



I remember how we arrived in a storm of icy rain at the end of November. We shivered through our first night, but I rejoiced in the sense of winter and in the tall bare trees after several years amid cactus and mesquite.

Everyone has their own perspective on these events. For me, when I look back over twenty years in the oakladen Texas Hill Country, memories begin to blur and accelerate.

Our MDM history can be divided into three parts chronologically: Our start-up years at Sts. Peter and Paul; our acquisition of the Mission land; and our eventual residence on or near the property.

The Start-Up Years:

These years were **fueled by grace and adrenaline** as we struggled to establish our Community life and to begin our retreat apostolate in a totally new setting. They were also fueled by the surprising generosity and kindness of the people of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish; and especially the providential friendship and support of Monsignor Eugene O'Callaghan, which became vital to our initial acceptance in this archdiocese.

I remember the 9:30 Sunday Mass that Monsignor regularly entrusted to Father; the virtuoso performances

of Wilfrid the organist; the cakes and pies friends loaded us down with when it was a bake-sale Sunday.

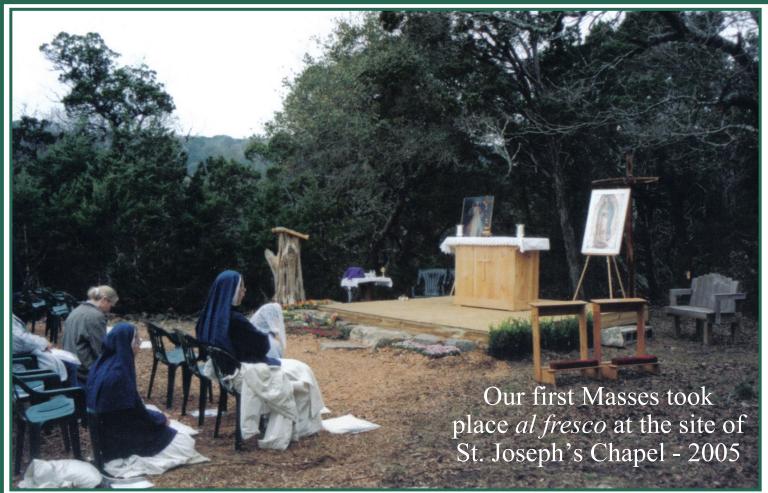
I remember the Thursday evening Holy Hours; the series of talks on spiritual formation; and the small but faithful group that would begin to lay the foundation for what would become our *Amici Christi*.

I remember the energy in town during the fall Wurstfest; the crowds in summer all heading to Schlitterbahn; and the exotic water fowl that paraded daily around Landa Park. New Braunfels was a charming place for the Lord to situate us despite the laborintensive nature of those early years.

Place of Our Own:

The second stage would be the discovery and purchase of the Mission property in the fall of 2004. (And at the same time we changed from our old tan habits into our new blue and white ones.) This took us in a totally new direction. We began to build – at several different levels. More grace and more adrenaline.

I remember vestments hung on cedar branches; the "curmudgeons' table" that would fill up quickly at Saturday morning breakfast; toddlers entertaining themselves in the mulch spread on the ground of our open air Chapel; high-risk Sunday tours to the summit in the



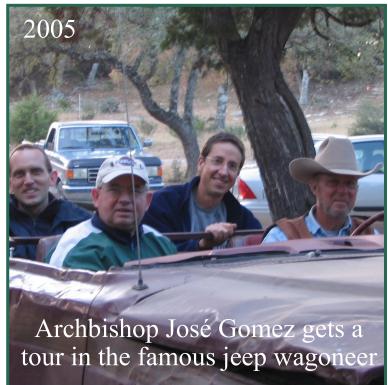
battered old jeep wagoneer that came with the property ("Sure, we'll drive you up there. But first, are you in the state of grace?"); dust-covered teams of young men batting around a huge pushball on the sports field; girls with journals hiking to the summit on warm summer evenings for a breeze, a view of Canyon Lake, and an hour of silent reflection.

I remember Dave and Yvette - and then Jackie - all pioneering a new vocation as *Mission Staff*. They were the early standard bearers of other 'Good and Faithful Servants' who would become the first line of defense around the Community, our apostolates, and all those who came here.

We began to find ways to offer weekend retreats for those who could handle the rustic setting (meaning men). We started a Holy Week tradition that has become for many our most meaningful event of the year: Our outdoor Way of the Cross. We also began to celebrate the great Feast of Divine Mercy at the Mission. These last few years we usually have had about seven hundred in attendance. *Gracias a Dios!*

Finding Our Way Home:

The third stage has been moving out to the Mission and making it our home. For a decade Larry and Joanne Aniol had given us a quiet, protected refuge on their property where we could live, pray, and stabilize



as our Community began to grow. They are "forever benefactors"!

But at the end of 2012 when we were able to purchase and move out to houses bordering the Mission we





entered a new phase. Now our daily Mass and adoration were taking place here. The Eucharistic Heart of Jesus was now in residence and accessible every day here at the Mission.

These have been years of grace and sorrow.

There was the joy of being able to honor Msgr. O'Callaghan upon the completion of the O'Callaghan Center and the occasion of his sixtieth Anniversary of Ordination; and to see the Center filling with his friends and ours.

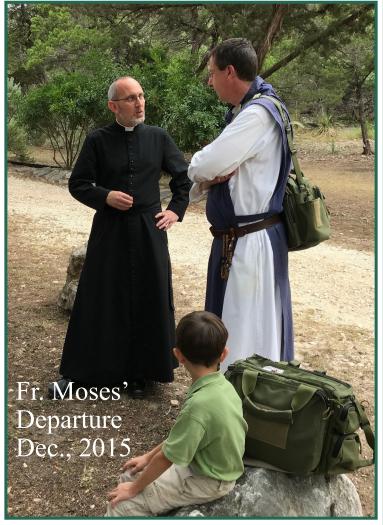
There was the mysterious grace at a candle-lit Christmas Eve Mass when **the Host grew luminous** in Father's hands as he lifted It at the Consecration.

There were the many stories of mercy, healing, and sometimes surprising supernatural graces that retreatants would share as they finished their *Encounter with Jesus*.

There was the sorrow of watching **Father Moses** depart from us after Christmas of 2015, a black cassock replacing his blue and white habit.

There was the greater sorrow of the final departure of **Maria Felicitas** in February of 2019 after her long journey with cancer. But there was also our peace in the conviction of her final victory; and in the new Mission Cemetery that seemed to spring miraculously into being as a testament to her.

In 2017 we were encouraged by the Lord's Gift of some strong new graces within the Community; and also by the guidance to build an outdoor Sanctuary on the western hill of our Mission. Though we did not realize it at the time, this Sanctuary, our Lady's *Teocalli*, would become the means of allowing us to continue to celebrate a public Sunday Mass throughout the pandemic year.



Finally, after Our Lord Himself and His Mother, there has been the slow but continuing Gift of the Father as He draws new members to His Mission: Brother Mikael, Brother Daniel, Peter, Raymundo, Susannah. Life is rarely easy, but it – and we – are His.

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"FIRE!"

As stated elsewhere in this newsletter, the approaching anniversary has been the occasion for telling remembrances. Recently Dave Sommers related a story that occurred before my time and that I hadn't heard before. But in listening to him I was struck by the similarities to Fr. John Mary's experience of the fire when he was a novice in France. I asked if he would please record it for the newsletter. — EJ

et me start by saying I cannot be certain of the date of the incident I am about to describe, but I believe it was in the early Fall of 2008. The Saint Michael's Squadron was here at the Mission for one of their Push Weekends, where the boys would spend time hiking and playing sports, but also attending Mass and Holy Hours and participating in group discussions.

It was a little after noon on Saturday, and I was working near the gate area when I heard the sound of an ATV coming down the hill and a woman screaming "FIRE, THE BARN IS ON FIRE!" The woman was our neighbor, and she kept screaming "FIRE, DAVE! HELP, FIRE!"

When she reached me she told me that her husband had been burning brush, only to have the fire get away from him and now the wind was blowing the fire towards the barn.

I knew that Bill Wylie was working here at the Mission, as he did so many days. I got in the old jeep and found Bill and apprised him of the situation. Then we loaded up our chain saws and headed up the road to our neighbors and the fire. When we arrived we found the fire was already covering a large section of property near the house and barn. Sparks from the fire were setting the cedars up like torches. And the wind was rapidly moving the fire towards the house and the Mission fence line. This was kind of like a David and Goliath situation, a couple of guys with chain saws trying to cut a fire break that would turn the fire --- It wasn't happening! But we kept at it.

Finally the fire fighters with their brush trucks arrived, but it continued to be a no-win situation for us. The wind outworked us. I don't know how long we struggled against the smoke and flames but it seemed like a lifetime. Then as the fire neared the Mission fence line we noticed a shift in the wind and within a few minutes the wind had turned and was blowing the fire back on itself. Within less than half an hour the wind did what the fire crews could not do and soon there were no flames, just smoke and ashes. Bill and I returned to the Mission, hot, tired and with burn holes in our shirts.

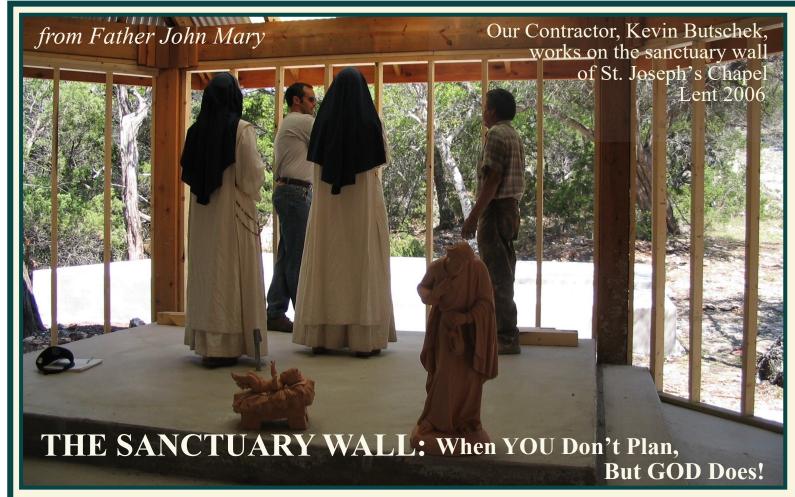
God bless our fire fighters!

Meanwhile, Father John Mary and the Squadron had had no idea what was going on just over the hill from the Mission until they spotted the smoke that could be seen from St. Joseph's Chapel where they were gathered to say the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Later, after talking with Father and telling him of all that had happened and reviewing the timeline we quickly realized that the wind had changed and turned back on the fire at the same time the boys were saying the Chaplet.

I have been here at the Mission from the start and have witnessed many incidents that some people would label as inexplicable. But for those of us who know the Mission and the Community and this Holy Ground the answer to these incidents is crystal clear: Mission Control! God is Mission Control and HE is guiding every move that is made. He has given us this land, this Holy Ground, and He has put it under the stewardship of Father John Mary and the religious community he leads.

There have been so many life-changing experiences that have taken place here at the Mission. Some I have been humbled to have a small role in. Some I have been grateful to witness. But I think that most of them are known only to God and to those He has touched while they were here. • Semper Fi, Dave





As our community reminisces about the past twenty years, many stories get told. Stories about events that make us laugh, or shake our heads, or marvel. So many of the events have gained significance in retrospect because now we can see how the Lord was leading us, when at the time we felt that we were wandering in the desert.

An example of this is the sanctuary wall in St. Joseph's Chapel. Now, looking at our sanctuary wall with its familiar ledge and niche that welcomes the Holy Family, I hope it seems fitting, and well-planned. And I think it was well-planned — just not by us — but by God in His Providence.

We purchased the Mission property in November of 2004 and our very first Masses at the Mission were in an open field. Eventually we built a platform for the altar, but there was no protection from rain or sun. It was obvious that we needed some form of shelter.

But we had little or no money for building, so whatever we did would have to be *very simple*. Our plan was to build a roof held up by the necessary posts. And that's what we did, with the help of Kevin Butschek of Shandera Homes, our go-to guy for construction. There were no walls, windows or doors, and the floor was a layer of mulch. The construction began on Saturday, March 19, 2005 the Feast of St. Joseph, who became the patron of the chapel.

In relatively short time the roof was raised, and we felt blessed and very fortunate to have that simple structure over our heads — the first new permanent structure at the Mission. Eventually we began to think about enclosing the area behind the altar to create a greater sense of dignity and protection. Kevin recommended and helped connect us with some good stonemasons.

The day arrived more quickly than we anticipated. The stonemasons were there, unloading their equipment. It was only then that I realized that, with everything else that was going on, we hadn't given much thought to the actual details of building the sanctuary wall.

The stonemasons began to work and were advancing quickly. If there was any planning or design it had to be done now!

The wall behind the altar is the natural focal point of most churches. It usually features a large Crucifix, work of art, or stained-glass window. The first thing that struck me was that given the height and slope of the roof behind our altar, the new wall itself wouldn't be very high; in fact, it would only be about four feet taller than the height of the altar. There would be no soaring wall on which to hang a Crucifix. There wouldn't even be enough height behind the altar to suspend a Crucifix from the ceiling.

Traditionally, the Tabernacle would be placed behind the altar, however being an open-air chapel, we had to have a separate, more secure place for the Tabernacle. What could we do with the space available to us?

Seeing it in my mind's eye, I realized the space would permit something horizontal, rather than vertical which was the more usual arrangement. What would work there? What would feel appropriate?

I felt stumped and I was beginning to worry that our soon-to-be brand-new wall could turn into a permanent problem.

As I was pondering this disaster-in-the-making, I happened to glance over at a statue of our Blessed Mother, part of a three-piece, terra cotta Nativity set that we had just received. That day was one of Her feasts, and so we had placed the new Blessed Mother statue out in the chapel for Mass.

Seeing the statue gave me an idea: What about using the Nativity set there? Put the Baby Jesus in the middle, with St Joseph and Mary on either side.

Hey, maybe that would work...

We would need to build a ledge.

How about if we build it in 3 parts, with the middle ledge higher than the two side ledges?

My mind pondered another scenario: even though currently we couldn't have a Tabernacle in the chapel, there might come a day when we could. Could we make this design also work for a future Tabernacle? How about if we made the middle section into a niche, rather than just a

ledge? That would work for the Baby Jesus, and also for a future Tabernacle.

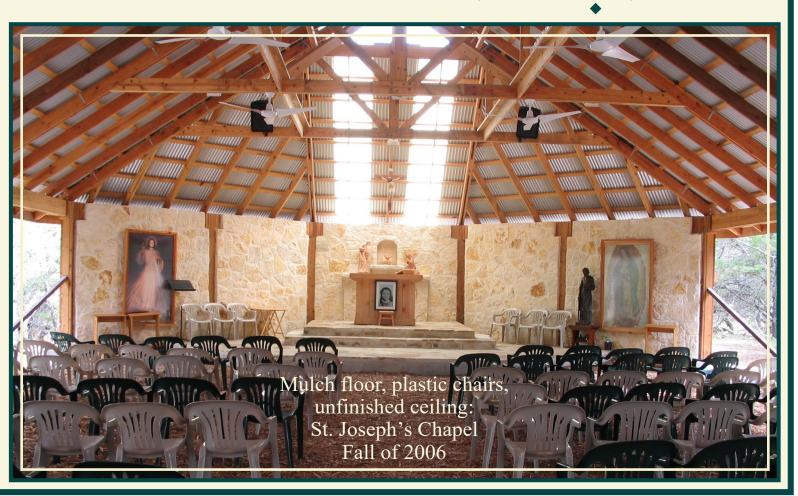
All these ideas came to me in a matter of minutes, fueled by the desperation I was feeling and, I hope, a little inspiration from above...

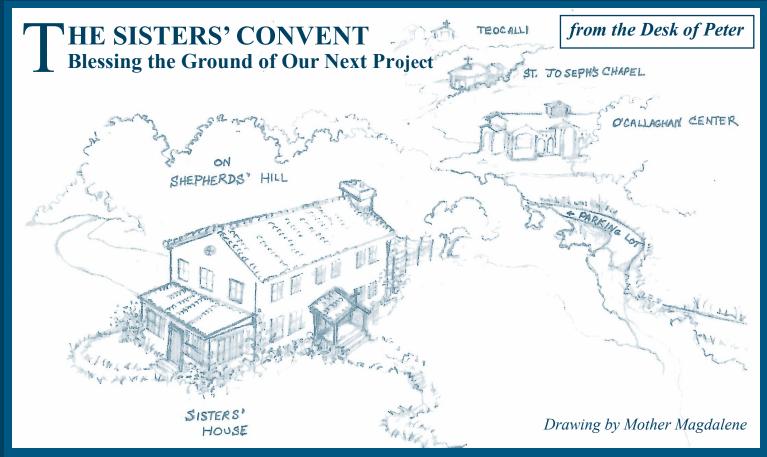
I approached the stonemasons who listened to my description of how I imagined the niche and ledge could work. We made a sketch of how the wall would look. Then they went to work and the rock dust flew. When the wall was complete and the Nativity set in place it looked like it was meant to be. And I think it was.

Our sanctuary wall has served us well through the years and the liturgical seasons. Throughout most of the year the Holy Family resides there, and during the Christmas season we build a stable over them. During Lent we replace the Nativity figures with the Face of Jesus from the Shroud of Turin, and from Easter through Pentecost the Relic of the True Cross is placed in the niche during Mass. It all works.

The account of building the sanctuary wall is pretty simple, but I feel that it illustrates what we have experienced so often at the Mission: our sense of often stumbling in a fog of uncertainty, and only later, looking back, seeing how, in that fog, the Lord was leading. It has been this way for all of our twenty years.

Jesus, we trust in You. Faith, so that God can act!





On Sunday, November 21, after concluding our Anniversary Mass, we will invite everyone to join us in a short procession to the nearby Shepherds' Hill where we will bless the future site of the Sisters' convent, the first phase of our monasteries. For many years we have wanted to begin construction on monasteries for our men and women religious. Sometimes it seemed only a distant dream. And other projects had to take precedence: notably the O'Callaghan Divine Mercy Center and the Tepeyac Hill project.

Recently, after years of planning, scrimping, and saving, we have the seed money to move forward on building an initial stage of the monastery, a convent for the women religious. We want to move the women from their current more remote location down into the center of the property.

The property on which the women currently live, is nearby, but is isolated from the Mission. Relocating the Sisters to the Mission grounds will provide added safety, as well as easier access to the Mission (especially during inclement weather). We plan to sell the Sisters current property, which should generate significant funds to help pay for the Monastery.

SHEPHERDS' HILL: MONASTERY SITE

The construction of the Sisters' House is in alignment with our long-term plans for a set of monasteries that would have distinctly separate living spaces for the

men and women but would share a common chapel. Instead of constructing a large monastery building in the classic design, these monasteries will each consist of a cluster of smaller houses. The Sisters' House would be the initial house for the women; then as need arises and finances permit, additional houses will be built for the women and for the men. This approach provides flexibility to expand as God permits.

The monasteries will be located on Shepherd's Hill; the site that we selected and designated for this purpose several years ago. The proposed convent will be built on the northeastern edge of the monastery site where it can be completed and allow the women to take up residence. Then as subsequent houses are constructed, the women will not be living in the middle of the construction site, but on the edge of it.

WHEN GOD OPENS THE DOOR

Humanly speaking, it may seem like an uncertain time for embarking on another building project. And our Community has remained very small. But we believe that the Lord is asking us to take this step in faith. And that in *His* time He will bring the vocations after these long years of preparation. This spirit — of faith, of the "obedience of faith", of hope — is what has guided our little Mission these 20 years. Faith, so that God can act!

"You Are Invited"

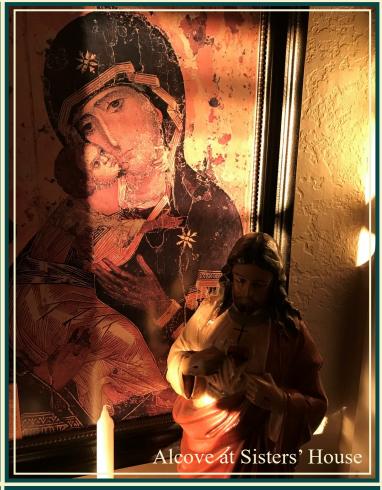
MDM 20th Anniversary Celebration

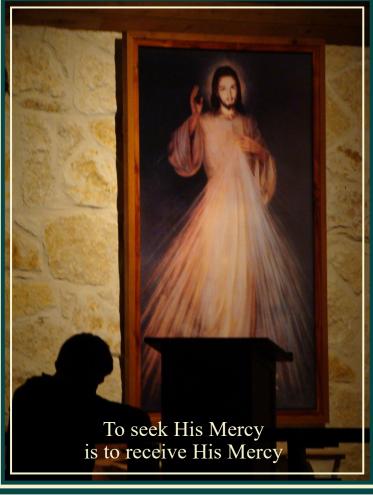
Sunday, Nov. 21, 2021

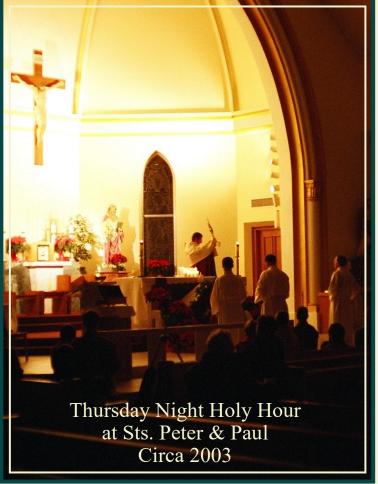
Holy Mass - 10:00 AM

followed by
Procession to the
Building Site of the
Sisters' New Convent

Reception follows







JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU X 20

As we were approaching the 20th Anniversary of the founding of our Community, we were wondering how best to mark it? Of course we would celebrate with a beautiful Mass. That's a given. But should there be something else? Something that all of our friends could participate in, no matter where they lived and even if they couldn't get to the Mission that weekend? Something that they could do wherever they were. Something that would honor God, and benefit the individual as well as MDM?

What occurred to us was asking our friends to pray "Jesus, I trust in You" 20 times a day throughout the

next year for MDM's intentions and for their own.

For those of you who have known us for a while, this should ring a bell.

Ten years ago when we were approaching our tenth anniversary we invited people to pray "Jesus I trust in You" ten times a day until Divine Mercy Sunday. We called it the "Building by Trust" campaign and Fr. John Mary described it as "our most important building campaign ever." He said at the time:

"I had been praying about buildings made of concrete and wood. But God was leading me toward a much more important effort, one that will have far more important and lasting results."

We want to promote this effort again, only this time saying it 20 times a day in honor of MDM's 20th Anniversary.

The prayer is brief, very powerful, and easy to remember. You can pray it twenty times in less than two minutes, if you wish. You can do it all at one time or spread it out over the entire day, for example: five times on waking up, ten times during the day and five times before going to sleep. If you forget sometimes, that's okay. But the benefits can be life changing, perhaps even world changing.

And as Fr. John Mary says:

"Whoever participates is drawing down Grace upon themselves...their loved ones...our world. United by this divine bond of trust in the Lord, together we are forming a network of trust supporting each other. The more we can spread it, the more everyone benefits. And the more people who unite in doing so, the greater the strength. A growing network of trust in Jesus spreading out from this Mission.

"This is the purpose of the Mission of Divine Mercy: to encourage everyone to trust in Him, so that He can give you very much. We invite you to join us in the effort to increase our trust in His Goodness and Mercy. And to learn what it is that He wishes to give us and our world"



A GROWING NETWORK OF TRUST

The "Building by Trust" campaign was a great success, both in terms of the number of people who participated and in the graces it seemed to bring down upon us and them. Nearly 1500 people, several from different countries, pledged to say the prayer ten times a day. They also sent us many stories of how they felt they were benefitting personally from the prayer. We feel certain that many people continued the prayer long after the year ended. (See Sidebar)

THE POWER OF TRUSTING JESUS

Our world can feel very dark. There is much to cause people to despair and lose hope. Perhaps even to the point of losing their faith.

We invite you to begin to pray the Trust in Jesus prayer right now. And to pledge to pray it at least 20 times a day for the next year. If you wish, you can also go to our website and put your name on a list to be part of the growing network of trust spreading out from the Mission.

By repeating this prayer, you are actively pushing back against the darkness with the LIGHT that is JESUS. Repeating this prayer throughout the day helps to prevent you from lingering too long on any works of darkness that threaten to overwhelm you. It reminds your spirit to look up to Jesus and call out to Him at all times.

We encourage you to repeat the prayer "Jesus, I trust in You," until you are breathing it and being nourished by it. Until trust in Jesus is so firmly rooted within you that your Faith can withstand any storm that will break around you.

AS WE ENTER OUR THIRD DECADE

This is a momentous time in which to be alive. We are all being called, perhaps as never before, to stand up for what is right, and to put our Faith on the line. To be warriors in God's great Reconquest. In order to do this, we must have absolute trust in God's Mercy and Goodness. What better time to season our day with....

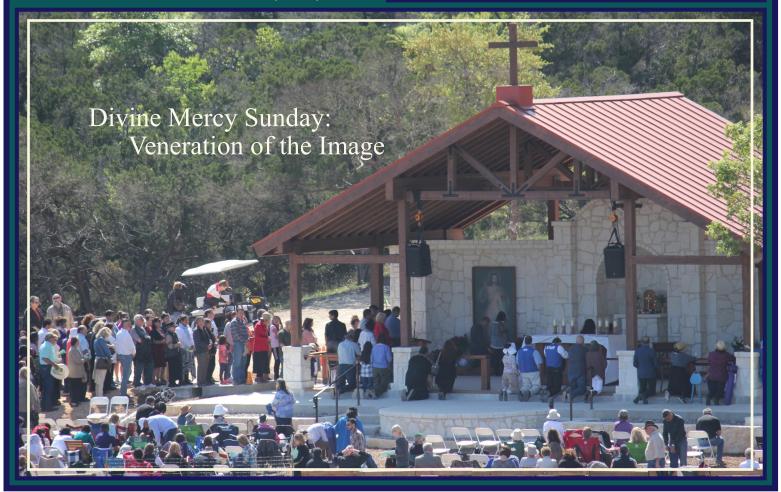
JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU!

by Emily Jebbia

A FRIEND OF MDM IN ATLANTA

"I want to let you know how much it means to me when I say "Jesus I trust in you." Father John Mary told me about saying this small prayer when I first visited the Mission about 10 vears ago. Since then I have said it every day anywhere from 10 times to 110 times (or more!). It brings my mind front and center to the presence of Jesus in every part of my life. When I am hurt or scared, it is a life line for me because I am reminded that Jesus will take care of me. When I am happy I say it as a thank you to Jesus for bringing me moments of joy. When Father asked that I say this prayer 10 times a day, my first thought was that it would take too much time - 10 times! It actually takes only a minute or so, and I say it throughout my day in all circumstances to remind me of Jesus' presence in everything. Father John Mary gave me such a beautiful gift when he taught me this short prayer. I can't imagine not saving it now!" ◆

Libby Isaack



CAR CHASE by Mother Magdalene

It was July, 2021 and our Community was on the way to a retreat house in New Mexico. The men had left before dawn in one car, we women followed later in our van. We crossed into New Mexico at Clovis and then continued to climb the subtle but significant elevation of the Great Plains. Arriving in Fort Sumner at noon-

time we found ourselves in the midst of steady four and six-lane traffic going in and out of town. Having stopped for gas and rotated drivers we climbed back into the van: Susannah at the wheel, me in the passenger's seat, Sister Amapola behind Susannah.

A moment or two after we merged with the steady traffic going west, Susannah became aware of a commotion behind us. We were in the far right-hand lane with a shoulder to our right. A police car was flashing its lights, running its siren, obviously in pursuit. Susannah started to try to pull over onto the shoulder to let it pass. But a split second later a car charged past us on the shoulder, exactly where we would have moved, followed by the police car.

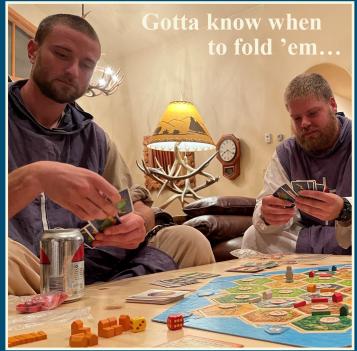
Stunned we watched as the lead car (get-away car it turns out) cut immediately between us and an 18-wheeler, diagonally crossing lanes of traffic where there seemed to be no space to cross, followed by the speeding police car.

Within less than a mile or so up the road the drama was already concluding. Both cars were in the grass of the median strip, two officers had guns drawn, one man was spread-eagle face down in the grass and one man was climbing out with hands up. From our perspective it had all taken place in a matter of seconds.

But there is one more part to the story. And Susannah still shakes her head as she relates it. "As soon as I saw the flashing lights behind us I felt a sense of peace come over me. I just thought, 'Okay, something's happening and I better get out of the way.' Traffic was heavy, there was an 18-wheeler just ahead of us and I didn't want to slam on the brakes, so I thought that I would just pull over onto the shoulder. *And I thought I had*. But a split second later the car had leaped onto the right hand shoulder — just where I had intended us to be and *thought we were* — and raced past us with the police following. I still don't quite understand how that happened. I felt sure that I had pulled over onto the shoulder, but fortunately the van remained in its lane, or we would have been part of — at minimum — a three-car pileup."

Holy Angels, Holy Angels! ◆





BROTHER QUASIMODO

There was the time that Brother Mikael stood up quickly at the end of Holy Hour in order to serve at Benediction; and then almost toppled to the ground again. His right leg had fallen asleep. Father, already kneeling before the Altar, was oblivious to this. So Brother limped forward a couple times, Quasimodo-style, dragging his numbed leg behind him. Then calculating quickly and taking aim he tossed the Benediction Stole forward and landed it squarely on Father's shoulders. Some of us may have been drowsing during adoration, but we were all certainly awake for Benediction....

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

In our early years especially, Dave Sommers was often called on to speak on behalf of the Mission and tell people about his experiences. Recently he recounted how he liked to conclude these talks:

"Many organizations spend money on expensive firms to help them with their fundraising. MDM employs THE BEST fundraiser of all: the Holy Spirit. No matter what we try to do to raise funds, it always seems to be the effort of the Holy Spirit on our part that inspires people to donate. So if you feel the whisper of the Holy Spirit asking you to support MDM, PLEASE LISTEN."

And so many of you did! For which we are profoundly grateful. Each and every day, our Community and staff remember our donors in our prayers. We pray in thanksgiving for your generosity, and we pray for your needs and intentions.

These are uncertain financial times for everyone, including the Mission. But we still depend on the Holy Spirit to be our best fundraiser. Thank you for listening.





"In the Old Covenant I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to my people. Today I am sending you with My Mercy to the people of the whole world." (#1588 Jesus' words to St. Faustina in Divine Mercy in My Soul)



SATURDAY MORNING REFLECTIONS

December 4th - "Marian Consecration" Talk by Mother Magdalene (English)

December 11th - "Consagración Mariana" Talk by Sr. Amapola (Spanish)

MDM CALENDAR

SUNDAY, Nov. 21

MDM Anniversary Mass - 10:00am

THURSDAY, Nov. 25

Thanksgiving Day Mass - 9:00am

FRIDAY, Nov. 26

Mission Closed

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 8

Solemnity of Immaculate
Conception Mass - 11:30am

SUNDAY, Dec. 12

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass - 10:00am Veneration of the image of OLG after Mass

FRIDAY, Dec. 24

Vigil of the Nativity Mass - 9:00pm

SATURDAY, Dec. 25

Solemnity of the Nativity Mass - 8:30am

SUNDAY, Dec. 26

Solemnity of the Holy Family Mass - 10:00am

FRIDAY, Dec. 31

Vigil of the Solemnity of Mary

<u>Mother of God Mass - 9:00pm</u>

SATURDAY, Jan. 1

Solemnity of the Blessed Mother MISSION CLOSED

SUNDAY, Jan. 2

Epiphany Mass - 10:00am



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<u>Contact Us:</u> 830-302-2238 or mdm@missionofdivinemercy.org www.missionofdivinemercy.org

"The Mother of God has taught me how to prepare for the Feast of Christmas. She said to me: My Daughter, strive after silence and humility, so that Jesus, who dwells in your heart continuously, may be able to rest. Adore Him in your heart; do not go out from your inmost being...I shall obtain for you the grace of an interior life which will be such that, without ever leaving that interior life you will be able to carry out all your external duties with even greater care. Dwell with Him continuously in your heart. He will be your strength."

(Diary of St. Faustina #785)

