

Christmas

2023



*"If you are sad
as Christmas approaches,
go to the Crèche....
Take the Infant Jesus in your arms."*

Mission of Divine Mercy



*“And believe that what is done in Faith, is done in Truth –
even if you do not perceive it.”*

MDM'S 2023 CHRISTMASTIDE SCHEDULE

Dec. 24th, Sunday	10:00am - Morning Mass 9:00pm - Vigil Mass of the Nativity
Dec. 25th, Monday	9:00am - Mass of the Shepherds of Bethlehem (Quiet Mass without a choir)
Dec. 30th, Saturday	8:00am - Mass
Dec. 31st, Sunday	10:00am - Mass 7:00pm - Vigil Mass of Mary, Mother of God
Jan. 1st, Monday	Closed
Jan. 2nd, Tuesday	11:30am - Mass
Jan. 4th, Thursday	7:00pm - Holy Hour (Concluding with Prayer for Healing)
Jan. 5th, Friday	11:30am - Mass
Jan. 6th, Saturday	8:00am - Mass
Jan. 7th, Sunday	10:00am - Mass, Epiphany of the Lord

The Mission grounds and office will be closed from December 26th through January 1st except for scheduled Masses and Holy Hours.

LET'S REFOCUS AS WE APPROACH CHRISTMAS

As we live the days of Advent and anticipate the Feasts of Christmas, many of us find **our hearts filled with longings and with memories**—some of them happy, but others sad and perhaps even bitter.

Our world has **distorted the sacred sense of these days** by focusing on the all-too-human ideal of Christmas instead of the Divine Reality.

In our culture a **romantic notion of the ideal Christmas** is focused on festive gatherings with family and friends; wonderful times of good food and fellowship, gift-giving, carols, and laughter. But in all that human festivity, we know that **Jesus can be left out.**

And for a growing number of us in our broken world of broken families, Christmas lacks even the expectation of familial gatherings. Instead of joy and fellowship, there is pain, loneliness, and an impatience for the holidays to be over and done with.

Then there is the pressure of our culture's intense focus on materialism and consumerism. Even with the best intentions **many, especially women**, fall prey to these pressures, and **can end up feeling sad that they did not have everything "perfect" for the "season."**

This year, we suggest a little refocusing to help us experience His Love and His Peace—and perhaps even that elusive holy joy.

HIS PROMISES, HIS LIGHT, HIS SECOND COMING

Let's refocus by lifting our eyes to Heaven. No, not to some cherubs-on-fluffy-cloud ideal, but with **Hope in the Person of Jesus, and in His fulfillment of His Promises.** Promises and prophecies that were uttered through His Prophets down through the centuries and were finally fulfilled in His First Coming. Promises that are meant as much for us—for you—as for the people living 2000 years ago:

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For behold, I will come and dwell in the midst of you, says the Lord." (Zec 2:10)

"Here is your God. He comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened. The ears of the deaf cleared. Then will the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy." (Is 35:4-6)

"On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." (Is 11:1-2)

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel." (Is 7:14)

What is even more comforting is what is still to come. Because even though these promises were fulfilled in His First Coming, *they will have their complete and perfect fulfillment with His Second Coming.* **His first coming was a WAVE of Grace and of events awaited for centuries, foretold by His Prophets. But His Second Coming will be an OCEAN of Grace and Mercy, in which ALL will recognize Him.** In which He will reveal all that has been hidden for centuries because the time had not yet come.

Throughout the year, when you feel sad and overwhelmed, think of the first Christmas—those days of GREAT LIGHT due to the fulfillment of His Promises. Let this strengthen you in awaiting the glorious fulfillment of ALL His Promises.

Maranatha! Come soon, Lord Jesus!

GO TO THE CRÈCHE

There is another way to refocus **if you are sad as Christmas approaches.** If you are tired and fed up with many personal trials...**go to the Crèche.** Lay your head down next to the Infant. Share in the smile of the Mother and that of St. Joseph.

Experience the serenity and peace that is present there.

Take the Infant Jesus in your arms, let Him open the fountain of tenderness in your heart, as He did with St. Joseph on that night. *The fountain of tenderness that springs from the deepest, most intimate part of your being, your true being, far beyond your mere earthly humanity.* And once flowing in you, this fountain will spill over into those around you, who are thirsting for the Love whose only source is Jesus.

This is why He came as a Baby—a little One that could be taken in arms—to move the hearts of His children, and to be able to open once again this fountain of tenderness, of His Love in you.



So this Christmas season take the Infant in your arms without fear or embarrassment. Because He comes gladly and with so much love! **And as you take Him in your arms, so will He take you in His.**

And believe that what is done in Faith, is done in Truth—even if you do not perceive it.

Let's refocus this year, and spend these Holy Days that are coming, close to the Crèche, trusting in the complete fulfillment of His Promises.

***Maranatha!
Come soon, Lord Jesus.***



***“For behold,
I will come and dwell in the midst of you,
says the Lord.”***



Rustic private Oratory built by the

SUSANNAH'S COMMITMENT

We are very happy to announce that in October, **Susannah made her First Commitment as a Consecrated Lay Woman of the Mission of Divine Mercy** at a small private ceremony in the Sisters' Chapel.

Up until that point Susannah's participation in the life of the Community had been as a Novice. Now, as a full member of MDM, **she wears the sacred Emblem of the Mission on her vest**, the same Emblem worn by the religious on their scapulars.

Susannah of Jesus and Peter of the Heart of Jesus and Mary are currently our two consecrated lay members. We would like to take this occasion to help people **to better understand the vocation of the consecrated lay person**, a vocation that is little known or understood, but of great value.

Our community is small, yet by the grace of God, it has representatives of four different vocations: Priesthood, Religious men and women, Consecrated Laymen and Laywomen, and a branch of the laity known as *Amici Christi*.

Using the analogy of a body, **the Priest is the head** that guides, having received God's Light for the good of the whole body. **The Religious are the heart** that makes the Blood—God's Grace—flow throughout the whole body, but that is hidden. **The Consecrated Laypeople are the arms and hands** that take the love, put it into practice, and make it visible to others. **The Amici Christi are the legs and feet** that take God to others out in the world.

The position of the Consecrated Laypersons has its own innate difficulty because they need to be rooted in the spiritual life of the Community, while also interacting more closely with the world; taking care of the more necessary human requirements and activities. In this way they help to free the religious branches to fulfill their missions unhindered by too many of the day-to-day considerations.



One way of understanding the role of the Consecrated Layperson is that **it is like a Bridge between what is Sacred and what is secular**. The consecration of their lives to Jesus in all their different activities allows the world to be flooded and illuminated with His holiness.

They are the two arms: the arm of prayer and intercession and the arm of practical visible charity.

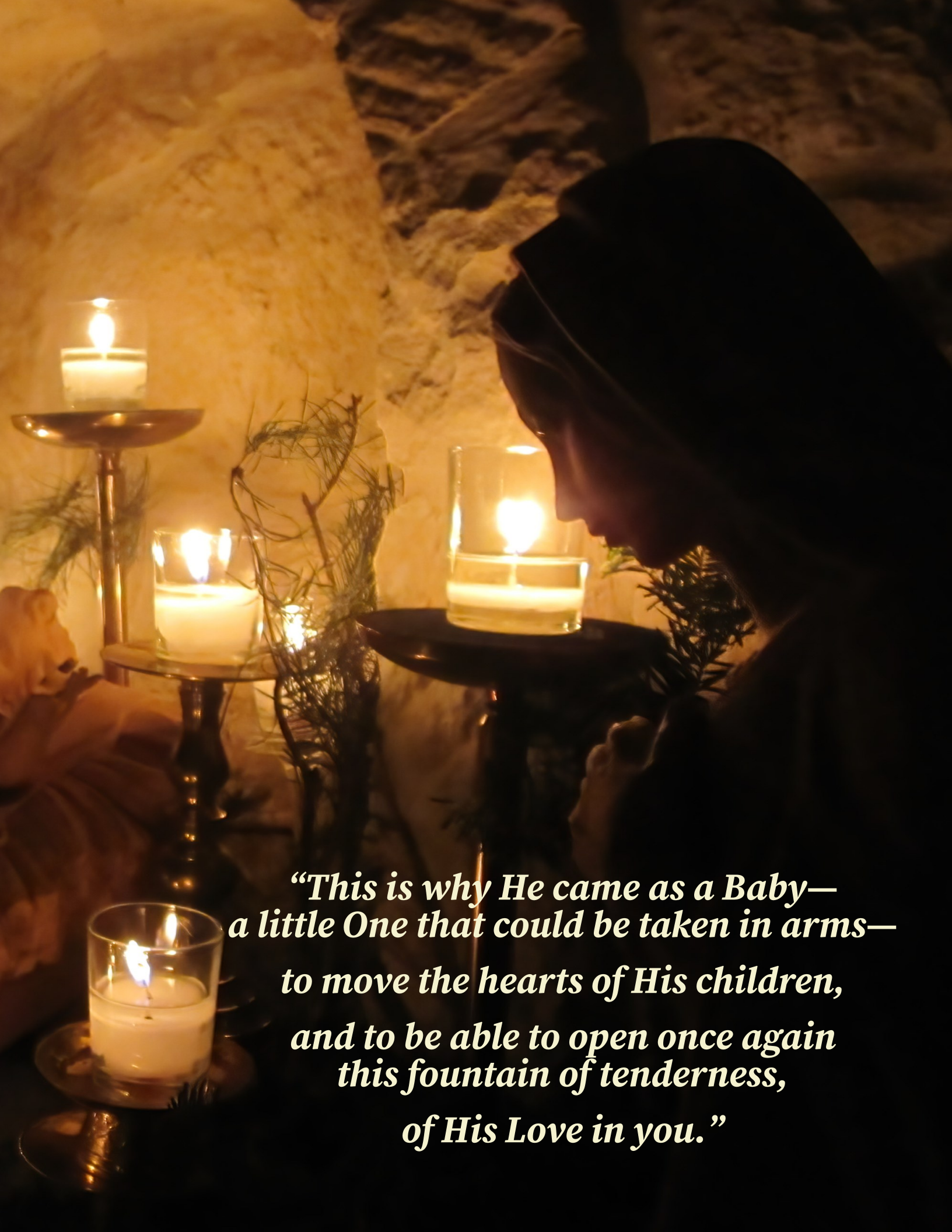


*"Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and **your life is hidden with Christ in God**. When Christ your Life appears, then you too will appear with Him in glory."*

(Col 3:2-4)

“Go to the Crèche....”



A close-up, dimly lit photograph of a nativity scene. In the foreground, a baby Jesus lies in a dark manger, partially obscured by shadows. Several lit candles in glass holders and metal stands provide a warm, golden light. Pine branches are scattered around the candles. The background is a textured, light-colored surface, possibly a cave wall.

*“This is why He came as a Baby—
a little One that could be taken in arms—
to move the hearts of His children,
and to be able to open once again
this fountain of tenderness,
of His Love in you.”*

“Lord, You Have Bumped Us...”

by Mother Magdalene

One thing we have learned at the Mission over and over again is **that the Lord's ways are not our ways, and that the Lord's timing is not our timing.** While we have been housed, fed and clothed by the Lord from the moment we began, we have never—until now—managed to build our own housing.

As early as 2005 we had begun to make plans for our housing at the Mission. There were blueprints, committees, conversations with architects and excursions over the terrain; all to no avail. The project of the women's house (the men had graciously prioritized our housing and security) had circled like an elusive creature that would show itself, move closer, and then dart away—always just out of reach.

"Lord, You have bumped us, and we've let ourselves be bumped."

Repeatedly over the years the women's housing had moved to the forefront, only to fall back when something more pressing took its place. While the men had put our housing before theirs, the Lord had put the *apostolate* before our housing. We have had five major building projects over the course of our two decades here; all of them to further the mission of His Mercy. (This does not include countless smaller projects that included restrooms, well houses, sheds, workshops, roadwork, parking lots, and general infrastructure.)

In 2005 we built **St. Joseph's Chapel**. In 2006 there was **St. Michael's Hall** which has served many functions, and currently acts as a dormitory for retreatants. In 2008 we built **St. Raphael's**, our visitor's center and office space. In 2015 we completed the **Msgr. O'Callaghan Divine Mercy Center** which finally permitted us to hold our *Encounters with Jesus* here at the Mission. It is a large, beautiful facility that provides a reception and dining area, conference and meeting rooms, and our first commercial kitchen (amazingly, until then, Maria Felicitas had done everything out of the old Camp House kitchen). And finally in 2017 we built our outdoor Sanctuary, the **Teocalli**. Early in the spring of 2017 it had seemed that we were, at last, turning our sights to the women's housing. Then suddenly through a surprising sequence of events it was clear to us that the Lord had a different plan. And in a matter of weeks, with a speed no one had anticipated, the Teocalli emerged. Three

years later our hilltop sanctuary was invaluable in letting us hold outdoor Masses during the covid lockdown.

Ready, Set... Go!

In November of 2021, on the occasion of our 20th Anniversary, we processed to Shepherd's Hill after Mass to bless the site of our future housing, hoping to remind the Lord, just in case He had forgotten.

Finally in the summer of 2022 we set our sights on the women's housing once again. Land was cleared, a design was drawn up, conversations were held with architects. Through the fall, winter, and spring the design was re-worked many times and checked against the proposed site. But many other things were going on as well, and Susannah, who was exhausted and world-weary after a year of caring for her injured son, said, "I'll believe it when they begin to pour the foundation."

Then suddenly this past summer it was as if the Lord said, "Enough! It's time." And everything began to coalesce and accelerate at an amazing speed. Schedules cleared, workers showed up, and Sister Amapola, our Project Liaison, began to consider bilocation as she struggled to integrate her day job with her day job. Materials were delivered, big machines moved in, **and the Lord made a pathway in the wilderness.**

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

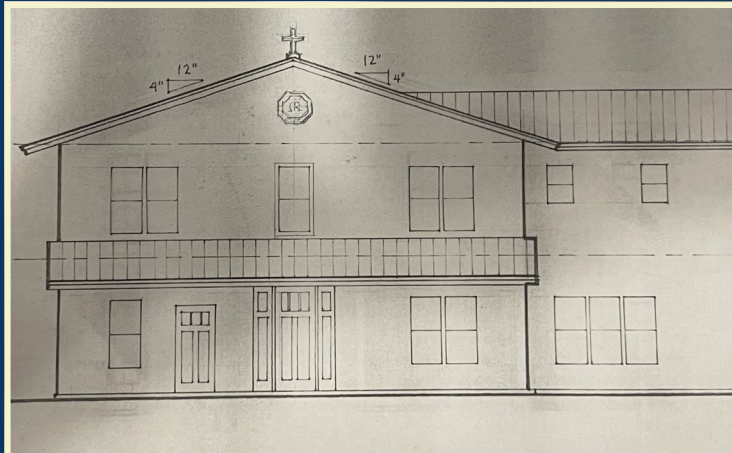
We had originally thought the house might have four to six bedrooms; the building committee ultimately decided on eight. The Community had also sensed in prayer that the Lord was asking us to build in faith for those He would bring in the future.

So the current structure will have seven bedrooms with the possibility of one space becoming two more if needed. It will have a Chapel, a sewing room, a laundry, a kitchen, a dining room/living room, a guest parlor, and an office.

Currently it will have more bedrooms than people, but **"Faith so that God can act."** We have learned repeatedly that **it's not a go until He says it's a go. When He does say it's a go, get out of the way.**

"Unless the Lord builds the House...." (Ps127)





From Fr. John Mary:

"This year of 2023 has been an important one for the women of MDM. We've seen Susannah's Commitment Ceremony; Sister Amapola's "Silver Plus One" Anniversary (26 years); and Mother Magdalene's 50th year of Consecrated Life. Perhaps their new residence is the Father's Gift for their Gift of themselves to Him." ♦



TESTIMONIES FROM THE ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

At the end of each *EWJ* retreat, we invite the retreatants to answer a few questions in writing. We want to know what went well and what could use improvement. It also gives them an opportunity to share any special experiences or insights they might have had—**time and again they give witness to how their *Encounter With Jesus* has healed them in body and soul.** Recently we received these testimonies which we were given permission to share.

WHAT TO DO WITH MARY?

I grew up in Episcopalian and Protestant churches. The most challenging part of converting to Catholicism as a young adult was what to do with Mary?

In my experience, Mary was only a statue in the Nativity scene at Christmas. She was a young Jewish girl chosen by God to be Jesus' mother, but hers was only a bit role in a much bigger story. The Three Kings, shepherds and animals got more attention than Mary did.

Our images of Jesus were mostly of Him sitting on a rock surrounded by children, or telling parables, or throwing the money changers out of the temple.

Easter was about Jesus Risen. Very little emphasis on the Cross or Crucifixion. Scant mention of Mary and John in relation to the Crucifixion. Everything was about Jesus Risen—happy, happy, happy. Nothing about redemptive suffering.

There was no Crucifix in our church, nor our homes. And certainly no images of Mary's suffering. It was kind of glossed over, as though sure, she suffered because her Son died a horrible death, but she was not referred to as "The Mother of God."

All of this background is to help explain why I found the presentation before our Consecration to Mary so very powerful. Especially following yesterday's presentation on suffering. This retreat has uncovered barriers to trust in me that needed uncovering!

Thank you, Mother Magdalene, for emphasizing the uniqueness of women, mothers and most especially Our Blessed Mother.

~ M.W.

*"Sing and rejoice,
O Daughter Zion!"*



REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING: A MUCH DEEPER KNOWING

Thank you for all the work and prayers done to provide this weekend retreat for us. The presentations have all been superb.

The one on suffering this afternoon was transformative for me. I have Parkinson's Disease, an incurable nerve degenerative disease. I am a retired doctor with a nursing background. Before today, I have been afraid of undignified suffering—which is a real prognosis of this disease.

After the reflection on suffering, I feel a grace of transformation. Instead of hoping I will die a quick death, I realize that Jesus suffered a very undignified, cruel death. Who am I to ask for an easy death when my Lord and Savior Jesus suffered for me—died for me?

Grace has given me an understanding that my suffering can be united to Christ. I've said and thought that before—but now it is a much deeper "knowing." **I want to take the chain off of the door to Jesus, and let Him all the way in.**

~ Thank you, Mary

THE LORD'S WARM HEALING OF BODY AND SOUL

It has taken me almost a year to put into words what I experienced at the *Encounter With Jesus* retreat that Our Lord, and your EWJ team made possible for me to attend. **The experience and the result of this encounter have been awesome, bewildering at times, frightening at others, and so emotional that I am often brought to tears.** But always thankful for the chance for a sinner to meet with the Lord as I did.

Being a new Catholic (over three years now), I had no preconceived notions as to what to expect from the retreat other than some classroom training and establishing some new friends seeking the same things I was. I was pleasantly (to say the least) surprised and exuberantly excited about what really happened to me at the *Encounter*.

MY PERCEIVED MIRACLE: To give a little background, for many years I have had an increasing problem with my knees and back, seriously inhibiting my ability to squat, kneel, or stand up without assistance from my wife or some

nearby stationary object. To kneel in prayer without substantial padding under my knees, and someone or something to assist me in getting up and down was very painful and difficult.

That cool, dark, December evening at the retreat we were given the opportunity to prostrate ourselves (lie flat on the floor, face downward) before the Eucharist in adoration, devotion, prayer and confession in the candle-lit chapel. It was a very solemn, heartfelt, and contemplative moment that I was experiencing.

I could not prostrate myself successfully while in the pew and began to consider an alternative—all the while also contemplating the inevitable pain and difficulty that would be involved.

I noticed several of my brothers were kneeling in the aisle in order to prostrate fully and decided to try to do the same. As I attempted to kneel on the tile floor and assume a prostrate position, the pain and difficulty made themselves very apparent, however, **I was not going to let the Evil One win on this one.** I got to my knees in the aisle next to my pew, and using the pew as leverage, I lowered myself to my elbows and knees, but was not able to totally prostrate. So, I started my adoration in this awkward and painful position.

Several minutes into my prayer (which was very emotional for me), I felt a fresh warm breeze blow under my body between my raised chest and the floor of the Chapel. It was a cool night, so where could this warm breeze be coming from? No doors or windows were open, yet there it was: warm, soothing, all-encompassing and *silent*. (When the heaters are on in the Chapel they make a very loud noise.) ***I felt a new sense of strength that allowed me to lower my whole body to the floor with ease, and without pain.***

Even a year later I can kneel in prayer in church, and can stand up with much greater ease and move about so much better; THANKS BE TO GOD.

That warm wind from our Lord was enough for me to realize what I needed so badly in my life as a sinner. I thanked the Lord for this epiphany, and then and there decided I will do so much more with my sinful life.

~ Yours in Christ, Don



Prostrating in Prayer





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