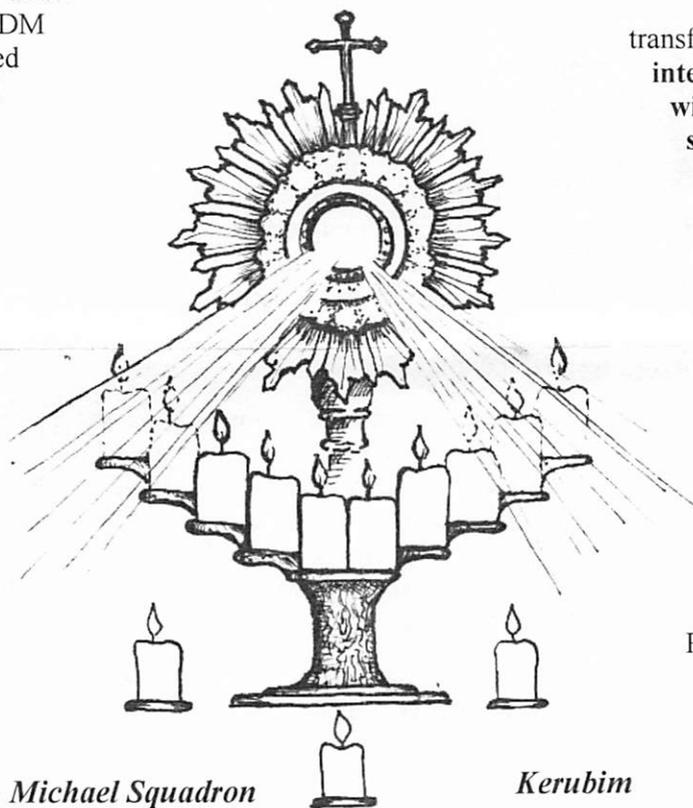
For MDM, the new lay association resolves a dilemma. As Fr. John Mary explains: "We had been sensing a call to a more contemplative life, which was difficult to reconcile with the amount of youth ministry we were doing. At the

same time, we didn't want to abandon the young people we'd been working with, and both they and their parents felt it vital that the programs continue in some form. With laypeople now assuming responsibility for running the groups, we can better answer the contemplative call but still continue to help the youth spiritually and in an advisory role."

It's clear that, despite the transfer of authority, **FSDM intends for the connection with the Mission to remain strong.** "The Mission grounds are a special place, so we're very happy that they will continue to be the primary location for all our youth group activities," Mr. Menditto said. "But even better is the fact that Fr. John Mary and Fr. Moses will continue to preside over the Holy Hours for the young people as well as offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Maintaining the spiritual bond with the Mission is very important to us."

We at the Mission are **grateful to all involved** in setting up Families Seeking Divine Mercy and making this new phase of youth ministry possible, and we offer our prayers and best wishes for the fruitfulness of their efforts.

Those interested in learning more about FSDM or any of the particular youth groups can contact Ken Grasso (512-938-3536, kgrasso@txstate.edu) or Mark Menditto (830-832-2768, mmenditto@satx.rr.com). ♦



St. Michael Squadron

Queen of Peace

Kerubim



Mornings at the Camphouse...



Upcoming Schedule of Events – Spring 2009

All our activities and events are listed on our website. Click on “[Calendar](#)” on the Home Page and you will be able to view our online calendar of events. www.missionofdivinemeracy.org

February 28 and March 28 (Saturdays)

LENTEN DESERT DAY 8:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

These desert days offer you the opportunity to spend time alone with the Lord and be renewed in Him. The schedule is flexible so you can adapt it to your situation.

- Begins with Mass at 8:00 a.m.
- Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament all day
- Chaplet of Divine Mercy at 3:00 p.m.
- Spiritual teaching at 3:15 p.m.
 “To Heaven, our Promised Land”
- Sacrament of Reconciliation 4 - 5 p.m.
- Closes with Benediction at 5:00 p.m.

Light breakfast after Mass. (You are welcome to bring your own lunch.) Drinks will be available during the day. *All are welcome.*

April 3 – 5

ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS RETREAT for Men

An opportunity to discover Our Lord in prayer of the heart; in His Real Presence in the Eucharist; through silence, prayer, and Eucharistic Adoration.

For more information or to register, please contact Yvette Sommers at (830) 899-3444. ysommers@gvtc.com

April 5, 10:30 a.m.

SOLEMN MASS OF PALM SUNDAY

April 9 -11

PASCHAL TRIDUUM RETREAT (Schedule to be announced)

April 10 - 18

GREAT NOVENA OF DIVINE MERCY

(Beginning on Good Friday)

April 19

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY (Schedule to be announced)

We alert you to these important feasts that will fall during Lent:

March 19 (Thursday)

Feast of St. Joseph

March 25 (Wednesday)

Feast of the Annunciation and Incarnation of Our Lord

As the weather begins to warm up, the following is especially important, and we would be very grateful for your help in spreading the word:

MODEST DRESS AT THE PROPERTY

This is consecrated land. Out of love and respect for Our Lord, for one another, and for ourselves we are invited to dress modestly:

Please refrain from wearing:

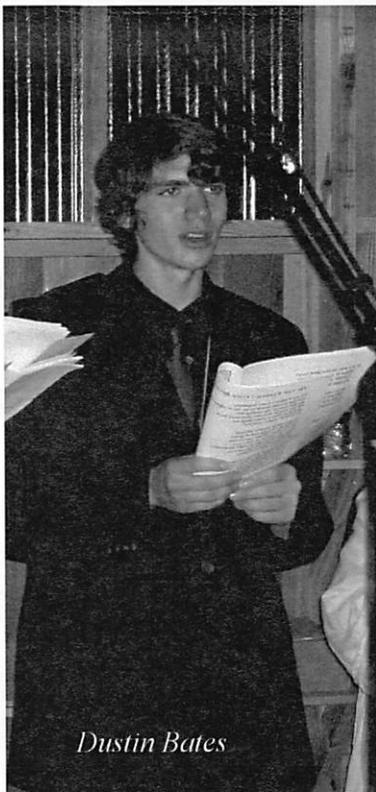
Low-cut necklines, tight pants, hemlines or slits above the knee; shorts, sleeveless shirts; or any provocative clothing.

Transitions....

As we noted in our Fall Newsletter, the novitiate is a time of discernment, not commitment. For **Brother Salatiel** the conclusion to our mutual discernment was that his place to follow and serve the Lord is in the world, at least for the moment.

We miss him. Among his many talents, his organizational skill brought a new level of order to the men's house. With his departure will chaos again lurk at the kitchen door? Happily, though, in losing Brother Salatiel we recovered **Matt** who is still very much a part of the prayer and activities at the Mission when not working hard at his new Job. *Make it big, Matt, and then donate!*

This fall we had the pleasure of having one of our long term Squadron members join us for a semester in the **St. Gabriel's Institute**. **Dustin Bates**, who excelled in forensics and drama during his high school career, decided to take a semester off after graduation to anchor himself more deeply in the Lord.

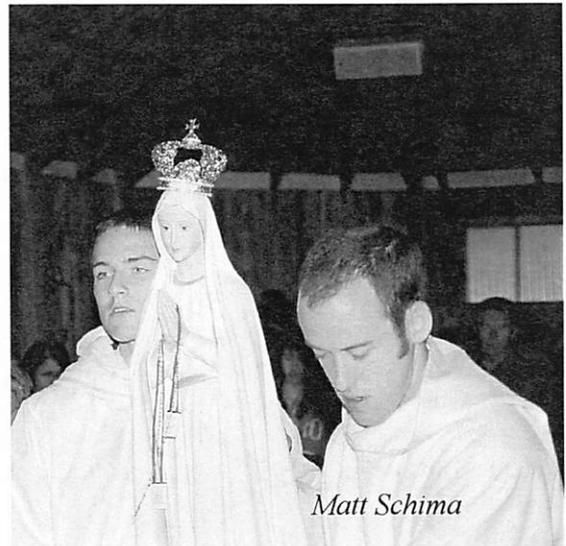


Dustin Bates

"The most helpful aspect of this program," he said, "was the chance to really grow in a relationship with God, especially through frequent Eucharistic adoration."

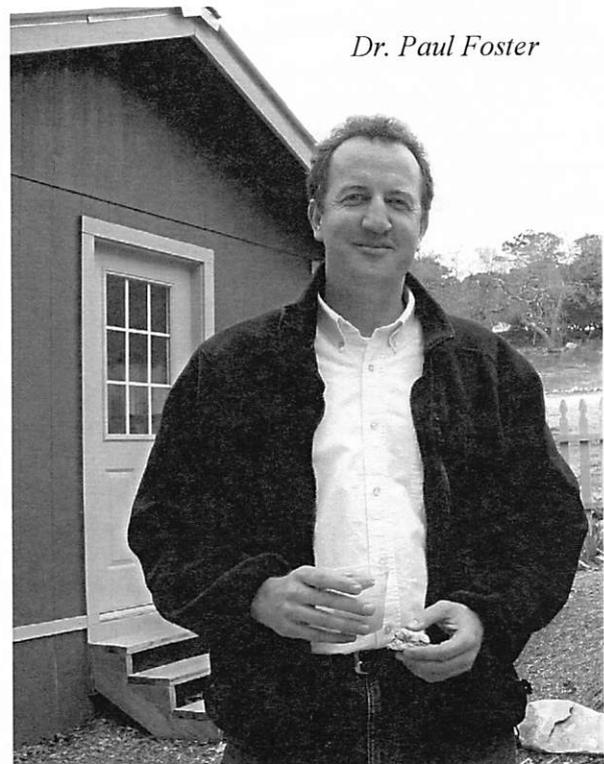
Now working in New Braunfels, Dustin will take off next fall for California, where he has been accepted into the program at **Thomas Aquinas College**. Their gain; our loss, especially for the Choir. But Godspeed!

After a certain amount of arm-twisting, Father John Mary persuaded his younger brother **Dr. Paul Foster** to take time off from his work and give a year as a lay volunteer for **MDM**. Dr. Foster received his doctorate in Political



Matt Schima

Philosophy from the Catholic University of America. For the past five years he's been teaching Ancient and European Histories at **The Heights**, a Catholic boys' academy near Washington, DC, as well as teaching occasional courses as an adjunct professor at various universities in the area. His activities this year range from helping with the young men in the Kerubim Program and St. Michael Squadron, to kitchen detail at the men's house, to sweating through "*all the Community prayer!*" But his low-key, gracious presence is proving to be a big help. ♦



Dr. Paul Foster

Prodigal Daughter

I will call her Sasha. She was Canadian-Ukrainian, and we met at Madonna House, Canada, in 1973. Both of us, from different vantage points, were seeking the Lord's Will for our lives. I knew that. Initially she might not have.

For me this was my "gypsy year," the year after my college graduation when I would work for a while, travel, and struggle with the call of a religious vocation. I was turning twenty-three.

Sasha was thirty. She had come of age just as the sixties were hitting with full force and, like many others, she was swept far and wide by that current. Her twenties had been iconoclastic. She'd had her affairs, her adventures, her devil-may-care life. She'd had her rebellion against God. But after a few years all that had lost its savor. One time when she was travelling with friends they'd found themselves at **Madonna House** in the north woods of Ontario.

Madonna House was and is a Catholic community of celibate lay men and women who are trying to live the Gospel simply and faithfully in their daily lives. The Foundress, very much alive at that time, was a Russian Baroness named **Catherine**.

Intrigued, they had stayed for a couple of days.

Now Sasha was back, this time by herself,

for an indefinite stay. And since we'd arrived at the same time and were both in the women's guest dorm we quickly became friends.

Late one winter afternoon we were crunching up a snow-covered country road into the long gold ribbons of fading sunlight. At some point she turned to me and said, "**Everyone says Catherine is a Saint. But I don't think she is. I think she's arrogant.**"

In the 1970's Catherine de Kolyschine de Hueck Doherty, the Baroness, was a vibrant

guiding presence in the daily life of the community.

Books have been written about Catherine, and her

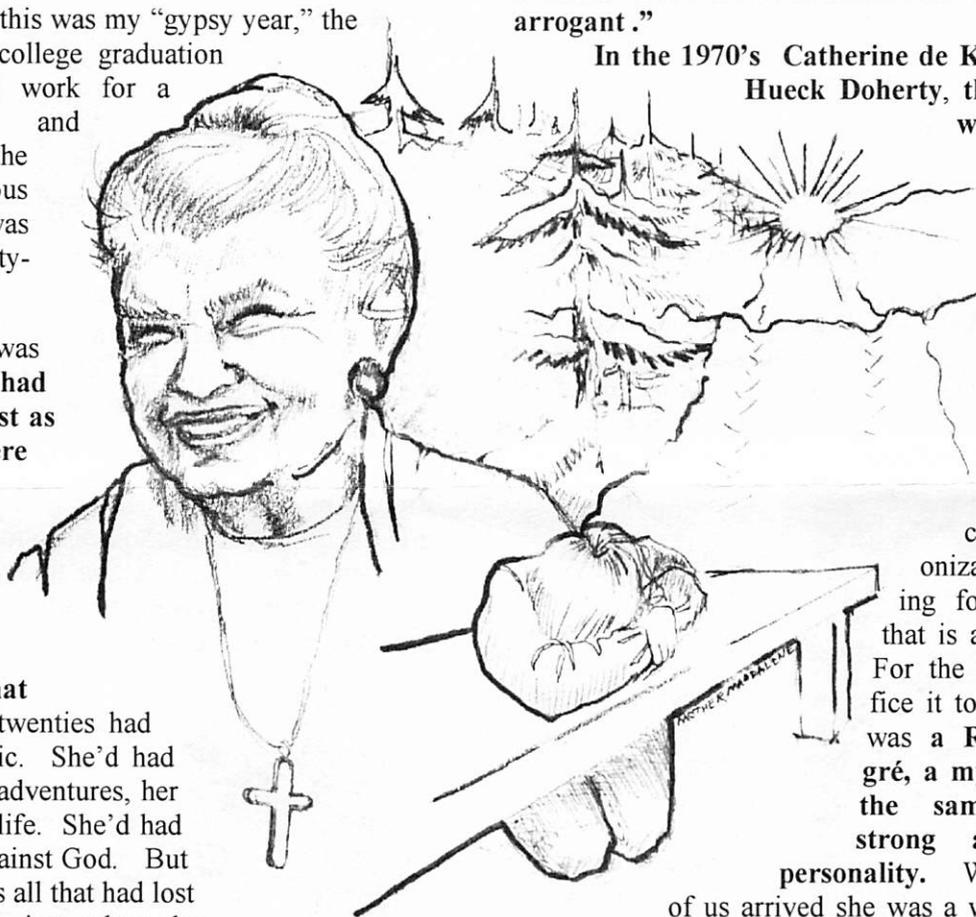
cause for canonization is moving forward. But that is another story.

For the moment suffice it to say that she was a **Russian émigré, a mystic, and at the same time a strong and earthy personality.** When the two

of us arrived she was a woman in her mid-seventies and her health was still robust. She had a pronounced Russian accent and a deep husky voice, deepened perhaps by a lifetime of cigarette smoking. Certainly she was a force to be reckoned with. This then was the Catherine that Sasha was reacting to.

A few evenings after our walk everyone - staff workers and guests - was in the small Chapel of Madonna House for the daily Mass. The second-floor Chapel was furnished with simple wooden benches that had no backs on them. You sat on your bench but when kneeling you tended to prop your-

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self up on the bench in front of you.

That night I was coming back to my place after receiving Holy Communion. I passed Sasha kneeling at her bench a couple rows ahead of me. She had not returned to the Sacraments after her years away from the Faith. So she would attend Mass each night but would not receive Communion.

But as I returned to my place and started to kneel down I was surprised by something. Catherine, who was a few steps behind me and also returning from Communion, had suddenly turned in to Sasha's row, stooped and embraced her, then continued on to her own place. When she left Sasha seemed to crumple. She sank down with her head

on the bench in front of her crying quietly.

Later I had a chance to ask her what had happened.

"I was feeling so lonely," she said, "when everyone went up to Communion. I was feeling so lost... so sad and lonely and lost, that I suddenly cried out inside, '**God, if You're here, and if You really love me, You have to let me know. And You have to let me know right now!**' Then all of a sudden I felt arms around me...."

The next day Sasha went to Confession and then received the Eucharist for the first time in years. She returned to the Church. She stayed at Madonna House as a guest, then a volunteer, and eventually made permanent promises as a staff member. She is there today. ♦

*(This was the last section of Dave's update for the Newsletter.
But I thought it deserved its own space. Thanks for this, Dave! FJM)*

ON ASH WEDNESDAY....

ments and the house we are trying to sell. You see, we are getting close to the date in April when the loan that we took out to build the St. Raphael Center and St Francis House is coming due. And the sale of my home in town was going to take a large part of that loan off the books. As you can guess I tend to lose a lot of sleep over things like this. As I was working on one of the small tractors that had broken down (just one of the many things going wrong on this day) the thought of the start of Lent came to mind and it hit me like a hammer! Here I am spending time worrying about these kinds of things, these worldly things that tend to drive us all crazy at times, **and I realized that the forty days leading up to the crucifixion of our Savior was vivid in His mind.**

He knew what was in store for Him; He knew the suffering that awaited Him on that Friday we call Good Friday. He knew what we were going to do to Him. He knew the suffering that we were going to put His Mother through. Thinking of this and all that must have been on His mind leading up to His death made me realize that even with this on His mind, **He continued to do the Father's Will; He continued to stay focused on saving the very people that were going to put Him to death. He continued to have complete TRUST in the Father.**

All of this made me realize how petty and selfish I am and how I worry about these worldly things and that my biggest worry should be whether or not I am doing God's Will and if I am truly trusting in Him. This helped to put things back in the right order for me. I am not saying I won't lose my way again in a couple of hours but it sure did help me on Ash Wednesday and it reinforced the fact that when the Holy Spirit is ready for us to have the money to pay our Mission loan He will just go out and find the money for us **and until then what is needed is our love and trust in Him. Semper Fi.** ♦



Project Update

DAVE'S CORNER

I can't believe it's time for another Newsletter....

We continue to work on improving our roads and structures, especially our humble little Chapel, and I feel we are doing as well as we can considering our financial situation. **Donations for the St. Raphael project have been very slow*** but considering our nation's financial situation at the present, we are thankful for every dime we receive from our loyal Mission family.

At present we are considering **some improvements to St. Joseph's Chapel to try and make it more serviceable year round.** Like all projects here at the Mission, we can only do what our donations allow us to do, but we also know that if the Lord wants it done, He will provide!

We've been doing a lot of work on the entrance area to make it more welcoming and more secure. You will soon see **our new fence and gate** as you approach the entrance of the Mission. We hope to have this completed prior to Holy Week.

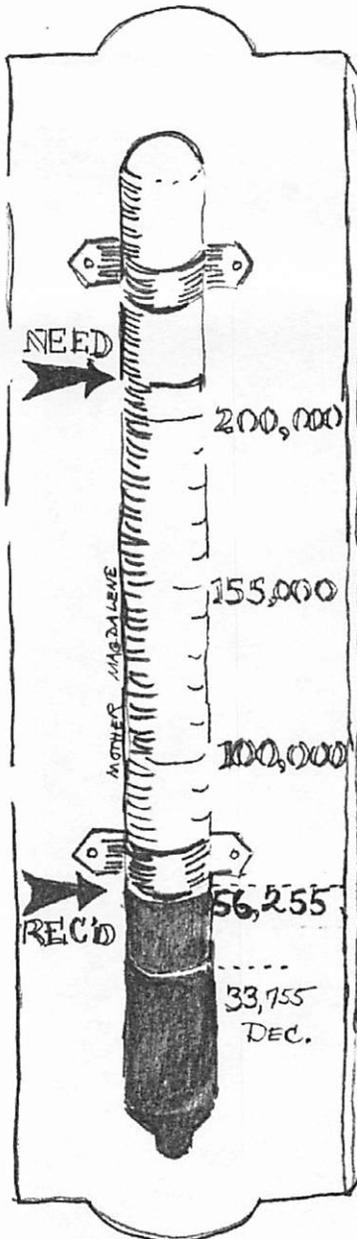
Here is a way you can assist in this project: I would like to have some of you folks with green thumbs to take on a section of the landscaping such as the area around St. Raphael Center or a section near the entrance; you could care for one of these small sections whenever you would have the time. We are looking to keep it simple using only native Texas plants and of course plants that are not on the deer menu! If you think you would like to help in this area please give me a call at **(830) 837-9867.**

Spring is on the way and time to start preparing the summer garden. We have a large garden put in that, God willing, will produce fresh produce for the MDM Community. I have started preparing **my battle plan to combat the Mission critters** and keep them from eating the vegetables before Maria Felicitas can cook them. I see this as an ongoing operation throughout the summer. Ronan, Roxy and the Chalupa, our resident Mission K9s, are helping in the defense of the garden by supplying me with hair to place in socks to hang around the bottom of the fence thus giving the small critters the scent of "watch dogs on duty." This is done while the "Timex Watch Dogs" are fast asleep on the front porch! I view this much the same as guerrilla warfare. Just this week I saw one of the Mission rabbits who was keeping the garden under surveillance from the tree line; I suspect that he will try and get through the fence under cover of darkness but I think we're ready for them!

A Lenten invitation to all of you who might like to visit the Mission once a week during Lent: **Please join us for the Chaplet.** We say the Chaplet each day at 3 p.m. and would love to have you join us. Most of the time we're a small group, but, regardless of the number, we are in the Chapel each day praying for a growing list of intentions. I know it is difficult for most folks to get away during the day, but if you are able to during this Lenten season you will find it a wonderful place to spend a little time. ♦

*** Good News:**

As we are going to print we've had to revise our thermometer. We're adding \$22,500 to our St. Raphael's payment. \$20,500 of that is from donations in memory of our much-loved friend Bob Atwood. That brings us up to a total of \$56,255. THANK YOU! Can we make it to \$100,000 by Pentecost?





Lots of light for the Angelus Choir as they practice in the conference room at St. Raphael's.



The fence posts are in and the gate is on its way.

Our Website...

For those of you who have not entirely given up on our website, we have three brief announcements:

1. After having received several requests to be able to **send a donation to us online**, we now (finally) have a way to do so **via PayPal**. If you click on the *"Donations and Pledges"* button on the navigation bar, you will see a *"Donate"* button close to the bottom of the page. Use this if you wish to make a donation using your credit card online.
2. Also, in case you have missed it, on the home page under the *"Updates"* heading you will see *"Calendar"* — this button will take you to our **online calendar of activities**, where both our regular activities and special events are listed.
3. And last but not least, you can **send us any prayer intentions you have** by clicking on the *"Prayer Request"* button on the navigation bar. We check these daily and offer them to Our Lord at our daily Masses.

Thank you for your patience!

From the Book of Sirach 2:I-II

My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord,

prepare yourself for temptation.

Set your heart right and be steadfast,

and do not be hasty in time of calamity.

Cleave to Him and do not depart,

that you may be honored at the end of your life.

Accept whatever is brought upon you,

and in the changes that humble you be patient.

For gold is tested in the fire,

and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.

Trust in Him, and He will help you;

make your ways straight, and hope in Him.

You who fear the Lord, wait for His Mercy:

and turn not aside, lest you fall.

You who fear the Lord, trust in Him, and your reward will not fail;

You who fear the Lord,

hope for good things, for everlasting joy and mercy.

Consider the ancient generations and see:

who ever trusted in the Lord and was put to shame?

Or whoever persevered in the fear of the Lord and was forsaken?

Or who ever called upon Him and was overlooked?

For the Lord is compassionate and merciful;

He forgives sins and saves in times of affliction.



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