

Triumph of the Heart

THE MISSION - PART III

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PDF - Family of Mary





*“**M**ay Mary help to remind us that all Christians are called to be heralds of the Gospel with their words and with their life.”*

Our Spiritual Family in Italy

When Bishop Hnilica invited the first brothers and sisters to Rome in 1990, nobody could have imagined where God's providence would lead us.

It was from Rome that our first missionaries were sent to the countries of the former Eastern Bloc: Slovakia, Russia, Kazakhstan and the Ukraine.

Shortly thereafter, brothers and sisters went to Amsterdam, Germany and South America. In Italy, some moved to Civitella, a small, tranquil town in Abruzzo, and others to Ariccia, on the outskirts of Rome.

In the "House of St. Joseph"

The house of formation for our novices lies tucked away from the noisy city streets, surrounded by vineyards and olive gardens, about 12 miles south of Rome, close to Castel Gandolfo, the Holy Father's summer residence. The novices place their time of spiritual formation under the protection of St. Joseph, who him-

self lived many years in the seclusion of Nazareth for Jesus and Mary. For that reason, he is an incomparable model for us.

Here, in silence, the first thing the young men learn is to pray. The day begins early in the morning with Holy Mass and afterwards the Blessed Sacrament remains exposed for Eu-



Fr. Florian Maria
(front middle)
with the novices
during a pilgrimage
to Padre Pio in San
Giovanni Rotondo

charistic adoration until evening. With the Rosary, hand-in-hand so to say with Our Lady, the postulants and novices meditate on Holy Scripture. Conferences on Mariology, exegesis, spirituality and the lives of the saints help them to grow step by step into a priestly way of life, a life which renounces one's own plans and desires, serving God and the others in love. Naturally, learning practical things is also important for future missionaries. Therefore, they work in the house and in the garden. If they so desire,

they may also develop their talents in painting and wood-carving, in music or learning other languages.

Currently, there are six novices and five postulants in the House of St. Joseph from seven different countries: three from Slovakia, two from Germany, and one each from the Ivory Coast, Togo, France, and Austria. To our great joy, there are also the first two Asian vocations from Korea.



In the House “Jesus the High Priest”

After three years of preparation, the novices become missionaries in the *Family of Mary* by praying a solemn consecration to Our Lady. Some then help as brothers in the missions and others begin their studies of philosophy and theology.

The students spend the next five years in

our house consecrated to Jesus the High Priest, just across the street from the House of St. Joseph. In March 1999, “Casa Gesù Sommo Sacerdote”, as it is called in Italian, was officially recognized as a house of formation for theology students by the Bishop of the Diocese of Albano. Our students are very grateful that they have a

quiet place to return home to after classes in the city of Rome. Although studying at the Pontifical Gregorian University is a major part of their daily life, prayer and brotherly love remain essential in their preparation for the grace of ordination to the priesthood.

Their day begins in the chapel at 5:30 a.m. with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Before lunch they pray the Rosary, and at 3:00 p.m., as we do in all the houses

of the community, they pray the “Hour of Mercy” which Jesus desired from St. Faustina. In the evening, there is a half-hour, silent adoration together before Holy Mass since the Holy Eucharist must become the center of a future priest’s life and work!

Bishops and priests from all over the world regularly come to visit the students. Some give conferences and others come to draw new strength for their ministry.



Last year, four deacons from four different countries were ordained to the priesthood: Fr. Alain Marie (Ivory Coast), Fr. Peter Thomas (Slovakia), Fr. Hubert Francisco (Germany) and Fr. Florian Maria (Austria).



Media Apostolate in Rome



Not far from the novices and students live the sisters who comprise the team that writes and arranges the original German edition of our missionary magazine *Triumph of the Heart*. The Italian, French and Dutch editions are also edited here and an archive is kept for all the photos and texts used in the magazine.

Music has always played an important role in our missionary work. We are often amazed

at how God's grace consoles and brings cheer to people through our music at retreats, days of prayer, weddings and ordinations.

For about four years now, we have been able to edit our own recordings in a music studio we set up in a trailer. We are thankful to the many professional musicians who have not only helped us with advice but have so often been there to play with us.

Mission of Mercy

For more than 13 years now, we have been hosting a so-called "Mission of Mercy" in Rome. Faithful from all walks of life—beggars, teachers and doctors; the healthy and the sick alike—come to the Dominican convent "San Sisto" close to the Lateran Basilica. This day of reparation includes adoration, Holy Mass, the

opportunity for Confession and a candlelight procession. We started this mission in response to a statue of Our Lady that cried tears of blood in Civitavecchia (12 miles west of Rome) in February 1995. How happy we were when, in December of the same year, Pope John Paul II called for a "great city-mission in Rome".

Our Office on “via Monte Santo”

Our late Bishop Paul Maria Hnilica, who passed away on October 8, 2006, had his office in Rome on a street called “Monte Santo”, which means “Holy Mountain”. Sisters and priests had worked there with him since our arrival in Rome. It is very close to the Vatican, and you can see the cupola of St. Peter’s from the balcony.

Even though the number of foreign visitors has declined without the lively apostolic activity of our bishop, the office is still necessary for the care of our Italian friends and benefactors. Our “office sisters” do not simply remain at their desks though. They are often called to little acts of charity because, on the streets of Rome, there are many poor and needy people. We would like to tell you about one such act of love. Sr. Chiara, from our mission station in Amsterdam, translates a Spanish letter which she received a short time ago:

Dear Sisters!

I would like to tell about something that happened in October 2002. I made a pilgrimage to Rome from Peru with a group of friends to participate in the canonization of St. José Maria Escrivá.

We arrived just fine and wanted to buy our subway and bus tickets because we were supposed to stay in Zagarolo, a city quite a distance from Rome. At the central station in Rome, we didn’t find this city listed on any of the routes. It was already 11 p.m., and there were many drunkards and strange people hanging around, as is often the case at train stations in big cities. We were scared because back home it is very dangerous for young women to be out at night, even in groups. We were in a helpless situation. We didn’t speak Italian and had no idea what to do or where to go.

Then we saw two young sisters in white dresses and, in our great need, we approached them. When we told them what had happened to us, they offered to let us stay with them because it was too late to make it to our final destination. We were very surprised when we didn’t arrive at a big convent but rather a simple rented apartment in the middle of town. The sisters gave us their rooms and cared lovingly for us, and all this without even knowing us. As we were leaving the next day, they gave us a couple prayer cards with a picture of Our Lady which we hadn’t seen before. It was the prayer card of the Lady of All Nations. Since that day, I have always had this prayer card with me, and I even have one on my desk at work.”

Claudia Torres, Peru

Claudia sent this letter to Amsterdam five years after her visit to Rome without knowing that the sisters there are in the same community as those on “via Monte Santo”. Naturally, our “Roman” sisters were happy to hear that this little act of love led to a deep relationship with the Mother of All Nations.

An Unusual Mission

*A*ugust 5, 1994 was the last day of a novena to St. Joseph in which we asked Jesus' earthly father to help us find a new house. And, like so many times before, he did not abandon us this time either. On the feast "Our Lady of the Snows" we were offered a convent in Civitella del Tronto, in the province of Teramo, which had been empty for a number of years. The order which owned it did not have any new vocations and could no longer maintain it. We found out only later what a wonderful story goes along with this place.

In 1344, the first Poor Clares came to Civitella. They lived in this convent for

nearly 500 years until it became the private property of somebody else during the secularization. Only about 100 years ago, the Church bought it back and entrusted it to a different religious community.

We graciously accepted the offer and in September 1994 began renovating the abandoned convent. "Casa Maria" as we call it, or the House of Mary, first served as the brothers' novitiate until they moved to Rome. Since then, sisters and brothers work here in our international office because there is a lot of administrative work to do for the mission stations we have in a number of different countries.



Civitella del Tronto

*I*t is important, for example, to keep close track of the donations made and see that the money reaches those for whom it was intended. We really try to care for our benefactors too through thank you letters, telephone calls and especially in prayer. Then we have to pay bills, insure brothers and sisters as well as the cars, produce written and audio material, maintain mailing lists for our magazine *Triumph of the Heart* and to maintain and attend to the legal affairs of the missionary family. Nobody is bored here!

Nevertheless, we strive here in the office not to put work first, but prayer. Therefore the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in our chapel from early in the morning until evening.

It is not always easy to see office work as missionary activity. We try to remind ourselves of the words of Maria Theresia Ledochowska, the founder of the Sodality of St. Peter Claver who, because of her weak constitution, could not go to the missions in Africa:

“The sight of a sister sailing the seas to bring the Gospel to pagan nations draws calls of admiration from the world. When, however, it has to do with someone who works from morning until evening to the point of exhaustion making publicity, writing articles, doing correspondence, correcting proofs from the printer, logging donations, confirming them, packing boxes for Africa or sending out fliers, it doesn't seem so heroic and honors neither her nor her family back home. The life of such a sister is full of non-stop work, far from those for whom she works, far from the land she loves and wants to conquer for Christ. She isn't allowed to live a tranquil life and in her active life she must renounce seeing the fruits of her labor. Others reap what she has sown in secret.” Yes, faith tells us that it is love, even when it is lived in secret, which brings blessings to somebody in the world.

Along with the office in Civitella, there are sisters who sew vestments for our new priests and see that the missionaries receive the clothing that they need.





In March 17, 1996, the parishes of Civitella, Ponzano and Borrano were entrusted to us and currently two priests and two sisters help in their pastoral care. Additionally, the Bishop of Teramo-Atri, His Excellence Michele Seccia, asked Fr. Aleandro to be the diocesan vocations director.

The nursing home in Civitella is also under the spiritual care of our missionaries. Fr. Johannes celebrates Holy Mass there every week, anoints the seriously ill and accompanies the dying in their final hours. Some souls who spend their last years here carry within themselves a hidden treasure, like Vittorio who died last summer. His modesty was an example for everybody.

Vittorio was always very respectful towards us consecrated men and women, *“I especial-*

ly honor consecrated people because they bring Jesus to us in their hands.” He would have liked to become a priest, but as a passionate soccer player he injured his knee when he was young. Due to his injury and the rules for admission at the time, Vittorio could neither become a Franciscan nor enter the diocesan seminary. He made a great sacrifice out of his fate so, *“That priests may live their priesthood better, I offer this sacrifice.”*

As the priest gave Holy Communion to him on the last Feast of Corpus Christi with the words, “the body of Christ,” the old man made a deep bow before the Blessed Sacrament and said loud and clear with the deepest conviction, *“My Lord and my God!”* Everybody who heard it was touched by the reverence and faith of this man.

Our Service in Germany

In 2006, our spiritual family joyfully accepted invitations to our first two German dioceses—Augsburg in Bavaria and the city of Neuss, close to Cologne, where His Eminence Cardinal Joachim Meisner asked us to come and reanimate the St. Sebastian's Monastery with its eventful 600 year history.

The Adoration Church in Neuss

On June 1, 2006, two priests from our community, one from the USA and the other from Slovakia, began caring for this church dedicated to Eucharistic adoration and Confession in the middle of downtown Neuss. They were joined in September by two sisters, one Austrian and one German, and since the summer of 2007, there are now three priests—a German, an American and one from the Ivory Coast. We let them narrate.

Since our church St. Sebastian is in the middle of the pedestrian zone, the daily noontime Holy Mass is always well-attended and the faithful like to pray the Rosary together as preparation. Our congregation is pretty international so that, in addition to the locals, you also meet Spaniards, Italians, a family from Sri Lanka, Poles, Japanese, Koreans, Africans, a couple from Fatima, a woman from Kazakhstan and an Irish businessman; so you can see that being able to speak different languages comes in handy. The faithful listen attentively to the short homilies which they really appreciate since they want to go away with something for their spiritual life. Even on Fridays and Saturdays, when often more than 100 people attend Mass, people enjoy taking a few extra minutes for silent thanksgiving following Holy Communion.

In the spirit of Pope Benedict XVI who said on Pentecost 2007, *“Prayer is the first and most important contribution that we are called to in the missionary activity of the church,”* we in Neuss see it as a beautiful mission to be in adoration in the name of those from our community who



Cardinal Joachim Meisner on Palm Sunday 2006 with our first missionaries in Neuss, Fr. Gregory and Fr. Martin.

have many things to do. We take turns praying before the Blessed Sacrament in the hours which the church is open. Between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. people of all ages and classes come to pay a visit to the Lord. Confession is available throughout the day, and the number of penitents continues to grow. We pray the Hour of Mercy together at 3 p.m. with the Stations of the Cross, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, music, and meditations from

the Diary of St. Faustina. Families and young people enjoy coming to the evening adoration each month where we pray for vocations for the Archdiocese of Cologne.

On Sundays, when the faithful go to Mass in their parishes, we usually celebrate in nursing homes or hospital chapels. We celebrate Masses in other chapels and religious communities during the week as well.



Since coming here, we have made some nice friendships with our daily churchgoers. There is, for example, a street sweeper who comes every day during his lunch break with his bright orange safety vest. He adores the Lord for a half an hour or pays a visit to the manger scene during the Christmas season. *“Yes, I come to thank God every day,”* he told us once, *“because I was sick in bed for half a year and now I can work again. I have to thank God.”*

Many just stop in as they are walking down the main street and take a look. Some of these passer-bys are touched though by the grace. Perhaps it is simply the prayerful atmosphere here,

but whatever the case may be, we have heard more than once, *“What an oasis of peace and prayer!”*

A short time ago somebody commented, *“I just happened to come into the church. If the priest had not already been sitting in the confessional, I certainly would not have gone to confession.”* Some of the “coincidental visitors” ask when Holy Mass is celebrated, and then joyfully return to participate.

They are some disadvantages to living in the pedestrian zone however. It can be very loud in the summertime. Many people walk the mall and shop, and the street musicians give their all. Their loud singing and playing at times nearly

drowns out the Rosary and Holy Mass. *“Once, I walked over to the musicians,”* recalled one of the sisters. *“I said a short prayer before I went, ‘Mary, speak to them through me.’ I really had to overcome myself to ask the group to play somewhere else since the Mass was due to start. To my surprise, they were most obliging and one of them said unexpectedly, ‘Sure sister, we’d do anything for God.’”*

*L*ay people and religious alike from an ever-growing area seek out this place of silence. Our Lady is especially honored in May and everybody loves participating in the short evening meditations. Several times a week a lady takes an hour long train ride to come for adoration, *“I not only found Jesus here, but also Our Lady, whom I didn’t know before.”* Once, even her daughters accompanied her because they often wondered back home, *“Mom, why are you always so happy after you visit the monastery?”*

Occasionally, a group of young priests meets for adoration together at St. Sebastian’s and thereby draw new strength for their pastoral work. Cardinal Meisner reminded us at a meeting here in Neuss, *“It is impossible to speak about God if we don’t speak with him first.”*

A true treasure of our adoration church is Mrs. Gossen (right). Unfortunately, at age 84 she has become frailer, and so we often bring her Holy Communion at home. Her greatest joy, however, is when she is able to attend Mass. Sometimes she prays out loud without realizing it and you can just make out the words, *“Jesus, I love you so much, my King and Redeemer. You suffered so much for me. I also love your mother who is my mother too. Help me, please, that I do not become completely blind and deaf and that I can still come often to you. Bless everybody, especially the priests!”*

Our priests are also frequently called to the hospital to give the sacrament of the Anointing

On another occasion, a young man with a child in his arms rang our doorbell. We saw that he wanted to share his excitement with us sisters. *“Earlier,”* he said, *“I wanted to be a priest too. Since I never found a spirituality which I fit into I decided to get married. Today, however, at Holy Mass, I was so happy because I finally found the spirituality I have been searching for.”*



of the Sick, to administer last rites or to spiritually accompany the dying in their final hours. Fr. Gregory, for example, was able to give Ms. Neumann, one of our most faithful churchgoers, last rites less than an hour before she passed away. Receiving such a grace in the hour of death was certainly a gift from Our Lady; she prayed for it every day during the Rosary. In the preceding weeks, we sisters had visited her several times. It was always touching to see how well she accepted her suffering and the peace she radiated. A lay member of the Schoenstatt Movement, she once whispered softly with eyes aglow, *“You know, our founder Fr. Kentenich placed great value on caring for new vocations. I offer Jesus everything in this intention; I offer him everything for spiritual vocations!”*

Our Work in Bavaria

Since April 30, 2006, three of our German sisters have been living in an apartment on a quiet farm in Zankenhäusen, Germany. Although a modest beginning in the Dioceses of Augsburg, this mission station is "a little cell which should shine," according to Bishop Walter Mixa. In just a short time, various interesting tasks and opportunities have presented themselves to Sr. Anna, Sr. Rosa Maria and Sr. Therese.

From Zankenhäusen, we take care of St. Joseph's Warehouse eight miles away. There we store and ship the missionary material of our community: CDs, cassettes and our magazine "Triumph of the Heart". It is always busy because friends or people we have met during retreats, conferences or elsewhere contact us by telephone, fax or e-mail to order our magazine or the music they have heard.

Our mission stations as far away as the Ural Mountains, Kazakhstan or Uruguay also receive the necessary mission material from here. Due to our convenient location, we are also able to provide the necessary material for the retreats in the German-speaking countries. Our friends and families volunteer and we are very grateful for their help.

When somebody calls the warehouse or the House of St. Anne, where we live, it usually turns out to be more than just an order. Many entrust their personal problems to us over the telephone and at the end they always say, "Please pray for us!" We carry these great and varied intentions consciously in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. We see Eucharistic adoration, as we do wherever we work, as the first and most important part of our mission. We would like to give you an example.

A short time after we arrived, we met Monica, a joyful, 48-year-old photographer, who lived in an apartment attached to our warehouse. She listened attentively to what we told her about the missions although we never spoke about her personal convictions regarding the faith.

During one visit last spring, Monica seemed different and we asked her with a little worry if everything was okay.

"I'll be honest with you," she answered, "I have cancer."

We wanted to do something for her so we invited her to take a little tour of our warehouse. Afterwards, we gave her a picture of the Mother of All Nations and said, hoping to console her, "Look Monica, she is also your mother. Mary understands your concerns. She will help you."

Monica immediately began to cry and pressed the picture to her heart saying, "I am so touched. That picture just moves me; I am so happy about it."

We had never seen anybody accept the image from Amsterdam so profoundly. Just a few weeks later, she was already in the hospital at the terminal stage of her illness. We were able to speak to her on the telephone and assure her that we were praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy for her every day.

A few days later her sister called and told us that Monica had passed away: "You know, Monica died with the words, 'Family of Mary, Family of Mary,' on her lips. It seems you were very close to my sister at the end." It's true, because in the hour of her death, we were before the Blessed Sacrament at a special service in honor of Our Lady during May.

When we went back to Monica's apartment, which we may now use for pastoral purposes, we saw to our great delight the picture of the



On November 4, 2007, we three sisters were overjoyed that the Bishop of Augsburg, His Excellence Walter Mixa, came to the House of St. Anne for a personal visit. He gave a fatherly blessing to us and our mission and encouraged us to expand our pastoral work here.

Mother of All Nations hanging in a place of honor. When we told Bishop Mixa about this room that was now available, he encouraged us to use it for catechism, prayer with young families and children, and for our monthly parents' prayer group.

*M*arch 2007 was a highlight for our House of St. Anne. Fr. Betram Meier, the priest responsible for all the religious orders in the Diocese of Augsburg, officially brought the long-awaited Blessed Sacrament to our house chapel. *"The true Master of the House has entered,"* expressed Fr. Meier during the special Holy Mass that he celebrated.

The number of people who find their way to our little family here continues to increase. Not only friends and relatives ask to pray with us and to recharge spiritually in the House of St. Anne, but sometime also strangers arrive at our doorstep who have heard about us and want to learn

about our spirituality.

Last but not least, we accommodate our sisters from other mission stations and accompany them to retreats with our priests in the German-speaking countries. During these retreats, we help with spiritual and fun activities for the children and youth, as we do at our monthly family prayer meeting in Munich.

*I*t is as if our community lives from a continuous miracle of Divine Providence given to us through generous benefactors. We have noticeably experienced this from the outset in our little Bavarian missionary family as well. It often happens, for example, that we nearly trip coming out the front door because a basket of vegetables or a bag of fruit has been set there. On the morning of our chapel's consecration, surprisingly a missal arrived in the mail from a benefactor who sent it to us without knowing how much we needed it that very day.

Amsterdam - The City of The Mother of All Nations

On May 31, 1996, the Bishop of Haarlem-Amsterdam, His Excellency Henrik Bomers, together with his auxiliary bishop, Joseph Maria Punt, officially allowed veneration of Mary under the title "The Lady of All Nations". Ida Peerdeman, the visionary of Amsterdam, lived to experience this triumphant moment after more than 50 years of silent waiting, prayer and sacrifice. She passed away shortly thereafter on June 17, 1996, at the age of 90. Then things started to happen quickly. Only a month later, at the request of Bishop Bomers, the first four sisters came to Amsterdam July 22, 1996. What a privilege for our community! We had known the messages and lived deep unity with the visionary for many years. Today, 12 years later, four priests, seven sisters and one consecrated lay person work here.

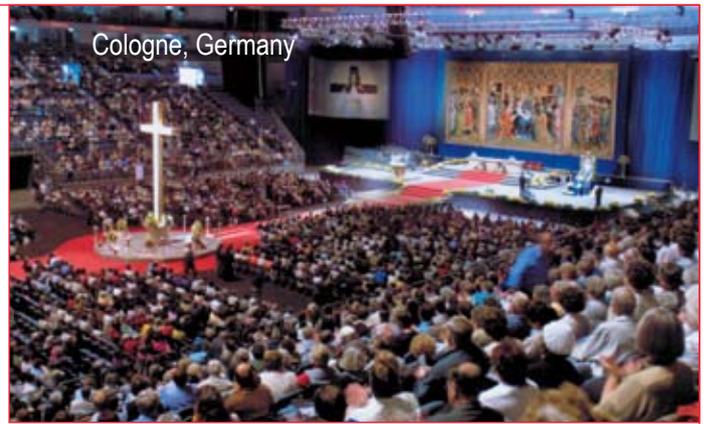


International and National Days of Prayer

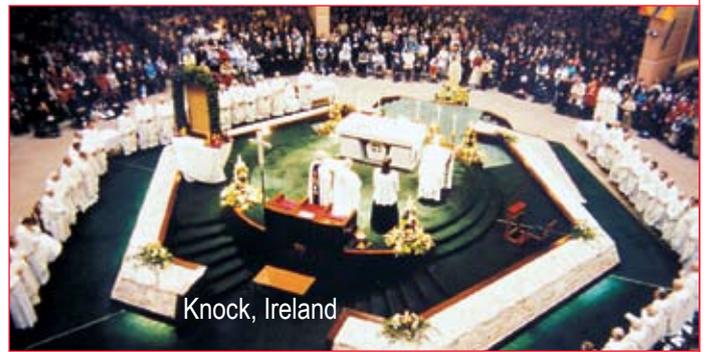
On July 23, 1996, the day after we arrived in Amsterdam, our spiritual father, Fr. Paul Maria, asked Bishop Bomers and Bishop Punt if they would permit us to organize a Day of Prayer in honor of the Lady of All Nations the following year. “Unbelievable, unbelievable!” cried Bishop Bomers when on May 31, 1997 he saw 80 priests and 5,000 pilgrims from 49 countries in the RAI Convention Center in Amsterdam gathered around the Mother of All Nations. Every seat was taken. Up until now there have been seven International Days of Prayer. Thousands of pilgrims from different races, languages, and religious denominations from all over the world participated. Cardinal Alfons M. Stickler from Rome and Cardinal Ignace Moussa Daoud, the former Prefect for the Oriental Churches, honored Our Lady with their participation on several occasions. Numerous bishops from various rites in their colorful vestments gave an ecumenical, universal character to the celebration.

The International Days of Prayer in honor of the Mother of All Nations were also intended to be a model for the national or regional days of prayer that have taken place since 2001. In dioceses, parishes and prayer groups, more and more people have come to know and love Mary as their personal mother. Consequently, our community is helping to plan Marian days of prayer again this year in several countries including Germany, Ireland, Slovakia and Switzerland.

Over the last few years, our priests, brothers and sisters, with the help of many lay people, have made various missionary journeys to make the Lady of All Nations known in Columbia, Japan, Australia, India, Vietnam, Korea, America and the Ivory Coast.



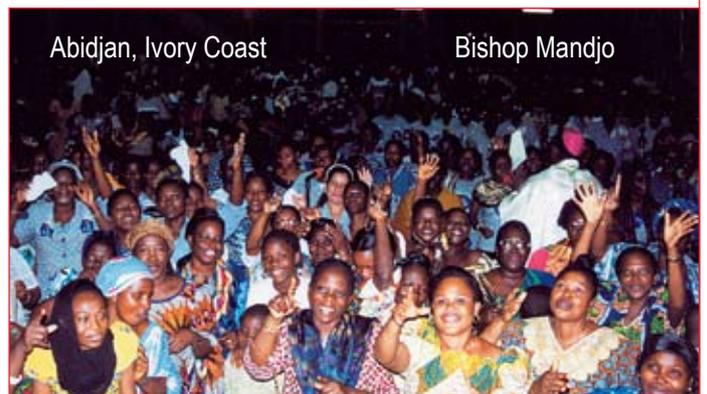
Cologne, Germany



Knock, Ireland



Perth, Australia
Archbishop James Hickey



Abidjan, Ivory Coast

Bishop Mandjo



Ruteng, Indonesia

Cardinal Ignace Moussa Daoud,
then Prefect for the Oriental Churches



What pilgrim could forget the glorious floral arrangements, the encouraging conferences, the diverse testimonies and musical performances; the large illuminated cross, Eucharistic adoration, the Rosary and the many penitents for confession. Finally, the high point, the Holy Mass of Pentecost: the solemn flag procession, the ringing of the bells, the greetings sent by cardinals and bishops from around the world, the gift-bearers in their colorful traditional costumes and the conclusion with the solemn, candle lit consecration to Our Lady.



Cardinal Alfons M. Stickler,
Austria and Rome,
who passed away December 12, 2007,
and Fr. Michael Fitzgerald from Ireland



Archbishop Maakaroun
of the Greek-Melchite Church in San Paolo, Brazil

“*I*t was a glorious
and holy day for me.
I suffer from a handicap and,
without God’s help,
I would not even be alive.
Here Our Lady led me closer again
to her and my Jesus
and renewed my strength
to carry my cross with Jesus.”





Multan, Pakistan



Stockholm, Sweden



Indore, India



Tokyo, Japan

The Worldwide Action continues

As of November 2006, prayer cards with the change requested by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, “*May the Lady of All Nations, the Blessed Virgin Mary, be our advocate,*” may now be printed again and spread out. Immediately requests poured in, especially from priests and parishes. We would like to relate a few stories which we have received in our correspondence at the shrine.

Marcela from Chile wrote, “*I began to pray the prayer of the Lady of All Nations. The next day here in Antofagasta, the most barren and driest place in the world, it began to rain. This response to the prayer from Amsterdam really impressed me!*”

The owner of a “Bed and Breakfast” in Ireland told us on the telephone, “*Although I don’t really have much to do with the faith, I really value the prayer of the Lady of All Nations and have believed in its power since I heard about it. I’ve had a few serious automobile accidents in the past, so I’ve made a habit of repeating the prayer from Amsterdam from the moment I get in the car until I get out. I have been doing this now for three and a half years and I haven’t had a single accident since!*”

Dina, an Italian family mother from a little town north of Rome, found a simple, nice way to pass on the prayer of the Mother of All Nations. After talking on the telephone with friends, relatives or coworkers, Dina always asks if she can pray a beautiful, short prayer for them. Nobody refuses. On the contrary, many of them begin this telephone apostolate themselves. It’s a chain reaction.

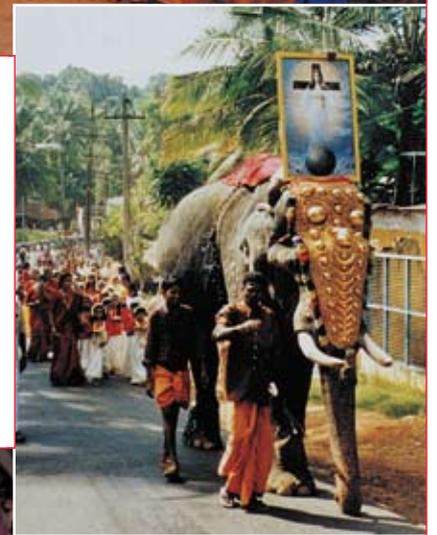
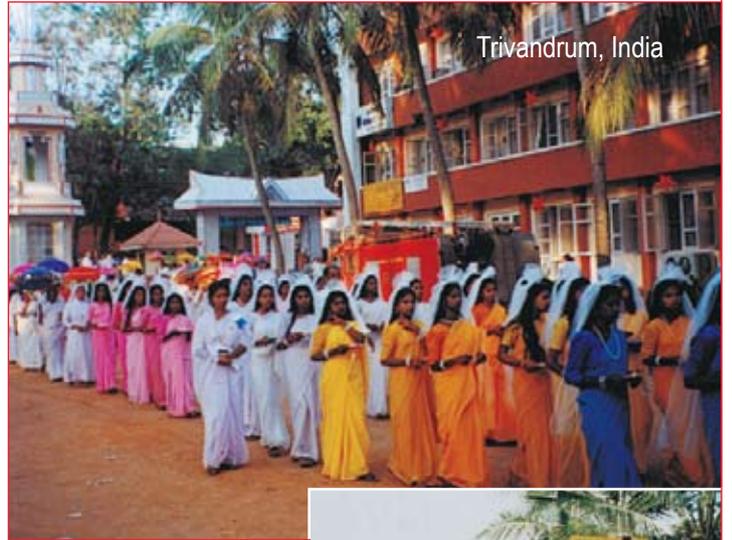
Bali, Indonesia



r. Jacinta Daehler, who has been in Tanzania for a good 30 years and working hard for the last nine to make the Lady of All Nations known, wrote that 50,000 prayer cards in the new version were being printed in Swahili. She and six coworkers regularly give talks about Amsterdam in the parishes after Sunday Mass. The people are delighted and because there are often believers from Uganda or Kenya, they bring their love for the Lady of All Nations to their homeland.

Denpasar, on the island of Bali, is very unique. There are five houses of worship were built right next to each other (see *Triumph of the Heart* #34): a mosque, Catholic and Protestant churches, and Hindu and Buddhist temples (picture top). The Catholic Church is consecrated to the Lady of All Nations and is so well loved that it cannot hold the 2,000 people who come sometimes for Sunday Mass. In 2007, the church was expanded under the direction of Mr. Djaya. This former Protestant wanted to express his thanks to the Lady of All Nations. When Mr. Djaya, whose son was dying from heart, lung and kidney problems, saw his Catholic wife praying the Rosary, he wanted to know what she was doing. *"I am praying to Our Lady to heal our son,"* she answered. From that moment on, Mr. Djaya did not hesitate to follow the example of his wife and he often accompanied her to the church to pray before the image of the Lady of All Nations. To the doctors' astonishment, their son miraculously recovered. Mr. Djaya converted to Catholicism and chose his new Christian name after St. Francis of Assisi. A fervent devotee of the Lady of All Nations, he often testifies, *"She hears all my prayers!"*

Trivandrum, India



In the Chapel of the Mother of All Nations

Many pilgrimage groups come to the Lady of All Nations, and they are not only from European countries. They also find their way to the small chapel from South America, the United States and the Philippines. Often in their mother language, we explain the messages, pray with them and accompany their Holy Mass with music. Between March and May 2007, eight groups came from Korea alone. In addition, there is international correspondence to take care of, translations to be made and the official web site of the Lady of All Nations to maintain (www.de-vrouwe.net).

From the very beginning, we have met regularly with Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity to pray in an adoration chapel in the red light district. Mother Teresa once said to Bishop Bomers, "*Amsterdam is the worst city I know. There has to be adoration here!*" The Blessed Sacrament is also exposed daily in our chapel, and since Amsterdam is the melting pot of 180 diverse nations, there are often 15 different nationalities represented at daily Mass. This has a positive effect for spreading the prayer and the image, because they send what has become precious to them back to their family and friends at home.

Since the chapel has become a spiritual home for many people, the pastoral duties continue to grow—bringing the sick and elderly Holy Communion and preparing others for baptism, First Communion, Confirmation and marriage. Sometimes our pastoral work means leading the visitors firstly to prayer and explaining the redeeming power of suffering in view of the image of Our Lady.

It is amazing how some people find their way to the chapel. Take Patricia from Guatemala for example. This 47-year-old family mother is married to a doctor in Amsterdam and had not

been to church since she was 15. In May 2007, she dreamt twice about the Lady of All Nations even though she had never heard about these apparitions. Shortly thereafter, she "coincidentally" drove by our chapel and saw on the wall outside the same image as in her dream. She stopped, came in and her return to the Catholic Church began.

Yet again in May 2007, a young protestant woman came with an elderly man who had let her go ahead of him at an ATM machine in the city, "*Please, go ahead, there is nobody waiting for me anymore.*" They started to talk and he explained that his wife and both daughters had been killed in a tragic car accident seven weeks earlier. Without thinking twice, the Protestant woman brought him to the chapel, where this suffering man from Amsterdam sat for a long time silently meditating on the image of the Lady of All Nations. He seemed consoled because two days later he was drawn again to the peaceful atmosphere of the chapel.

Another time, a desperate taxi driver, brought a suicidal woman to the chapel. We were even more surprised, however, when we saw the taxi driver the following Sunday at Holy Mass.

Egbert and Martine van der Laan have been caring for African refugees and those seeking asylum in Amsterdam for a number of years. They often make pilgrimages with their African friends to the Mother of All Nations. Among the group of 80 Africans who came in the spring of 2007 was a 30-year-old lady from Rwanda. She told us about a time during their civil war when she stumbled upon a skirmish with a genocidal group. When she begged out loud for Our Lady's help, she saw Mary as in the image of Amsterdam and she heard the words, "*Go straight ahead!*" Because she hesitated, Our Lady repeated, "*Neither right nor left, but straight*

ahead!” She obeyed and was able to escape. Only when she received a prayer card after arriving in Holland did she realize that it was the Lady of All Nations who had helped her.

In June 2007, 16-year-old Kevin from Almere, Holland was in a bad accident with his moped and was flown by helicopter to a hospital in Amsterdam. For days, nobody knew whether he would survive. In this time, his uncle, a taxi driver, received a prayer card of the Lady of All Nations from two Irish nuns at the airport. The

sisters encouraged him to make a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to the chapel of the Lady of All Nations if his nephew recovered. One and a half months later, Kevin’s mother and grandmother made this pilgrimage because Kevin fully recovered and was able to go back to school. With tears in their eyes they said thank you for this miracle and they promised to faithfully pray the prayer every day. They said, *“We believe now that God exists, that he hears our prayers, and that he is close to us.”*

The Pilgrim Image for Everybody

Giannina Dianderas Quispe, a pastoral assistant at the youth prison Maranga in Lima, Peru wrote, “We received a large image of the Lady of All Nations as a gift. It expresses so well how much Our Lady wants to help all the lost sheep find their way back to the Redeemer.” As a result, she organized a pilgrimage to the image for the young prisoners on May 12, 2007, the day before Mother’s Day.



For a decade now, pilgrim images of the Lady of All Nations have been circulating around the Netherlands. The guardians for these images have incredible stories to tell when they meet together four times a year at the chapel of the “Lady” for Holy Mass and prayer.

We sisters also have a pilgrimage image. Recently, we gave it to somebody who had just been baptized. He was reluctant, but by the end of the week he was so happy about the Blessed Mother’s visit that he did not want to give back the image.

Gisela Bidegain from Uruguay wrote that she tries to bring the image to those who cannot make it to Holy Mass due to their health or age. *“I am at a loss for words to express with what anticipation people receive Our Lady. Whether it is the poorest or the wealthiest home, there is always an altar decorated with candles and flowers.”*

From California, Pilar Andrade, who is the guardian for three pilgrim images, told us, *“Men who haven’t been to church since their wedding day start going to Holy Mass again after Our Lady visits their home.”*

Uruguay — A Mission of Mercy



More and more, each one of us missionaries experience that the tabernacle is our true home, as the Curè d'Ars so beautifully expressed it. For example, Fr. Hubert Francisco, pictured here (front middle) while still a seminarian, is from Bavaria, Germany. He was ordained a priest on December 8, 2007, and will be moving here to Uruguay from Rome this fall at the completion of his "spiritual year". He will continue in the parish of Fr. Francesco from the USA (to his right) who will then be free for a different mission.

We began our new mission in the Diocese of Florida, Uruguay in 2003, at the invitation of His Excellency Raul Scarrone, the now Emeritus Bishop of Florida and former president of the Uruguayan Bishop's Conference. Right from the beginning, we understood that an essential aspect of our missionary work here must be God's merciful love. Hence, we solemnly celebrated the Sunday of Divine Mercy, which Jesus revealed to St. Faustina, the first year that we were here. The papal nuncio, who is also from Poland, and seven bishops joined the hundreds of pilgrims in the festivities. The chapel on the right side of the cathedral containing a life-size image of "Jesus of Divine Mercy" was consecrated to during the celebration. Love for the Feast of Mercy grows from year to year in Florida.

*T*his beautiful country, with its rolling plains and open pastures, has about three-and-half million inhabitants, but it is strikingly poor both materially and spiritually. Unemployment is high and the discrepancy between the rich and the poor is great; there is no real middle class. Many people live in tiny, hut-like homes made out of corrugated tin siding. They have only two or three rooms which are sweltering hot in the summer and ice cold in the winter. They are content when they have bread and milk, and for the most part it is enough for them to just be baptized Catholic, they see no need to practice the faith.



February marked five years that we have tried to make God's mercy known here. First, we have our pastoral work of leading the people to a sacramental life through catechism classes, and we visit the sick in the hospitals or homes in the six villages of our three parishes. Then, we give food, clothing and medication to the poor and print and distribute devotional material about Jesus of Divine Mercy. The following examples illustrate how God's grace so often helps us three priests and five sisters.



Florida

Healed in the Depths of my Soul

Our friend Laura Pereira lives with her family here in Florida and works at the pharmacy close to the cathedral.

Although she was baptized Catholic, she knew almost nothing about religion or Jesus until after the Sunday of Divine Mercy 2003.

She gave an impressive testimony at the Feast of Divine Mercy 2007 about what happened afterwards.

She recounted to the faithful, the bishop and all the priests of the diocese in the packed cathedral.



Laura and her husband Rafael



Jesus of Mercy, I am standing here today to thank you. For 48 years I lived without inner peace. Four years ago I found myself in great need because, despite my loving family, a great emptiness had overtaken me. Then a friend of mine brought me a booklet with the novena of Divine Mercy. I was so drawn by the picture of Jesus of Divine Mercy that I visited the cathedral out of curiosity. I will never be able to fully explain what happened there. I was standing several feet away from the image in the side chapel. I was deeply touched, tears ran down my cheeks and I felt a warmth within me. It seemed to me as if Jesus was saying, “*I am here for you*

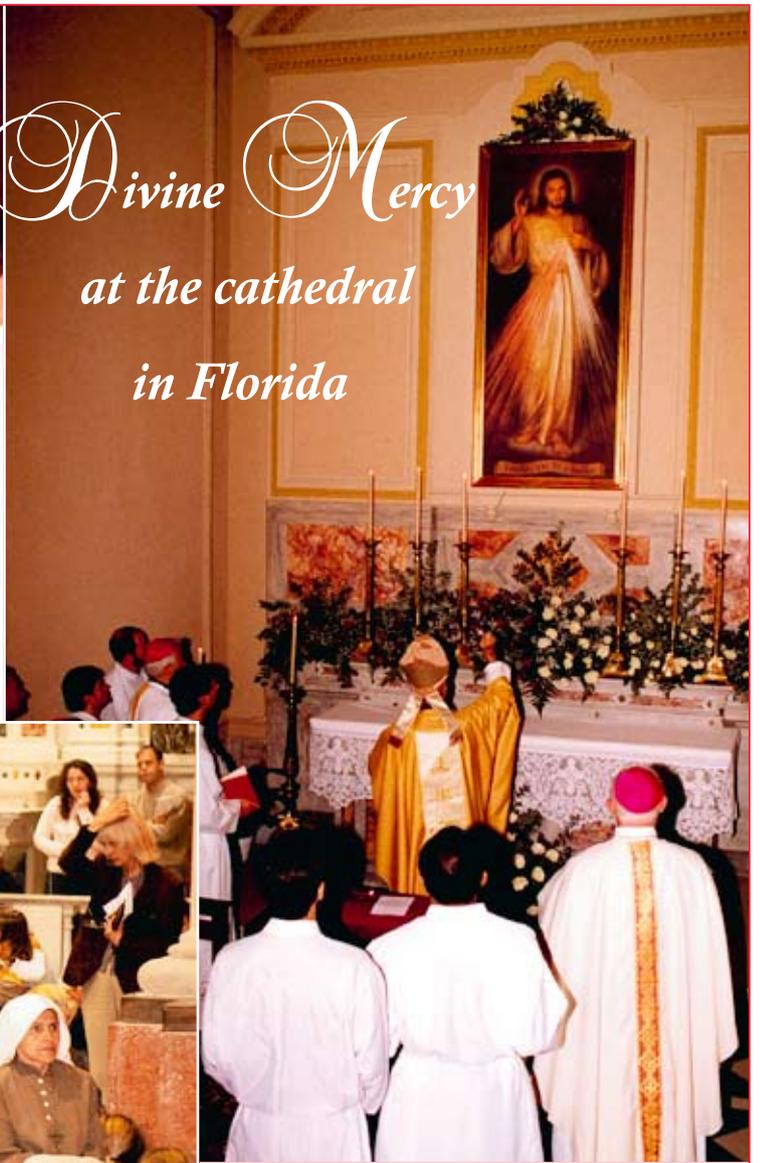
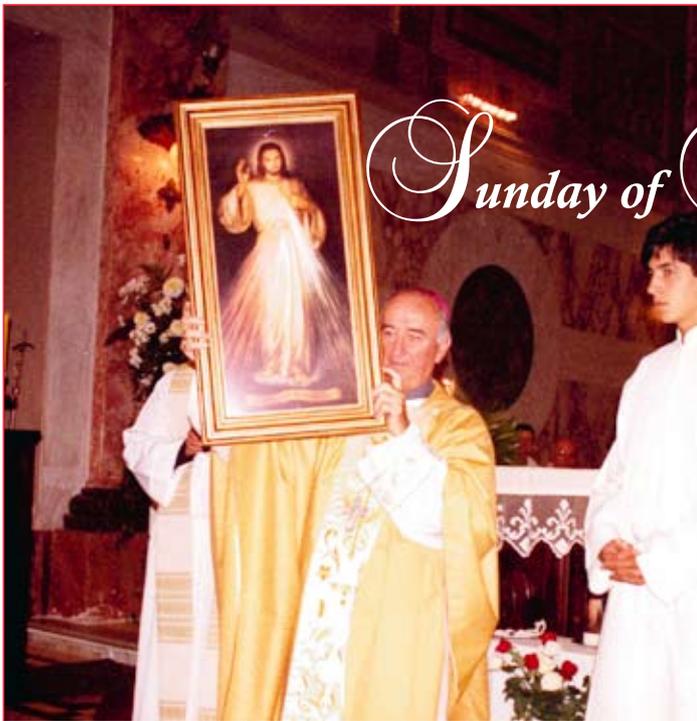
now and forever.” Somehow that opened my heart, and while I meditated silently on the image, a completely unknown desire welled up within me—I wanted to receive Jesus in Holy Communion.

The next day, my friend brought me to the cathedral priest and, after decades of not living the faith, I took my first catechism lesson. I learned why it is so important to be married in the Church before receiving Holy Communion. I told this to my husband, Rafael, who didn’t say anything at first. I was a little bit angry but I didn’t say anything; I just prayed. A week later, Rafael knelt down before me and asked me to be his wife. On the day we were wed in the church, I joyfully received Holy Communion and I became aware that only now we were really joined before God. What a blessing! Our two adult sons were also at the ceremony. Since then, I visit the image of Jesus of Divine Mercy every day. For me, it is very natural—actually it has become very important—to spend time with him and to tell him everything that is going on. I don’t know if I pray well, but I do know one thing: sometimes I come to him quite depressed and I go away renewed. I can’t understand how I survived so long without him!

I have been wounded all my life due to a lack of love since my childhood. Jesus in his mercy, however, healed me in the depths of my soul. I no longer live in my little world that is focused around me, but I am able to joyfully be there for the others. I am a totally different Laura. I go a way of faith now and, since my conversion, my husband sometimes comes to church as well.

Sunday of Divine Mercy

*at the cathedral
in Florida*



I am the Happiest Person in the World!

The shrine of the diocese's patroness, St. Therese of Lisieux, is located in the poor village Chamizo. This church, which we are currently renovating, had not had its own pastor for more than 20 years.

Since 2005, we have been caring for the spiritual and material welfare of the village's 500 inhabitants. Next to the church there is a Christian school and the children there are especially close to our hearts.



Santiago

*S*antiago, a boy at the school, is preparing for First Holy Communion. He is twelve years old, but he is much smaller and weaker than the other boys his age. Since he is shy and reserved, the other boys often tease him. At home he receives love neither from his mother who is young and mentally ill nor from his step-father who is verbally and physically abusive. More than once these great inner wounds have caused Santiago to react violently and be drawn into acts which would have justified admitting him to a home for juvenile delinquents. He could not hide this from anybody any longer, and even the other kids at school kept their distance from him. Santiago continued to close up and withdraw even more.

During a catechism class, one of our sisters explained to the children the importance of Confession and how God gives us a pure heart and fills us with joy when we tell our sins to the priest. Everybody looked at

Santiago and some of them made unkind comments about him.

His whole body shook and he almost could not get out the words to ask, *“Sister, but... if the priest tells my sins to the others?”*

The sister calmed him down, *“You know, Confession always remains a secret between you and the priest. He cannot speak with anybody about it. And remember, even if the others judge or punish you for what you have done, God is totally different. After Confession, God does not even remember*

your sins!”

On the day when the children made their first Confession, our sister was very surprised to see that shy Santiago wanted to be the first one in the confessional. Children are usually the opposite, everybody wants to be last.

After he confessed and prayed his penance, he came running and yelled radiantly, *“Sister, today I am the happiest person in the world. God forgave everything, and he doesn’t remember anything, he remembers nothing that happened.”*

Joaquin

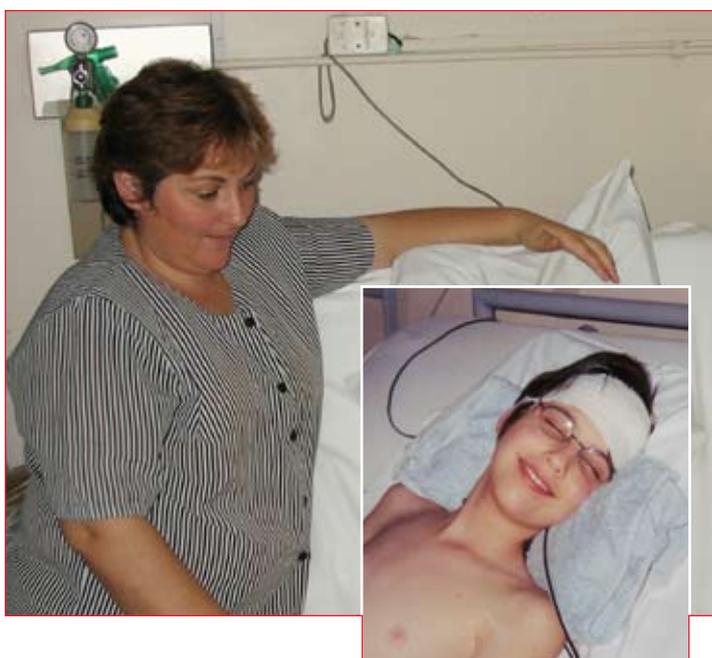
Sr. Raphaela recounts:

In 2004, 12-year-old Joaquin joined our children’s choir at the cathedral. He was always punctual and, unlike many other children, he continued coming to church even after his First Holy Communion. Suddenly, he fell ill one day. I brought Holy Communion to Joaquin, and he was thankful when we prayed together.

His mother Estela, on the other hand, was skeptical and not interested in what I had to say. The terrible diagnosis came at the beginning of 2006—a brain tumor. They operated on Joaquin for the first time in February, but were unable to remove all the cancerous cells.

I visit my weakened, dear little singer at least once a week to bring him Holy Communion. After the operation his mother began to open up, and she finally admitted, *“You know, I had such a terrible opinion of nuns that I never wanted to see one again. But that has changed now. I think differently.”*

In the months and weeks before Joaquin’s Confirmation on November 25, 2007, his mother was always the first one to ask at the end of the lesson, *“When are you coming back? Your visits help me so much.”* With one of her aunts, Estela even learned to pray the Rosary, and, in the meantime, she has begun to pray fervently with Joaquin and me. She has found her way back to the sacraments after many years, and she feels urged to attend Holy Mass regularly. Her son’s suffering has brought her noticeably closer to God, and I am especially pleased that she hung the image of Jesus of Divine Mercy in the nicest room of her house. She said, *“I understand now that Joaquin’s cancer is a trial rather than a punishment, as I thought in the beginning.”*



A Single Hail Mary

One of our parishes is named Berrondo and is consecrated to the Curé of Ars. The village has 300 inhabitants, just like Ars did when John Maria Vianney arrived.

There other similarities between Berrondo and Ars as well.

When this village was entrusted to our missionaries in 2004, only six children from the poorest families attended Sunday Mass.

We did not let that discourage us and began inviting them to come on Thursday afternoons for Holy Mass and hot chocolate and bread afterwards.

To our surprise, 30 lively children, who live more on the street than at home, came the first week. Each week, we give them a little catechism lesson after their snack, and many of them hear something about God for the first time.

To our delight, we have been able to prepare several groups for First Holy Communion. There are always nice things which take place in our "little Ars", where we also give out clothing and medicine to the most needy.



Our Humberto Maciel illustrates so well how we have to thank Our Lady for each pastoral accomplishment. In Humberto's case, she showed very clearly that she is mother for those who are far away from God and the faith. His wife and 11 children left him many years ago because of his carelessness. Nobody could stand it any more. The depressed, lonely man, who has so much pain in his legs that he is barely able to walk,

told our priest the first time he visited his home, *"I can't pray, but I'm Catholic."*

Fortunately, one of his sons had pity on him in the end and started to take care of him a little. One day, his 10-year-old granddaughter Yania also came to visit. She had heard a short time beforehand from one of the sisters in the First Communion class how important the "Hail Mary" is and how much consolation and help Our Lady can give through this prayer to those who are suffering. Since she knew that her grandpa could

not pray and was always in terrible pain, she brought him a long roll of paper on which she had written the whole Hail Mary in big letters so that, despite his poor eyesight, he would be able to read it and pray it with her. And he did it too!

The next time we passed by Humberto's, he began crying for joy. He could not believe that we had thought of him and had come to visit. *"You are really my friends,"* he repeated over and over again.

After he had told us about all his physical suffering, and all the pain that his family had caused him as well, he proudly took out his roll of paper with the Hail Mary and, although he cannot see anything anymore, wanted to pray it by himself, without any help. Since then, each time we come to visit, Grandpa Humberto eagerly unrolls his Hail Mary and prays with us. He cannot memorize it because the effects of alcohol have reduced his memory. When we gave him a picture of the Mother of All Nations for his birthday in March 2006, he began to cry. *"Sister, this is the greatest gift of my life. Despaired about my ruined life, twice I wanted to put an end to it, but this good mother wouldn't let me go. She saved me; otherwise I wouldn't be here anymore."*

Grandpa Humberto lives now in a nursing home in Florida. Last October, to our great joy, he brought all his misery and laid it like a child before God, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



Pictures of the church in Berrondo before and after the renovation.
Through your help, dear benefactors, we were able to rebuild our desolate parish church inside and out.



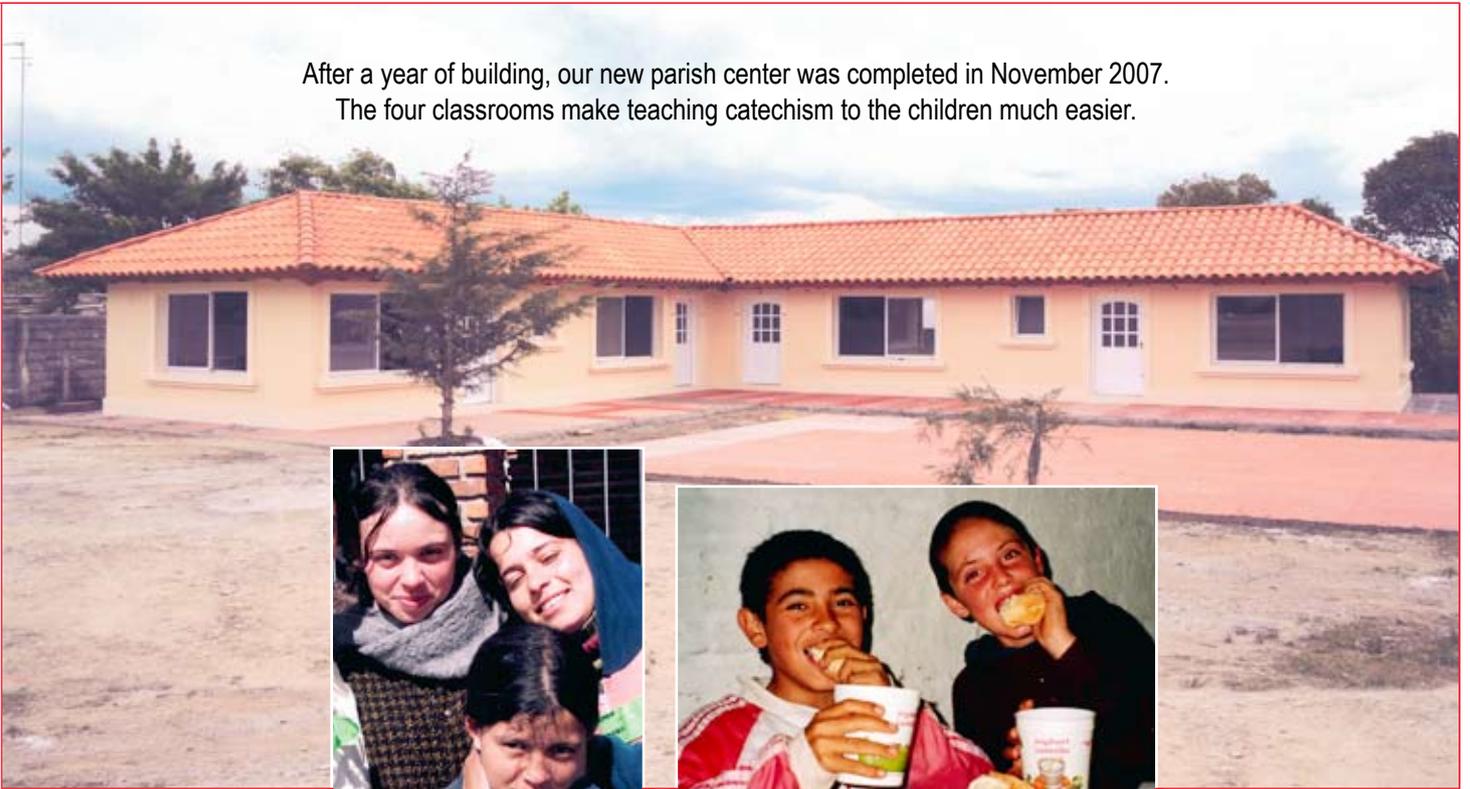


Impressive but quite different than our tradition,
the Three Kings arrive here on horseback in the hot summer sun.
Rich or poor, everybody in Uruguay learns to ride when they are young. It is the tradition of the land.



After the dress rehearsal on December 2, 2007

After a year of building, our new parish center was completed in November 2007.
The four classrooms make teaching catechism to the children much easier.



Eighty-five young people from our six parishes and from Florida acted in a play about the Martyrs which our missionaries first wrote and performed at the high school in Nitra, Slovakia. They began practicing for the Martyrologium in the summer of 2007 and everybody was very enthusiastic. They all believe but no longer practice their faith. However, through the rehearsals, they began coming more often to Holy Mass and some even to the Rosary and to Confession. As time went on, everybody gladly prayed a decade of the Rosary before each practice. Some asked to prepare for First Holy Communion and Confirmation and others wanted books to know the saints better, especially those whom they were performing. Opening night was March 9, 2008, at the Florida City Theatre. Other performances of the Martyrologium have been held in the six villages from where the actors come and everybody has been touched by it.



The Gypsies in Uzovská Panica

*Roznava is the smallest and poorest diocese in Slovakia,
and it has the highest unemployment in the country.*

*In 1993, Bishop Edward Kojnok entrusted us missionaries the unfamiliar village
Uzofska Panica in southern Slovakia close to the Hungarian border.*

*Its huge parish encompasses 22 villages but contains only three Catholic churches.
Along with Slovaks and Hungarians, there are mainly Roma, better known as Gypsies.*

Most of them live in slum-like conditions and are often unemployed.

We never expected to encounter such poverty only five hours east of Vienna.

*We have worked hard to build up our bilingual parish both spiritually and physically,
teaching catechism and religion classes, and doing things for the children and youth.*

*From the beginning, however, we also concentrated on the religious formation
and the personal development of the despised Gypsies,*

even though many people tried to talk us out of it saying,

“It is useless with the Gypsies, they’ll never make it out of their miserable situation.”

*In the meantime, 14 years have passed since the first brothers and sisters
arrived in Uzofska Panica which is 50 miles from our Motherhouse.*

*There are currently two priests, six sisters and one brother
from Slovakia, Austria, France and Switzerland living here with the Gypsies,
one of the most difficult missions.*



Each Person is Christ for Me

Fr. Lorenz, who had never had contact with Gypsies in his Tyrolean homeland, now loves these people in such a way that truly only God could have made possible.

Sr. Marie Marthe, his younger sibling, works with him; she has been answering the door here now for six years.

*That is no small feat in a Gypsy village!
She tells us a little from her rich experience.*

As in any mission, we too have to learn not to be too influenced by appearances when it comes to the Gypsies. Especially in the first years we had to discover and understand the mentality of the Roma. Day by day we strove to accept them in spite of their weaknesses and to love them as they are. Mother Teresa is a great example for me in this regard. She said, *“In the beginning, I thought I had to convert people. Meanwhile, I have learned that my task is to love and that*



love converts whenever it wills.” The ‘Mother of the Poor’ drew the necessary inner-strength *“to love until it hurts”* from the sacraments, her unity with Our Lady and her daily prayer. We try to live this also because, honestly, some situations are so challenging that without prayer we would never have the strength for this assignment.

However, there exist great differences among our Gypsies. Some live very simply, in many cases poorly, but they try to integrate themselves. They have good hygiene, a polite manner and try to learn a trade even when the job outlook is pretty bleak. There are many others, unfortunately, who never find their way out of this miserable environment and have resigned themselves to this fate. We try to seek out especially these lost ones for the Lord.

Blessed Charles de Foucauld, who worked with the Tuareg people in the Algerian desert, helps me particularly in this endeavor. Like him, we want to pave a way to the souls for Jesus by making contacts, offering help and letting this isolated, despised people feel our understanding and goodness so that we may gradually earn their trust.

We rejoiced, therefore, when a Slovak family father from the village said a short time ago, *“The Roma have really changed for the better, and I am convinced that it is through your efforts.”*

A Knock on the Door

The Roma often seem like big kids to me, worry-free, spirited, spontaneous, generous (even if they don't have anything), and always ready to test how far they can go, like when they pound on our door for every little thing.

Yes, the unbelievable persistence and perseverance with which they ask and beg makes me think sometimes, *"If I were only half as persistent in prayer with my worries and intentions."*



The Gypsies know that in emergencies, like when a child is sick or someone is hurt and needs to be brought to the hospital, they can ring the doorbell even at night. Otherwise, it has been worthwhile to accustom them to ringing at the mission door only during certain hours. At those times they may ask for things generous friends and benefactors have donated like clothing, shoes, school-supplies, strollers, medicine, towels, construction material, etc. At the end of the month, when their pockets are empty, they also receive food which we purchase from donations, baby formula, bread or baking powder for their typical Gypsy bread, "wakaro". The children here still light up over a piece of candy because it is something rarely found at home.

When the Roma children have a birthday—and they are children here until they are 20—they may come to us to receive an entire new outfit. In Uzovska Panica alone, that amounts each year to about 150 happy Gypsy children whom otherwise nobody would remember.



Children are the only thing that our Gypsies have in abundance. Girls marry at 16 or 17 and often have four children by the time they are 22. Many of the young women live on welfare and know that they can come here before the birth and receive everything they need from pajamas and toiletries to diapers and baby clothing.

Through this charity, our prayers and helpful talks, we have helped prevent abortions in several cases. One joyous mother said recently, *"How happy I am now about my decision! This last one is actually my favorite child."*

In order to help some Gypsy girls develop, we pay them to help us in the house or garden and, through that they discover their talents. Many of them are very gifted musically or artistically.





The Despised in Kocika

“*To describe the situation of the European Roma as an island of third-world in the first-world would be an understatement,*” explained Gypsy expert Jessica Heun from the University of Dusseldorf. We missionaries see how true that is when, loaded with humanitarian aide, we visit the huts of Kocika (cover page), a remote valley of our parish. Approximately 90 Gypsies, many of whom are illiterate, live there in total moral and material poverty. They have no electricity, running water or heating, and are packed into dark “holes” without windows. Even their own people make fun of them and look down on them.

One large family there has 22 children. It is understandable that they are thankful for any help they receive. Candles, for example, are a necessity because it is not uncommon for rats to come into the dark houses. Those who are able, leave for the West to beg or play music.

In many of the villages where we missionaries regularly teach catechism, there are no churches and so for the time being our two priests celebrate Holy Mass in the town hall, the school or the gymnasium. On “children’s day” everybody is excited when we celebrate from time to time in the most beautiful “basilica” of all, outside in God’s open nature.

Thanks to the help of benefactors, we can pick up parishioners with buses for Sunday Mass from all around the parish. Some of them come to Uzofska Panica, to the parish church “The Assumption” which, with the enthusiastic support of friends and volunteers, was beautifully renovated from the ground up and solemnly dedicated by Bishop Edward Kojnok in August 2006. Even from

the most distant village Lipovec, where you feel like you've gone back in time, we pick up children for Mass. Their separation from the rest of the world has, in a certain sense, preserved their innocence. For Mass in the southern part of the parish, the faithful go to Figa, where bullet holes from the Second World War can still be seen in the walls of the church. When we go to bless the houses or visit the sick there, the elderly still speak a lot about the suffering they endured during Communism.



At our mission station, there is always something to build or fix up and without the steady help from the West, none of it would be possible. A dilapidated school was transformed into a pastoral center, and St. Joseph's Chapel, which was once an old house, was just finished.

In our mission house the youth mingle: Slovaks, Hungarians and Roma come for catechism classes, the children's hour, a youth prayer group, and to sing and play. The fruit is unity and even friendship where normally only prejudices reign. Those who are preparing for First Communion or Confirmation may participate in the much-loved summer camp.



In 1997, Pope John Paul II beatified the first Gypsy, Ceferino Giménez Malla, known as "El Pelé".

Every year in Uzofska Panica there is a very colorful celebration where the whole parish makes a little pilgrimage to a picture of El Pelé in our church. The celebration concludes outdoors with Gypsy music and lively dancing.



From Good-for-nothing to Altar Boy

Along with two of our Slovak sisters who teach religion and prepare the students for First Communion in the Hungarian and Slovak schools, Fr. Jozafat has also been working for years with the children. He teaches religion classes in six schools to Slovaks, Hungarians and Gypsies between the ages of six and fifteen.

Our sacristan Berti, a Gypsy, always accompanies me to translate into Hungarian. The first time I visited one of the classes, a flower pot went flying across the room. I was shocked and thought, “You studied at the Gregorian University in Rome six years for this?” Next, a first grader in Uzofska Panica, Zdeno, continually tried my patience. One time the seven-year-old threw himself on the floor, and another time disrupted everything with laughing and screaming. He always thought of something new; I, on the other hand, didn’t know what to do anymore. One day, as I was playing soccer with the altar boys on the field by the school, Zdeno showed up and wanted to play. “Certainly not,” was my first thought, but then I said to myself, “Let him play. He can’t do anything wrong here.” So the trouble-maker played with us. Afterwards, I invited him to serve at the evening Mass, and, to my great surprise, he came.



Fr. Jozafat (above) and Sr. Columba, from Slovakia, are the second set of siblings working together in Uzofska Panica. Sr. Columba just finished her degree in education this spring at the university in Brastislava. Even before she finished, she began helping her brother with the children and teaches at the elementary school.

As he was getting dressed to serve—it was the first time for him—he was really happy. Actually, I don't think I have ever seen anybody so happy in my life. Immediately after Mass he asked, "Can I come to the summer camp if I serve Mass every day?" That was something

I never expected considering the very difficult situation in which Zdeno lives. Since that day, there has never been another problem with him at school. The boy is like a different person and now reminds the other troublemakers, "What are you doing? It's class time."

The Death of a Communist

Mrs. Babikova from Uzovska Panica told us the following true story about her Hungarian friend Piroshka Szeplaki who is one of the great "pearls" we have met. At the age of 78, she continues to pray faithfully for priests.

During Communism I was a cleaning lady at the hospital. From the very first day, I got along especially well with a modest nurse by the name of Piroshka. She had a friendly smile for everybody and was Catholic like me. She was older, however, and should have been retiring soon. I noticed early on that my friend prayed a lot, and, when time allowed, we prayed together. Piroshka was never ashamed of her faith. She was not afraid to show her religious convictions either, even though it was dangerous at that time. People often made fun of her and humiliated her at work.

Stefan Findra, the husband of our boss Amalia, was in our ward at that time, seriously ill from lung cancer. He was a staunch Communist who couldn't stand faithful people. He belittled and hurt my friend whenever he could. He refused to accept anything from Piroshka when she was delivering meals. He usually got mad and sometimes to such an extent that he would say, "I've had enough of this, I've had it!" and wouldn't eat for the rest of the day. Everyone was aware how quickly his health was deteriorating. Three days before his death, however, he had a significant dream. Afterwards, he immediately called his wife and asked her to bring all the doctors and nurses, Piroshka included. Then he told us what happened:

"I saw so clearly where I could have ended up! I am fully conscious and I am telling the truth. You all know that I was not a good man. Therefore, I want to ask all of you for forgiveness, especially from you Piroshka. Please give me your hand, and I ask you before everybody in this room to forgive me for how terribly I treated you. When I die, please be at my side in the final hours and pray out loud until I expire. Please wash and dress me after my death and place me in the coffin."

These words were astonishing, especially for the non-believing doctors. The dying man's wish was fulfilled. Piroshka stayed with him and prayed out loud until he died two days later, a completely different man. After his death, both of us often remembered him in our prayers.



Mrs. Babikova and Piroshka

Where can I help?

In this third and final issue about the missions, we have led you through the last of our present 23 stations in 10 countries. You have been able to recognize yourselves a little bit of the unimaginable poverty in the areas where we work. May we ask you once again to choose one of these missions to support and to note it on the reply envelope? With the Gypsies in Uzofska Panica, for example, our missionaries would be very thankful to cover the costs of the two “church vans” which they use to pick up and bring home the faithful from 20 villages for Sunday Mass. This costs about \$10,000 per year. In Uruguay on the other hand, Wilson, Joaquin’s uncle who has cancer, could be helped if somebody would pay for a \$7,500 treatment which is not covered by insurance. We are just as thankful, however, for unspecified donations which can be used wherever they are needed most—just think about the wearisome and costly building and renovation we are currently undertaking in eight churches and chapels from South America to Kazakhstan. Our community carries the financial burden for the majority of these projects.

We thank you in anticipation for your faithful support, we cannot do without it and it consoles us to know that we are not forgotten in the distant missions.

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Thank You!

Dear reader, a warm thank you for each of the loving gifts which you have given to us for our mission stations. Without your help, we would not be able to support those who are in great need. It is impossible to speak to people living in poverty about the love of God without concretely helping them at the same time so that they may experience this love.

Dear benefactors, we could give many examples from individuals and situations where we have been able to help alleviate suffering with your financial contributions. But since it is nearly summer in the Motherhouse and in Rome

and another year of the novitiate is drawing to a close, we would like to share our great joy with you. You are first of all spiritual benefactors for us through your prayer and your love. So we also have your prayer to thank that ten young women from the USA, Russia, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Slovakia were accepted as candidates at the Motherhouse. That is in addition to the five postulants we reported to you about at the brothers' novitiate in Rome.

We are sure that you rejoice with us and that you will accompany the new vocations with your prayers.

*Your thankful priests, brothers and sisters
from the Family of Mary*



*“Lord, open our eyes,
that we may recognize you in our brothers and sisters.*

*Lord open our ears,
that we may hear the calls of the hungry, the cold,
the fearful and the oppressed.*

*Lord, open our hearts,
that we may love one another as you love us...”*

Mother Teresa

