

Queen of the Holy Rosary Mediatrix of Peace,  
Mediatrix Between God and Man



# Shrine Newsletter

Volume 20 Winter 2017



*Christmas is Christ's Birthday,  
Come Let Us Adore Him*

## **About Our Cover**

“Now it came to pass in those days that a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken. This first census took place while Cyrinus was governor of Syria. And all were going, each to his own town, to register.” And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judea to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem - to register, together with Mary his espoused wife who was with child. And it came to pass while they were there, that the days for her to be delivered were fulfilled. And she brought forth a Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Luke, Chapter Two

## **A PROMISE**

Mary Ann Van Hoof (seer, stigmatist, and mystic) was given the following promise before she was taken to her heavenly reward on March 18, 1984:

***“When we take your sister home, I will be with you on all the Anniversary Days to bless these grounds. You will not see Me or the celestials with Me. I will not abandon you, unless you abandon Me. Is that understood?”***

## **OUR PLEDGE**

To stand firmly for God and for Country;  
To bring the truth to all people;  
To bring peace and unity between home, school, and church;  
Thus bringing everlasting peace to the nation.

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# Shrine Newsletter

**FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 1959**

The period of Lent is a period of fasting, sacrifice and penance.  
That too, must come from the heart.

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## Vigil Schedule at the Shrine

### January 2018

**8th Our Lady of Prompt Succor** — 8:00 p.m. Vigil

**23rd Espousal of Our Lady**— 8:00 p.m. Vigil

### February 2018

**2nd Presentation of Jesus & Purification of Blessed Virgin Mary** —  
8:00 p.m. Vigil

**9th Anna Katerina Emmerick** — 8:00 p.m. Vigil

**13th Robert Van Hoof Death Anniversary** —8:00 p.m. Vigil

**25th Tom Huber, Henry Binkowski** —9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Memorial

### March. 2018

**17th Saint Patrick** — 8:00 p.m. Vigil

**18th Mary Ann Van Hoof Death Anniversary** —8:00 p.m. Vigil

**19th Saint Joseph** — 8:00 p.m. Vigil

**21st Saint Benedict** — 8:00 p.m. Vigil

**25th Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary -**  
Procession and 8:15 p.m. Vigil

### April 2017

**6th Father Martins Death Anniversary** — 8:00 p.m. Vigil

**7th Apparition Anniversary of 1950** — 8:00 p.m. Candlelite  
Procession and 8:15 p.m. Vigil

### May. 2018

**1st Saint Joseph the Worker** — 8:00 p.m. Vigil

**24th Mary Help of Christians** —8:00 p.m. Procession and 8:15 p.m.  
Vigil

**28th Apparition Anniversary of 1950**—12 noon Procession and  
1:00 p.m. Vigil

**29th Apparition Anniversary of 1950** — 12 noon Procession and  
1:00 p.m. Vigil

**30th Apparition Anniversary of 1950** — 12 noon Procession and  
1:00 p.m. Vigil

**31st Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary** —  
12:45p.m. Procession/Crowning and 1:00 p.m. Vigil



## OUR LADY'S MESSAGES

The Revelations and Messages shared at the Queen of the Holy Rosary, Mediatrix of Peace Shrine came from the Blessed Mother, or one of the Saints who assisted Her; such as: St. Therese *The Little Flower*, St. Francis, St. Joan of Arc, and others.

Pilgrims who have visited the Shrine on Anniversary Days when the Revelations were given have seen Mary Ann in a state of ecstasy, noticing that she was not conscious of anything or anyone around her as she spoke. These Messages were taken down on a tape recorder and in long hand by at least two people. Some Messages were repeated word for word as given by the Blessed Mother; however, in most cases Mary Ann was inspired to speak using her own language, grammar and expressions. Many Messages were also given during suffering periods in her home, especially during Advent and Lent.

In a more general sense, the Revelations and Messages came from the Triumphant Church in Heaven, who used the voice of Mary Ann Van Hoof as a human transmitting device or instrument.

## HEAVEN'S MESSAGES IN REVIEW

### Present Day Martyrs

We are facing very perilous times as we hear daily reports of car bombs, shootings, suicide bombers, etc. Those targeted are Christians of all ages. We read in scripture (John 16. RHE). *“They will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God.”* These are the times we are living in. We desperately need to pray for our fellow Christians.

On November 14, 1958 the following Message was given by Our Holy Mother to Mary Ann: *“Martyrs, more martyrs for God’s Kingdom. Victims of the Godless, the anti-Christ. Pray, pray; remember Thy Creator and Savior first and last each day. Call to the Mother of God to help guide you through this trying path of confusion; un-Godliness, blackest, vilest sin”.*

Then on May 8, 1959 another Message was given: *“This is the period of the greatest confusion. The greatest holocaust in history .....MARTYRS, BLOODSHED, VICTIMS – and yet eyes are blinded, blinded because they do not remember their Lord and God, their Creator; their Creator and their salvation.”*

Our Lady also gave this Message on December 8, 1959 where She said,

*“There are many martyrs; there will be many more. America has the reputation of being one of the bravest, one of the quickest to jump into action. Then, why is it so hard to get the same ones to jump into action when it comes to saving the Christian World; why? You go and fight battles on foreign soils while at home we are destroying the very thing you are fighting for, the freedom of speech and liberty for all - the religion; and above all the Catholic Church, because the Catholic Church stands in the way of the enemy. Once there is brought about the unification of the Churches, the battle will be won. It is right now that they are breaking the threads of this unity, to completely destroy and be lost forever.”*

Later on February 17, 1961 yet another Message: *“No peace, no peace; more uprising, more revolts, more assassinations. Christian lives martyred. Persecution, trials, tribulation great for the workers for their Lord and God.”*

And, still another warning Message on March 28, 1969: *“It is up to the God-fearing people, God-loving Christians to stand up and be counted. Oh, you will be a martyr to thy Church, yes; martyrdom will befall many, but martyrdom does not always mean thy life will be taken. You will be a living martyr to thy Faith, thy Church; that is martyrdom. You will face severe persecution. You will be humiliated, ridiculed to such severeness that you will feel you cannot stand it; because it hurts your family. That is living martyrdom. But, stand up no matter how severe it is for you; you are doing it in the name of Jesus Christ.”*

On several occasions Mary Ann Van Hoof envisioned St. Joan burning at the stake. One such Vision came on May 30, 1974 when St. Therese appeared and gave this Message: *“The scene thy Sister just witnessed is to show you how we are with you as we were with our dear Sister, Joan, when she burned at the stake. She tells us that the agony she bore in her heart before the burning at the stake was much more painful, much more devastating to her being; mentally, physically, and emotionally than the burning at the stake. For, when she was burning at the stake, she knew that her Lord and God had not forsaken her; that in these flames she would resurrect, and she would find the Glory of Glories in Heaven forever and ever.”*

Let us invoke the intercession of St. Joan to give strength and courage to all those persecuted; and that we, too, may be aided by her prayers to face whatever the future has in store for us.



# SHRINE NEWS



## House of Prayer

October 14th was previously set for our fifth and final concrete pour of the Mezzanine area in the House of Prayer. As the day approached and the weather prediction was for rain, we prayed to St. Joseph to help us cope with the conditions and have a successful pour. We did prepare plastic coverings just in case.

We had prepared for this day all summer long by setting up support-shoring, building forms, putting steel reinforcement bars in place one at a time in two directions, and then wired them together. Literally tons of steel was needed for the 56 yds. of concrete.

Just as the women started serving a wonderful breakfast for the volunteers at 6:45 A.M. the rain stopped; and from 8:00 until 11:30 our volunteers from far and near poured and covered the concrete just in time.

A noon lunch was then served by the ladies. A big "Thank You" to the Ladies, to our Volunteers, and to St. Joseph!





## **Mezzanine area in the House of Prayer Completed** **October 7th Anniversary Day Report**

We have to admit that the cool and wet weather conditions were a surprise for us all. However, it didn't cause great concern for all the loyal and dedicated visiting pilgrims from our surrounding states who were there to prayerfully join us.

The Special Observance again started at noon by carrying Our Lady's statue in Procession through the Shrine Grounds to the Sacred Spot of the Apparitions. Even though Our Lady's statue had a protective covering over it and there were no flags being carried, it was inspiring to see the pilgrims walking in the wet conditions while singing the Shrine song "Ave, Ave" that was written by Fr. Duren.

When reflecting on Our Holy Mother's Messages of warning about the problems that our Country and our Church would be facing if we did not correct our ways, this effort was the least we could do to show Her our love and appreciation.

The next Anniversary Day will be on November 12th to honor Our Lady's first Visit to Mary Ann Van Hoof back on the evening of October 7, 1949. There will be a candlelight Procession starting at 8:00 P.M., followed by the Prayer Vigil. Please come to join us if you can.

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**Continued from page 9**  
and glory in Heaven. "*Lay not up to yourselves treasures on Earth: where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal.*" (Matt. 6:19) The wealthy can practice poverty in spirit by giving alms and performing good works.

Let us contemplate the true value of this lesson of the manger: Born in a cave, a dwelling for lowly animals, He, the great King of Heaven and Earth comes to us. "***God be with us***".

# FOOD FOR THE SOUL

## Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

The lessons of the manger are Love, and Poverty in Spirit. St. Bernard says: *“Poverty was not to be found in Heaven, but it reigned on Earth. Mankind, however, did not recognize its worth; and therefore the Son of God came down to choose poverty for His inseparable companion and to teach us to esteem it.*

From the book, *“The 12 Steps to Holiness and Salvation”* by St. Alphonsus Ligouri, we read:

This thought is in keeping with what the Apostle writes to his disciples: *“For you know the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich He became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich.”* (2 Cor. 8:9) Although our Divine Redeemer was the Lord and Master of all the riches of Heaven and Earth, He willed nevertheless to become poor in this world so that through His example we might become rich. He wished to induce us to love poverty as He did; for poverty, by detaching us from earthly riches, enables us to share in the treasures of Heaven. Our Lord taught those who embrace poverty of the spirit shall have a great and certain reward. He promises happiness even in this life: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”* (Matt. 5:3). While here on earth, they shall receive special graces.

The reward of the poor in spirit is very great. *“The less we have here,”* says St. Teresa, *“the greater will be our joy in Heaven, where our dwelling shall correspond to the love with which we imitated the life of poverty of our Divine Master here on Earth.”* He who is poor from choice despises the possessions of this earth and is, at the same time, the master of all.

A soul that is thoroughly penetrated with Divine Love is inclined of itself, of course not without the aid of grace, to divest itself of all earthly things which might prevent it from belonging entirely to God. He who loves God is not anxious to gain the esteem and love of men. All his efforts are directed to one end; to please God, the only object of his love.

Those who truly love God do not seek to praise themselves or take pleasure in hearing themselves praised. They are disturbed on account of the recognition they receive, and they rejoice when they are called upon to suffer contempt. *“I am only that which I am before God,”* said St. Francis of Assisi.

We cannot put all our efforts into striving for earthly possessions, for this puts us in grave danger of being eternally lost. The riches we must strive to gain, says St. Prosper, are not temporal goods but virtues, humility, meekness, chastity, and piety; for these will constitute our greatness

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## PRO-LIFE

Abortion remains the primary pro-life issue of all time. When we cannot find it in our hearts to protect and defend the most vulnerable amongst us, how can we expect anyone to hesitate to destroy life at any stage or any age, for any reason.

Euthanasia, assisted suicide, abortion, and murder in any form all result from a lack of respect for the gift of life that was given to us by God, Himself. Sometimes we are able to soften our conscience about euthanasia and assisted suicide by saying we are helping to alleviate unrelenting pain and suffering in the person whose life is being snuffed out. Sometimes it is at the request of that very person (assisted suicide), sometimes at the request of someone inconvenienced by the life and/or suffering of a “loved one” (euthanasia). No matter what name is given to these acts, it is the taking of a life; murder.

In today’s society there is not much value placed on the offering of one’s suffering to expiate for our own sins and the sins of others. So when we see someone suffering “unnecessarily” our first effort is to alleviate the pain. If this isn’t possible, then we may opt to convince the person that he or she is better off dead than continue such suffering. If this doesn’t work, there is the option of euthanizing the person “to put the person out of his or her misery”.

All this is done, they think of course, with the “best of intentions”. But it is actually a lack of faith. No thought is given to the immense value that suffering has if offered to Almighty God in reparation for our sins and the sins of the whole world. It is true that Our Lord suffered and died for us; and that one drop of His Precious Blood shed for us is enough to make up for all the sins of all the world for all time. But it is also true, that that is not how God wanted it to be. God wanted us to join our sufferings with those of His Divine Son in order to have a part, however small, in the salvation of our own souls and those for whom we offer it. This does not take away from the completeness of the sufferings of Christ, as according to St. Paul in his letter to the Colossians 1:24; *“Who now rejoice in My sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in My flesh, for His body, which is the Church: Douay-Rheims Bible.*

Every effort should be made to alleviate pain and suffering, but if it cannot be, people should be encouraged to offer their sufferings to God. The idea of this should be started when children are young. When they get little scratches and bumps, it should be suggested to them to offer it up to

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## SAINTS IN REVIEW

### St. Sharbel Makhlouf

Saint Sharbel was born on May 8, 1828 as Youssef Antoun (Joseph Anthony) Makhouf in the village of Bekaa-Kafra in northern Lebanon.

Joseph was raised by an uncle because his father, a mule driver, died when he was only three years old. Joseph's favorite book was Thomas a Kempis's "The Imitation of Christ".

At the age of 23 he left to join the Baladite Monastery of St. Maron at Annaya, Lebanon and took the name 'Sharbel' in honor of a second-century martyr. He was taught by Father Nimatullah, who later became Saint Har-dini. Sharbel professed his final vows in 1853 and was ordained six years later.

Following the example of the fifth-century St. Maron, Sharbel lived as a hermit from 1875 until his death. He followed a strict fast and was very devoted to the Blessed Sacrament. His reputation for holiness prompted people to seek him for advice, to receive a blessing, and to be remembered in his prayers. Occasionally his superiors would ask him to administer the sacraments to nearby villages, which he was glad to do.

On December 16, 1898, Sharbel was struck with a paralyzing illness while celebrating the Holy Mass. He died on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1898 and was buried in the St. Maron Monastery Cemetery in Annaya. A few months later, dazzling lights were seen around his grave. Hordes of pilgrims started swarming to the place to obtain his intercession. Christians and non-Christians soon made his tomb a place of pilgrimage and of cures.

In 1925, his beatification and canonization were proposed for declaration by Pope Pius XI. In 1950, the grave was opened in the presence of an official committee which included doctors, who verified the soundness of the body.

After the grave had been opened and inspected, the variety of healing incidents multiplied. Again, a multitude of pilgrims of different religions started flocking to the Annaya Monastery seeking Sharbel's intercession. Several post-mortem miracles are attributed to him, including periods in 1927 and 1950 when a bloody "sweat" flowed from his corpse, soaking his vestments.

His tomb has become a place of pilgrimage for Lebanese and non-Lebanese, Christian and non-Christian alike.

In 1954, Pope Pius XII signed a decree accepting a proposal for the beatification of Sharbel Makhlouf, the hermit. On December 5, 1965, Pope Paul VI officiated at the ceremony of the beatification of Father

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St. Sharbel Makhlouf - continued on page 23

## CHURCH UNITY

### Heaven's Request:

On February 28, 1958 Mary Ann Van Hoof received the following Message from Our Blessed Mother, "*Without the unification of the Eastern Rites with the Roman Rites, we shall not have peace. The conversion of Russia is the answer to peace; and thus meaning the unification of the two branches of the Church into one. Then we shall have peace.*" This was the first of several pleas that She made.

### Papal Reminder and Request:

On May 2, 1995 Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter *Orientale Lumen* to the Bishops, Clergy, and the Faithful, wanted to mark the Centenary of Pope Leo III's *Orientalium Dignitas* with a reminder and a request.

Pope John Paul said in his reminder, "*On the centenary of that event and of the initiatives the Pontiff intended at that time as an aid to restoring unity with all Christians of the East, I wish to send to the Catholic Church a similar appeal, which has been enriched by the knowledge and interchange which has taken place over the past century....*"

*"May God shorten the time and distance. May Christ, the Orientale Lumen, soon, very soon, grant us to discover that in fact, despite so many centuries of distance, we were very close; because together – perhaps without knowing it -*

*we were walking towards the one Lord, and thus towards one another."*

Pope John Paul then shared his hope, and request of us all, when he stated,

*"May the people of the third millennium be able to enjoy this discovery, finally achieved by a word that is harmonious and thus fully credible, proclaimed by brothers and sisters who love one another and thank one another for the riches which they exchange. Thus shall we offer ourselves to God with the pure hands of reconciliation, and the people of the world will have one more well-founded reason to believe and to hope."*

### Our Response:

Let us heed the requests of Our Heavenly Mother, and the Popes that She inspired, by praying daily for this unification of the Eastern Rites with the Roman Rites; so that ALL MY BE ONE, and we can have the peace that Our Blessed Lady promised.

The CHAIR OF UNITY OCTAVE and following prayers can be used to help us fulfill this task.

God bless us and answer our pleas!



**CHAIR OF UNITY OCTAVE**  
**JANUARY 18 to 25**  
**PRAY THAT ALL MAY BE ONE**

(The Octave is a period of eight days of prayer (Jan. 18-25) for the reunion of Christendom, the return of lapsed Catholics, and the conversion of unbelievers. It was founded by Fr. Paul Jannes Francis, S.A. in 1908 and blessed by St. Pius X in 1909. Since then it has spread to all parts of the Catholic world. The intentions of the Octave are given below.)

**DAILY INTENTIONS**

- Jan. 18 The union of all Christians to the one true faith of the Catholic Church.
- Jan. 19 The return of all separated Eastern Catholics to communion with the Holy See.
- Jan. 20 The reconciliation of Anglicans with the Holy See.
- Jan. 21 The reconciliation of European Protestants with the Holy See.
- Jan. 22 That American Christians become one in union with the Chair of Peter.
- Jan. 23 The restoration of lapsed Catholics to the sacramental life of the Church.
- Jan. 24 That the Jewish people come into their inheritance in Jesus Christ.
- Jan. 25 The missionary extension of Christ's Kingdom throughout the World.

**THE OFFICIAL OCTAVE PRAYER**

Antiphon: That they all may be One, as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me. (John 17:21)

Versicle: I say unto thee thou art Peter;

Response: And upon this Rock I will build My Church.

**Prayer**

O Lord Jesus Christ, who said unto Thine Apostles: Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give unto you: regard not our sins, but the faith of Thy Church, and grant unto her that peace and unity which are agreeable to Thy will: Who livest and reignest God forever and ever. Amen. Lord Jesus, most gracious Saviour of the world, we humbly beg of Thee by Thy Most Sacred Heart, that all the sheep now wandering astray may be converted to Thee, the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls: Who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

## **PRAYER TO OUR LADY**

Priest and People: O Virgin Immaculate, who was preserved by a singular privilege of grace from Original Sin, look down with pity upon our separated brethren who are still your children and call them back to the Center of Unity. Many have, even from afar, perserved a most tender devotion towards you, O Mother. Reward them for their devotion by obtaining for them the grace of conversion. Victorious over the powers of hell from the very first moment of your existence. Renew, now that the necessity is more urgent, your triumphant progress as in ages past. Glorify your Son, O Mother, by bringing back to the One Fold His straying sheep, making them obedient to the guidance of the Universal Shepherd who is His Vicar on earth. And may it be your glory, O Virgin Mary, to banish error from the earth, to put an end to disunity, and to restore peace to the world. Amen. Our Lady of the Atonement, intercede for us that there may be fulfilled the prayer of your Divine Son: That all may be one.

## **PRAYER TO ST. PETER**

Priest: Glorious Saint Peter, as a reward for your lively and generous faith, profound and sincere humility, and ardent love, you were singled out by Our Lord and endowed with most special privileges. You were made Prince of the Apostles, with primacy over the whole Church, of which you were made the rock and foundation. Obtain for us, we pray, a lively faith and an ardent zeal, so that all of us will labor for the return of our separated brethren. May the desire of our Divine Redeemer, that there might be but "one fold and one shepherd," be for us as it was for you, the inspiration to work and pray for the return of all those who are still outside the fold. Strengthened by Divine Grace, may they be led back speedily to the bosom of our Mother, the Catholic Church. Amen.

Versicle: Pray for us, Saint Peter the Apostle,

Response: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

### **Let Us Pray**

O God, who hast given unto Thy blessed Apostle Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and the power to bind and loose: grant that we may be delivered through the help of his intercession, from the bonds of all our sins: Who livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.

## HYMN

THAT ALL BE ONE, O DEAREST LORD, WE PRAY,  
THAT ALL BE DRAWN WITHIN THY ONE, TRUE FOLD,  
BACK TO THY CHURCH FROM WHICH THE WAND'RERS  
STRAY,

AND THY 'TRUE FAITH SHE KEEPS LIKE SAINTS OF OLD,  
O BRING THEM BACK GOOD SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP,  
AND ROUSE THE HEATHEN NATIONS FROM THEIR  
SLEEP.

THEN PRAISE WE GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON,  
AND GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT, THREE IN ONE,  
THAT ONE IN HIM AND ONE TOGETHER,  
WE IN UNITY MAY PRAISE THE TRINITY,  
TILL ALL THE RANSOMED FALL BEFORE HIS THRONE,  
AND GIVE ALL GLORY TO OUR GOD ALONE.

AMEN.

## WHAT WE PRAY FOR

The unity which all men desire in these dark days cannot be had apart from Jesus Christ; everyone who professes to be Christian admits this. But the unity which Christ offers is that of one fold and one shepherd. The Octave aims to secure for all men this unity of Christ. As. Fr. Paul said: "There is no other unity possible in the divine economy save that which is built upon the same foundation as the one on which Christ Jesus, the Lord and Master, founded His Church, and you know what that foundation is: ... "And I say to thee that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock, I will build my Church. and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven (by which He meant His Church) and whatever thou shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever thou shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven." ... When, therefore, you unit with us in the observance of the Unity Octave it should be to prayed specifically that all those who, down through the centuries, have been separated from the Chair of Peter at. Rome may return to Catholic communion, that is to say, communion with the Apostolic See."

## HOW TO OBSERVE THE OCTAVE

1. Recite the Official Prayer daily.
2. Assist at Mass and receive Communion daily.
3. Pray the Rosary daily for Unity, especially for the Church here.
4. Attend Octave exercises in Church.
5. Visit the Blessed Sacrament; make the Way of the Cross; perform spiritual and corporal works of mercy.
6. Offer daily actions for Unity; Read good Catholic literature.
7. Give good example to Catholics and non-Catholics.

Join the League of Prayer for Unity; and continue this crusade every day of the year.

(Indulgences attached to the Official Prayer)

1. Partial Indulgence of 300 days on each day of the Octave in any Church or public oratory where the exercise is performed.
2. Plenary Indulgence under usual conditions, at the completion of the Octave

(Granted by rescript of December 10, 1946  
by His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, through Nicola Cardinal Canali)

**Please: share this  
- CHAIR OF UNITY OCTAVE-  
With  
Family, friends, and relatives**

## SILENCE IN A NOISE-FILLED WORLD

### *Feature Article*

Cell phones, computers, television, and radio are bombarding us with “noise”. The instant communication of texting, e-mail, and social media draws us into the world where silence is difficult to find. Life has changed in many ways with this electronic age.

The Christmas season seems to be a time of busy shopping, party planning, and little time to reflect on the lessons and beauty of this wondrous season. We need to pull back from the world and truly meditate in silence on the gift of Emmanuel, “*God with us*”. Christ gave us the example – He was born in an obscure cave, away from the noise of the town; a cave of simplicity and stillness.

This article is taken from excerpts of the writings of St. Alphonsus Liguori, from the book entitled “The 12 Steps to Holiness and Salvation”.

To preserve recollection of spirit or the constant union of the soul with God, three things are necessary: solitude, silence, and the recollection of the presence of God. It was these three things which the angel of God referred to when addressing St. Arsenius. He said: “*Flee; be silent and rest.*” In other words: seek solitude, practice silence, and rest in God by keeping the thought of His presence ever before you.

Souls that love God feel a strong attraction for solitude, for they know that God converses familiarly with those who shun the noise and distractions of the world. God does not speak in those places where time is squandered in loud laughter and idle talk. “*The Lord is not in the earthquake*” (3 Kgs. 19:11); but He says, on the contrary, in the words of the prophet Osee: “*I will lead her into the wilderness and will speak to her heart.*” (Osee 2:14) God speaks to the soul in solitude, and by His words the heart is inflamed with Divine Love.

St. Eucherius relates that a person who desired to be perfect once asked a spiritual director what he had to do, and this was the answer he received: “*Solitude is the place where man finds God. In solitude, virtue is easily preserved; in intercourse with the world, it is easily lost.*” St. Bernard tells us that he learned more about God and divine things in solitude under the oaks and beeches, than from the books and schools of the learned. For this reason the saints felt an irresistible yearning to leave the noise and bustle of the world and retire into solitude; for this reason the mountains and forests and caves were inexpressibly dear to them. In the prophecy of Isaias we read: “*The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad; and the wilderness shall rejoice, and shall flourish like the lily. It shall bud*

*forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise: the glory of Libanus is given to it; the beauty of Carmel and Saron, they shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God.”* (Is. 35:1) In other words, for interior souls, solitude is the source of abundant delights; for it is there they look upon and contemplate the majesty and beauty of God.

In order to remain united to God, we must endeavor to keep alive within us a vivid recollection of Him and of the immeasurable goods He bestows on them that love Him. By constant intercourse with the world, these spiritual truths are apt to become obscured in the maze of earthly thoughts and considerations; and piety vanishes from the heart. Worldly-minded people shun solitude, and it is quite natural for them to do so; for it is in retirement that they are troubled with qualms of conscience. They seek the society and excitement of the world so that the voice of conscience may be drowned in the noise that reigns there. Those, on the contrary, whose conscience is at rest, love solitude and retirement; and when at times they are obliged by circumstances to appear in the noisy world, they are ill at ease and feel altogether out of their element.

It is true, man naturally loves the society of his fellow man; but what can be found more beautiful than the society of God? A life of solitude is not a life of sadness; it is rather a foretaste of Heaven; it is the beginning of the life of the blessed whose sole happiness is found in the love and praise of God. St. Bernard said: *“Never am I less alone than when alone”*; for when I am alone I am with God, who gives me greater joy than the society of all creatures could afford.

Now, in order to find this delightful solitude it is not necessary to withdraw into a desert and live in a cave; you can find it in your home and in the midst of your family. Busy yourself with the outside world only in as far as the duties of your state, obedience, or charity require, and you will be living in that solitude that best accords with your circumstances and that God requires of you. In the midst of the weightiest affairs of state, King David knew how to find solitude: *“Behold I fled away and dwelt in solitude.”* (Ps. 54:8). St. Philip Neri for some time entertained the desire to retire into a desert, but the Lord commanded him not to leave the city of Rome, and to live there as if he were in a hermitage.

There is also a solitude of the soul, and this is more necessary than the former; for St. Gregory says: *“Of what use is the solitude of the body without the solitude of the spirit?”* *“A soul that’s free from earthly attachments,”* says St. Peter Chrysologus, *“finds solitude even on the streets and in public places.”* Of what advantage is it to remain quiet at home or in church if our heart is centered on the things of the earth, and the noise of these earthly things prevents us from hearing the voice of God? One day

the Lord said to St. Teresa: *“Oh, how gladly would I speak to many souls! But the world makes so much noise in their hearts that they cannot hear My voice. Would that they might retire a little from the world!”*

In what does the solitude of the heart consist? It consists in banishing from the heart all desires and inclinations that are not for God; and in performing our actions simply with God’s good pleasure in view. The Psalmist expresses this truth in the following words: *“What have I in Heaven; and besides Thee, what do I desire upon Earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever.”* (Ps. 72:25-26). In one word, the solitude of the heart consists in being able to say: *“My God, Thee alone do I desire and nothing else.”*

Many complain that they are unable to find God, but to such St. Teresa replies, *“Tear your heart away from everything else; then seek God and you will surely find Him.”* If a crystal vase is filled with earth, the rays of the sun cannot penetrate it. The light of God cannot illumine a heart that is full of attachments such as the joys, the pleasures, and the honors of this world. *“When thou shalt pray,”* says Our Lord, *“enter into thy chamber; and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret.”* (Matt. 6:6). In other words, to be united to God in prayer, man must enter into his own heart and shut out all earthly attachments and inclinations. It is not to be supposed that solitude and retirement are synonymous with idleness. Many live in retirement, but it is an inactive and useless retirement of which they shall have to render an account. Devout souls, on the contrary, are like bees that are never tired preparing honey for their cells. No time must be lost, but every moment employed in praying, in reading, or in performing the duties of your state of life.

We cannot pray all the time; therefore, we must devote ourselves to work. In the life of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi it is said that she did more work than four lay-sisters together. Work is very conducive to our bodily welfare, and an effective remedy against temptations. St. Anthony the hermit was assailed by numerous temptations; and with a sudden aversion for his solitude, he scarcely knew which way to turn. An Angel appeared and led him into the garden; thereupon he picked up a hoe and began to cultivate the ground. Afterwards he prayed for a while, and then returned to work. From this the saint learned how he was to act; and the subsequent interchange of prayer and labor made his solitude very agreeable, while at the same time it protected him from many temptations.

But even labor need not prevent us from prayer. One day St. Bernard saw a monk praying while doing his work. *“Continue in this way, my brother,”* said he, *“and after death you will have no Purgatory.”* While



our hands are occupied with external occupations, our heart can be fixed on God. The good intention we make in performing our labors sanctifies them in the sight of God, and even makes of labor a prayer; for prayer has been called ‘the raising of the mind and heart to God.’

Silence is one of the principal means to attain the spirit of prayer and to fit oneself for uninterrupted intercourse with God. It is hard to find a truly pious person who talks much. But they who have the spirit of prayer love silence, which has deservedly been called a protectress of innocence, a shield against temptations, and a fruitful source of prayer. Silence promotes recollection and awakens good thoughts in the heart. According to St. Bernard, it forces the soul, as it were, to think of God and heavenly things.

In the prophecy of Isaias we read: *“The work of justice shall be peace; and the service of justice quietness and security forever.”* (Is. 32:17). On the one hand, silence preserves us from many sins by removing the occasion of uncharitable talk, rancor, and curiosity; on the other, it aids us in the attainment of many virtues. What an excellent opportunity we have for the practice of humility by modestly keeping silence while others speak! How well we may practice mortification by refraining from relating something we very much desire to tell! What a splendid chance to exercise meekness by not replying to unjust accusations and insults!

It is certain that a person who talks much with creatures, will converse little with God; and on His part, God will speak little to such a one. For He says: *“I will lead her into the wilderness and will speak to her heart.”* (Osee 2:14). *“In the multitude of words,”* says the Holy Ghost, *“there shall not want sin; but he that refraineth his lips is most wise.”* (Prov. 10:19).

The virtue of silence does not consist in never speaking, but in keeping silent when there is no good reason to speak. When therefore should a Christian, who desires to become holy, be silent; and when should he speak? He should be silent when it is not necessary to speak; and he should speak when necessity or charity requires it. St. Chrysostom gives the following rule: *“Speak only when it is more useful to speak than to be silent.”*

St. Ephrem says *“Speak much with God, but little with men.”* If in your presence unbecoming and sinful language is used, leave the company if it is possible to do so. At least cast down your eyes and remain silent, or lead the conversation to some other topic; thus making a silent protest against such unsavory talk. Be not over-eager to hear the news; curiosity leads to many faults. The Abbot John used to say: *“He who would hold his tongue in check, must close his ears by suppressing the desire to hear the news.”* And when you do speak, weigh well what you intend to say. St. Francis de



Sales quaintly remarked: *“To avoid faults in speech we must have the lips buttoned together, so that while unbuttoning them we may think of what we are going to say.”*

A powerful aid in preserving recollection is the remembrance of the presence of God. Not only does it conduce to recollection of spirit, but it is also one of the most effective means of advancing in the spiritual life. It helps us to avoid sin; it spurs us on in the practice of virtue; and it brings about an intimate union of the soul with God.

There is no more excellent means of quieting the passions and of resisting the temptation to sin than the thought of the presence of God. St. Thomas says: *“If we thought of the presence of God at all times, we would never, or very seldom, do anything to displease Him.”* According to St. Jerome, the recollection of God’s presence closes the door on all sins. For, if in the presence of our rulers, our parents or superiors, we do not care to transgress their commands, how could we violate the commandments of God if we remember that His eyes were upon us?

Men fall into sin because they lose sight of the presence of God. *“The cause of all evil,”* says St. Teresa, *“lies in the fact that we do not think of the presence of God, but imagine Him far away from us.”* A man who loses sight of the presence of God will easily become a prey to sinful and sensual desires, and have no strength to resist them.

On the other hand, by the thought of God’s ever-vigilant eye upon them, the saints have had strength to resist and overcome all the attacks of the evil one. It was this thought that gave the chaste Susanna courage to spurn the wicked advances of the men who tried to seduce her, and even threatened her with death. *“It is better for me,”* she said, *“to fall into your hands without doing evil, than to sin in the sight of the Lord.”* St. Chrysostom says: *“If we keep ourselves in the presence of God we shall neither think, nor say, nor do what is wrong,; convinced as we are that God is the witness of all our thoughts, and words, and actions.”*

As far as the practice of the Christian virtues is concerned, the recollection of God’s presence affords us a powerful stimulus. If we would bear in mind that in all we do God’s eyes are upon us, would we not try to do everything well and from the purest of intentions? St. Basil once said: *“If you happened to be in the presence of a prince and a peasant, would you not naturally try to make your conduct agreeable to the prince, regardless of what the peasant might like you to do? In a similar manner, he who walks in the presence of God is little concerned about what creatures may think or say; his whole concern is to please God, who sees his every action.”*

Union of the soul with God is the happy result of walking constantly in His presence. Love is always strengthened by the presence of the object loved. If this is the case with human beings, in spite of the many defects,

how much more so will it be between the soul and God. The more we walk in the presence of God, the better we recognize those beautiful qualities that are calculated to increase and strengthen His love in our hearts.

But in order to remain intimately united to God it is not sufficient to make a morning and evening meditation. To keep the fire of God's love aglow, the thought of His presence must be constantly before us. A means of keeping the presence of God before us is based on the truths of Holy Faith. It consists in seeing God with the eyes of faith; and being thoroughly persuaded that He is present, and a witness of our actions. It matters not that we are unable to see Him with our bodily eyes. It is sufficient to make little acts of faith such as the following: 'My God, I firmly believe that Thou art here present.' With this may be joined acts of love, of conformity, and of good intention.

Still another beautiful practice is that of seeing God in His creatures. The beauty of nature such as the rising and setting of the sun, a magnificent landscape, a majestic river, and a garden of beautiful flowers are so many reflections of the beauty of the Creator.

The most perfect method, however, of keeping alive the thought of God's presence consists in beholding God within our very selves. It is not necessary to ascend to Heaven to find the Lord God; we need only to recollect ourselves, and we shall find Him within us. He who, at prayer, pictures the Lord at a great distance from him is preparing for himself a source of abundant distractions. St. Teresa says: "*I never really knew what it meant to pray well until the Lord Himself taught me the proper way to converse with Him. I entered within my very self and found this practice exceedingly profitable for my soul.*"

God is within us in a different manner from what He is in other creatures; in us He dwells as the Lord in His temple and in His house. "*Know you not,*" says St. Paul, "*that you are the temple of God; and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*" (1 Cor. 3:16). And our Divine Savior Himself has said: "*If anyone love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him; and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.*" (John 14:23). Endeavor, therefore, to reanimate your faith in this consoling truth. Humble yourself profoundly before so exalted a Majesty who deigns to dwell within you. Excite yourself to frequent acts of confidence, of oblation, and of love towards the boundless goodness of God. St. Teresa said: "*Those who withdraw into the little heaven of their soul, where He who created them is enthroned, can be certain that in a brief space of time they will have advanced far on the road to perfection.*"

The happiness of the elect in Heaven consists in seeing and loving God. Our happiness here on Earth must likewise consist in loving and seeing Our Lord, not indeed face to face as the saints and angels do, but by means

of the light of faith. Thus we begin in this valley of tears, this earthly exile, the life of the blessed in Heaven; a life of endless joy in the fruition of the vision of God.

Let us then find solace in God's presence within us as we seek to attain silence in the noise-filled world. God will speak to us; and we in turn can speak to Him, only when our soul is in a state of contentment and inner silence. Blocking the noise around us we build that little cell in the innermost part of our soul; and we can converse with God.

May His peace be upon you this Christmas!

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**Pro-Life continued from page 10**

Jesus for a particular intention (eg., for Daddy, or Mommy, or for a friend or neighbor who has a health problem, or for a Poor Soul in Purgatory). This can be ingrained as a habit, and soon a child will do this on his or her own. There is so much suffering in the world; and so much is wasted that could be "put to good use". Pain is inevitable in this world of ours, so why not accept it and offer it up instead of trying to end it all?

The souls in Purgatory cannot offer any supplications on their own behalf, but they can receive the benefit of any prayers and sufferings we offer up for them. And they never forget the persons who help to shorten their time in Purgatory. Their prayers are very efficacious for those who pray for them. So why not put these two important beliefs of our faith together and start today; offering up to God all our sufferings, from the pain of a little headache to the crippling pain of cancer or other devastating diseases. And let us encourage others to do the same. This can be accomplished with our daily morning offering which should be the first prayer we say every day.

This practice will help us to realize the importance of each of our lives from conception to natural death.

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**St. Sharbel Makhlof continued from page 11**

Sharbel during the closing of the Second Vatican Council. In 1976, Pope Paul VI signed a decree of canonization of Blessed Sharbel with canonization taking place in the Vatican on October 9, 1977.

Pope John Paul II often said that the Church has two lungs (East and West) and it must learn to breathe using both of them. Also, when Sharbel was canonized in 1977, Bishop Francis Zayek, head of the U.S. Diocese of St. Maron, wrote a pamphlet entitled "A New Star of the East." Sharbel is like a Cedar of Lebanon standing in eternal prayer, on top of a mountain. The bishop noted that Sharbel's canonization proves "that the Aramaic Maronite Antiochian Church is indeed a living branch of the Catholic Church and is intimately connected with the trunk, who is Christ, Our Savior, the beginning and the end of all things."

## CONSTANT VIGIL OF PRAYER

**Could You Not Watch One Hour With Me?** Our Lord asked this of His sleeping Apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane. Many people throughout the United States have answered the call to take an hour of prayer by starting Perpetual Adoration programs in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Many areas, however, do not have Perpetual Adoration or do not have enough people to fill the hours.

Our Blessed Mother at Necedah has asked for an hour of prayer each week, in addition to our Sunday Church obligation, through a Constant Vigil of Prayer Program. This hour could be taken at home, at church, or anywhere, and could be filled by any type of prayer or spiritual reading. The general intention of this Constant Vigil of Prayer is to save America from destruction by the evil forces.

Please join us by sending your participation information.

### *The Constant Vigil of Prayer — Our Only Hope for Peace*

#### CONSTANT VIGIL OF PRAYER

**“Could you not then, watch and pray one hour with Me?”**

Choose one hour a week besides your Sunday Service as a family or individually.

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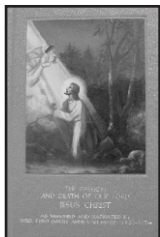
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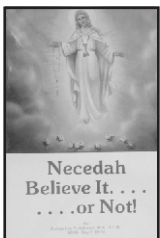
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# MAIL CORNER

**California:** Today we received your Shrine Newsletter and realized how much more work is needed to complete the entire project. Since we live in California, and are not able to travel anymore, we surely will miss the lovely shrines of the many saints. The most we will miss is the beautiful outside rosary; the complete three rosaries. Because we live so far away and will never be able to enjoy this again, we would like to send this check to help with your building needs. Continue the Shrine Newsletter. Thank you for the many things you have done for us. God bless you all!

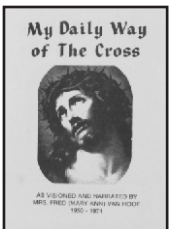


**Iowa:** Enclosed is a donation for keeping me on your mailing list. It brings back the wonderful memories my husband and I enjoyed each time we visited the Shrine. We have wonderful souvenirs, especially our gold rosaries. God bless you all!

**New York:** I am sending you a donation for the nice books I have received. Thank you; and God bless all!

**Minnesota:** We visited the Necedah Shrine on November 4th, the date of our 50th wedding anniversary. We have received many blessings from Mary, among the greatest were our twin grandchildren. We will pray for the Church to authenticate your Apparition.

**Missouri:** Enclosed is a check towards the House of Prayer. Hopefully my sister and I will be attending the August 15th Anniversary Date. Please put my intentions in the Box at the Shrine for the Anniversary Dates in June. I hope you have good weather for construction work this summer. God bless you all!



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