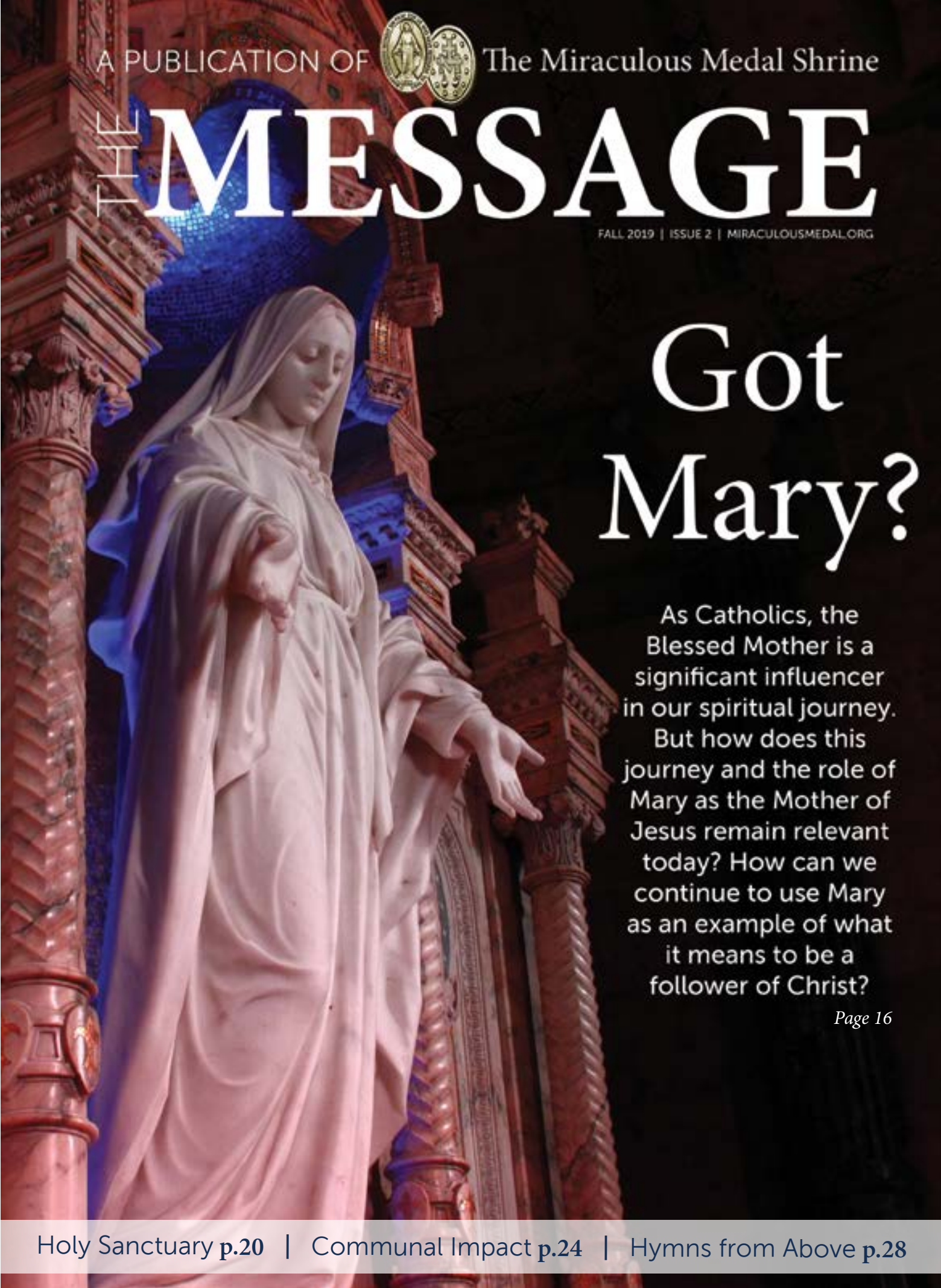
A PUBLICATION OF The Miraculous Medal Shrine

THE MESSAGE

FALL 2019 | ISSUE 2 | MIRACULOUSMEDAL.ORG



Got Mary?

As Catholics, the Blessed Mother is a significant influencer in our spiritual journey. But how does this journey and the role of Mary as the Mother of Jesus remain relevant today? How can we continue to use Mary as an example of what it means to be a follower of Christ?

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OCTOBER 10, 2019

HEARTS ON FIRE

170TH ANNIVERSARY *Gala*

Hosted by The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal (CAMM), the Hearts on Fire Gala, celebrating the 170th anniversary of the Vincentians in Philadelphia, was held on Thursday, October 10, at Loews Hotel Philadelphia. Emcee Bob Kelly from Fox News Philadelphia and the CAMM staff welcomed more than 350 attendees to honor and support the Vincentians of the Eastern Province. Special recognition and awards were presented to the Raskob Foundation (United in Purpose Award), Br. Alfred Smith, CM (Heart of Vincentian Faith and Practice Award), and the Daughters of Charity, St. Louise Province (Witnesses of Hope Award) for their service, contributions, and values, which align with the Vincentian charism. Proceeds from the evening go directly to Vincentian programs and initiatives, including The Miraculous Medal Shrine.

1. Left-right: Fr. Robert Maloney, CM, Fr. Stephen Grozio, CM, Bishop Timothy Senior, Bishop David O'Connell, CM, Dr. Joseph A. DiAngelo, Fr. Michael Carroll, CM
2. Noelle Robinson Fraycon, on behalf of the Raskob Foundation, United in Purpose Award recipient
3. Sr. Mary Frances Barnes, DC, on behalf of the Daughters of Charity, Witnesses of Hope Award recipient
4. Br. Alfred Smith, CM, Heart of Vincentian Faith and Practice Award recipient
5. Bishop Senior speaks on behalf of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in congratulating the Vincentians for their 170 years of service
6. Daughters of Charity
7. Emcee Bob Kelly, Fox News Feature Reporter
8. Bishop David O'Connell, CM, Diocese of Trenton
9. Fr. Stephen Grozio, CM, Provincial, Vincentians of the Eastern Province

Photos courtesy of Helm Creative Studios

Central Association of the Miraculous Medal

The Miraculous Medal Message is a publication of the Office of Marketing and Communications of The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal.

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Follow the web references for additional stories, videos, and photos. Visit the magazine website at MiraculousMedal.org/Message.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION
We invite you to share your thoughts, stories, and photos from the Eastern Province ministries. Contact tshea@cammonline.org or follow us on social media.

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MESSAGES

Dear Family,

Greetings from The Miraculous Medal Shrine.

The world needs Our Lady's loving grace and intervention, and at the Shrine, spreading devotion to the Blessed Mother is why we exist. Daily, our actions are driven by the question: "Got Mary?" Until the answer is a universal "Yes," we will continue our efforts to share Mary Immaculate with the world.

The Vincentian Priests and Brothers of the Eastern Province, along with their lay collaborators, have been diligent stewards in promoting Mary's love, especially through the Miraculous Medal. You'll see in the pages of this edition of *The Miraculous Medal Message* that sharing this love is manifested through a number of ministries, which are as varied as they are inspiring.

Thank you for all you do to bring Our Lady to the world. Through our shared endeavors and her intercession, one day when we ask, "Got Mary?" the world will acclaim with one resounding voice, "Ave Maria!"

Yours in the Blessed Mother,

Mary Jo Timlin-Hoag
President and CEO
The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal

Dear friends of Mary Immaculate,

May Christ's love fill your hearts with joy!

Recently, a Shrine visitor commented, "The Shrine's statue of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal is a significant presence. Through the image, I sense that the Blessed Virgin Mary is here." The visitor was not the first to have that experience; it is actually very common. Fr. Joseph A. Skelly, CM, wisely chose when he commissioned that statue to express Mary's presence. Certainly the beautiful marble statue of Mary is part of that experience. The prayerfulness of the Lower Shrine is another favorite.

I also feel Mary's presence in the faithful, who respond to her invitation "to come to the altar." They are devotees and first-time visitors—business professionals; husbands and wives; grandmothers and grandfathers—all coming to Mary seeking solace, comfort, and miracles.

Yes, Mary is present at the Shrine—she is always ready to listen.

Be assured of my prayers and the prayers of all the Vincentian Priests and Brothers.

Sincerely in Mary Immaculate,

Fr. Michael Carroll, CM
Director, The Miraculous Medal Shrine
Spiritual Director, The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal

MIRACULOUS BOOK BAGS

On October 4, approximately 1,000 students from Our Lady of Calvary Parish School (grades kindergarten through eight) received a Miraculous Medal on a keychain ring, which they affixed to the zipper of their book bags.

Before fastening their Miraculous Medals, students brought them to Mass, where after a homily discussion about St. Catherine Labouré and the Miraculous Medal, they prayed a consecration to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal and then had them blessed.

A priest from Our Lady of Calvary Parish visited the kindergarten and first-grade students in their classrooms, where he led them in prayer and blessed their Miraculous Medals.

What's more, each student received a copy of the book, *The Story of St. Catherine Labouré and the Miraculous Medal: A Message for Today and Tomorrow.* Published by Militia of the Immaculate in Canada, the books were donated by Bert Ronan of Ontario, Canada, who supplied The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal with thousands of copies to be distributed, especially to young people.

Features

UNDERSTANDING MARY

Our pilgrimage of faith has been inseparably linked to Mary ever since Jesus. Why? Because Mary is an icon of strength and hope.

A HOME FOR MARY

The Miraculous Medal Shrine is a fitting home for our Blessed Mother and her Miraculous Medal.

CREATING CHANGE

Inn Dwelling has evolved through the years, but one constant is the program's impact to the community.

THE BELLS TOLL FOR THEE

The Shrine's carillon (bell tower) has become a beacon, welcoming neighbors and the faithful to Marian devotion.

Departments

2 **HONORING 170 YEARS**
The Hearts on Fire Gala on October 10 celebrated 170 years of good works of the Vincentians in the Philadelphia region. The evening featured award presentations, live auction, raffles, and entertainment.

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The Eastern Province is vibrant with activities, events, and news, which perpetuate St. Vincent's mission of service and charity.

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Messages by and remembrances from the Miraculous Medal community.

SPANISH SERVICES ATTRACT HUNDREDS OF FAITHFUL

The Miraculous Medal Shrine dedicates the first Tuesday of each month to our Latino community. The May 7 Spanish Masses and Novenas drew almost 250 people. During the morning services, a statue of the Blessed Mother was processed to the Shrine and crowned by a six-year-old girl (pictured above). Those in attendance kissed their carnations before presenting them to the Blessed Mother.

GRANDKIDS CELEBRATE JESUS' GRANDMOTHER

On July 26, The Miraculous Medal Shrine celebrated the feast day of St. Anne by inviting the faithful to bring their grandchildren to Mass and experience the love spread by the mother of Our Lady and Jesus' earthly grandmother. Afterwards, refreshments were served in the Lower Shrine, and kid-friendly goodie bags and coloring sheets were distributed.

FR. SKELLY ANNIVERSARY

On July 8, a celebration was held at The Miraculous Medal Shrine commemorating the 56th anniversary of the passing of its founder, Fr. Joseph A. Skelly, CM. Fr. Skelly was known as the "Apostle of the Miraculous Medal" having established The Miraculous Medal Shrine, The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal, and the Perpetual Novena in honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal (1930).

Interactive Art Project Kicks Off Vincentians' Anniversary Celebration

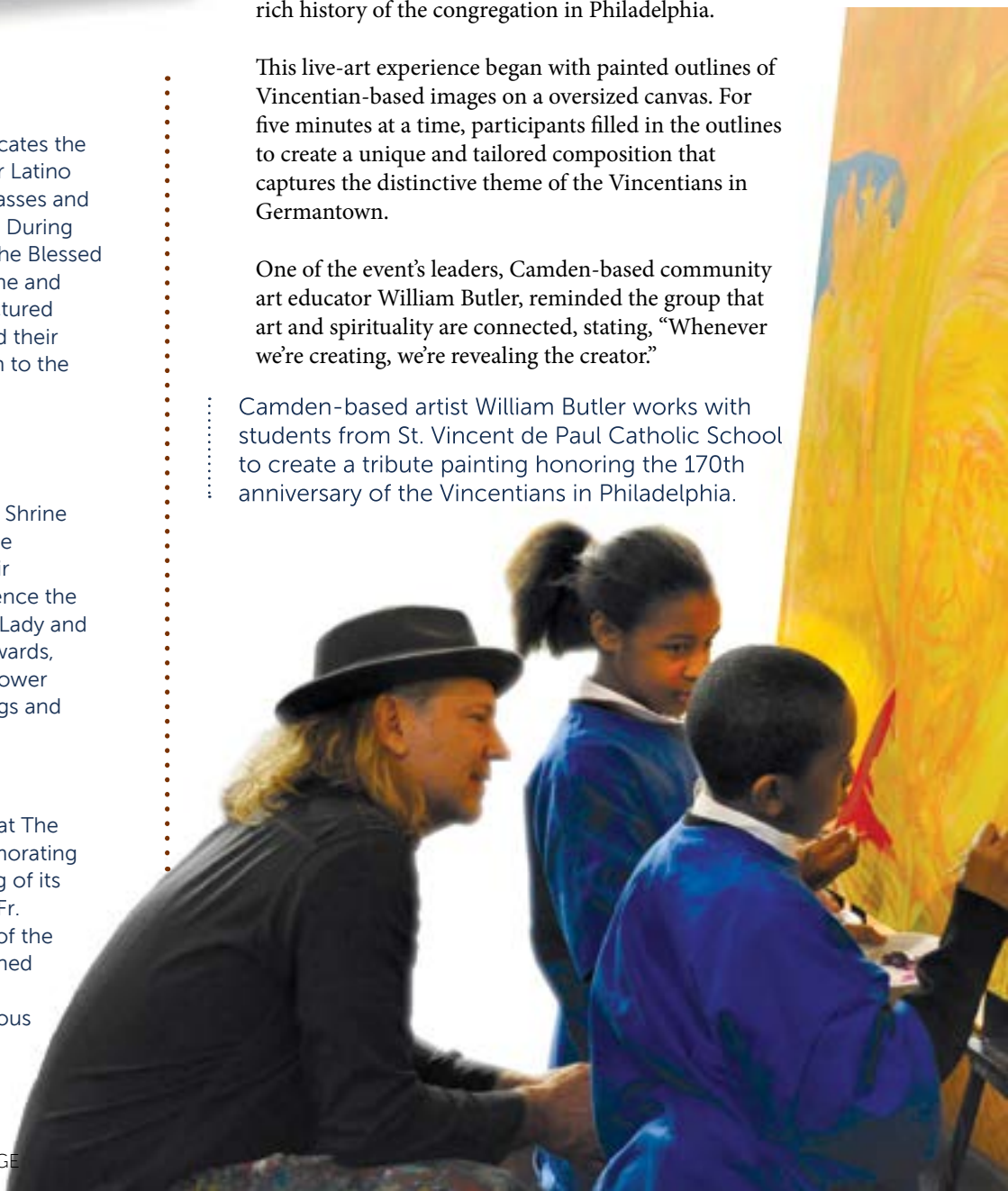
On February 23, the Vincentians of the Eastern Province inaugurated the yearlong 170th anniversary of their arrival in the Philadelphia region with an interactive art project at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Germantown, the site where the Vincentians first served on the east coast.

For this collaborative painting project, Vincentian Priests, employees from The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal, and grade-school students from St. Vincent DePaul Catholic School joined together to create a painting, which highlights the rich history of the congregation in Philadelphia.

This live-art experience began with painted outlines of Vincentian-based images on a oversized canvas. For five minutes at a time, participants filled in the outlines to create a unique and tailored composition that captures the distinctive theme of the Vincentians in Germantown.

One of the event's leaders, Camden-based community art educator William Butler, reminded the group that art and spirituality are connected, stating, "Whenever we're creating, we're revealing the creator."

Camden-based artist William Butler works with students from St. Vincent de Paul Catholic School to create a tribute painting honoring the 170th anniversary of the Vincentians in Philadelphia.



DID YOU KNOW?

Pope Francis appointed Sr. Kathleen Appler, DC, Superior General of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, to be one of twenty-three new members to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Sr. Appler joins five other women religious superior generals.

The Green Jackets of St. Thomas More

The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal's CEO, Mary Jo Timlin-Hoag, connected with the "Green Jackets" alumni of St. Thomas More High School at the Keys and Sword annual fundraiser and dinner, an event that unites Philadelphia area communities to express their love and support for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul.

The alumni, who were taught by Vincentian Priests, and Timlin-Hoag shared their stories of their Vincentian connections.

Blessed Breakfasts

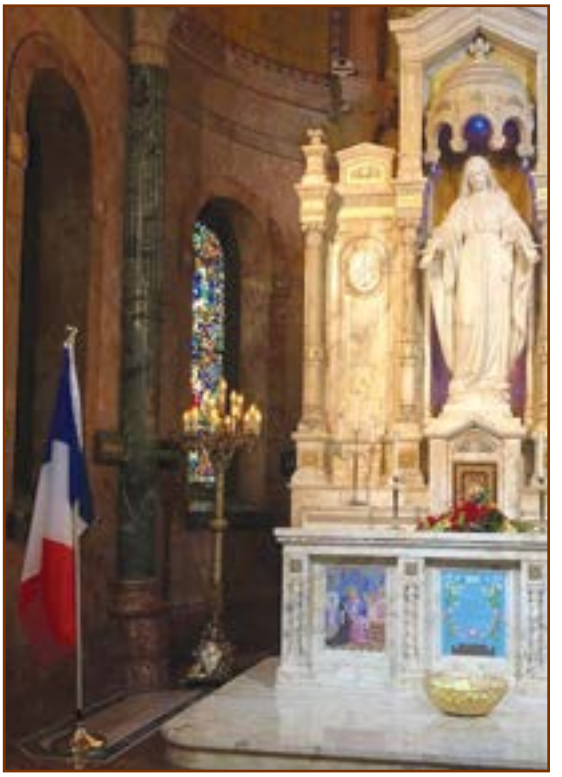
In February and May, groups of young adults came to The Miraculous Medal Shrine to prepare breakfast bags for homebound frail and elderly individuals. The groups included Bucks County young adults, Malankara Catholic Youth Movement members, St. Athanasius Church parishioners, and two families.

The volunteers helped pack non-perishable breakfast items into hundreds of bags, which were delivered to Caring for Friends in Northeast Philadelphia, an organization founded in 1974 that provides more than 16 million meals to more than 14,000 homebound individuals. On both occasions, the young people toured the Shrine, attended Mass, and were given Miraculous Medals.

Fr. Michael Carroll, CM, Director of the Shrine, reminded the groups that while service to the poor and marginalized is one of the Vincentians' missions, it is also a requirement of everyone who follows Jesus.

OUR LADY OF FIAT SHRINE DEDICATION

More than 530 people attended a Mass and enthronement of a shrine of Our Lady of FIAT in The Miraculous Medal Shrine on Saturday, July 13. Presided by Vincentian Bishop Roland Santos, CM, from the Philippines, the shrine is a partnership between The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal and the Filipino Apostolate of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Supported by a crowd-funding campaign, the shrine includes ornate statuary and material from the Philippines, including capiz shells and hand-crafted adornments. The shrine is a continual reminder of the abundant blessings that Mary Immaculate has bestowed on the Filipino community.



Mass of Solidarity and Prayers for Victims

On April 29, the Vincentian Priests and Brothers held a Mass and prayer service at The Miraculous Medal Shrine in solidarity with first responders and all who mourn the devastating fire that crippled the beloved Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on April 15. The Vincentian community has a deep connection to France, as the Miraculous Medal was first revealed in 1830 to St. Catherine Labouré in Paris. As such, the French flag was presented during the Mass and will be displayed near the Shrine until the reopening of the Notre Dame Cathedral.

Prayers were also offered during Mass for the victims of the terrorist attacks on Easter Sunday morning, April 21, in Sri Lanka. The explosions struck three luxury hotels, three churches, and two other locations. Several of the attacks took place in the capital city of Colombo.

Our Lady of Knock Shrine

The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal (CAMM) and local Irish cultural leaders celebrated the feast day of Our Lady of Knock on August 21, at The Miraculous Medal Shrine, with a Mass, reception, and Irish cultural performances. This feast marks the 140th anniversary of the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, and St. John the Baptist to the people of Knock, Ireland.

Bagpipers led the Mass processions, and Irish-American singer Andy Cooney cantored during the Mass. Afterwards, attendees were invited to a reception featuring performances by Cooney and the Rince Ri Irish Step Dancers.

This event kicked off the partnership between CAMM and Irish cultural leaders in the tristate area, as they collaborate to plan and construct a shrine to Our Lady of Knock.

"One hundred forty years ago, the cornerstone of the Immaculate Conception Chapel at The Miraculous Medal Shrine was laid, and 140 years ago in County Mayo, Ireland, Our Lady appeared to the people of Knock," said Sheila O'Hagan McGirl, senior director of institutional advancement for CAMM. "We feel connected to the apparition at Knock through our Marian devotion and ministry."

If you are interested in donating or volunteering to help build Our Lady of Knock shrine, contact McGirl at 215.848.1010, ext. 212, or smcgirl@cammonline.org.

"The shrine to Our Lady of Knock at The Miraculous Medal Shrine will bring our community of devotees together in hope, celebrating culture and faith."

SHEILA O'HAGAN McGIRL
SR. DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT, CAMM

SHRINE MAY PROCESSION
On Monday, May 20, The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal hosted a May Procession on the Germantown seminary grounds. Participants stopped to pray a decade of the rosary at points along the way, followed by a Novena Mass at the Shrine. The procession was also livestreamed. Honoring Mary during May has a rich and long history in the Church.

Actress Shares Fatherly Connection to the Shrine

Kate Flannery is an American actor best known for playing the role of Meredith Palmer on the NBC series, *The Office*, and recently joining the cast of *Dancing with the Stars*. Lesser-known is that Flannery has a deep connection to The Miraculous Medal Shrine.

The actor's father, Tom Flannery, and his brother were raised in Germantown. Each week, the brothers rode their bikes to the Shrine to attend the Monday Novena. Their weekly pilgrimages continued for decades.

In a recent visit to the Shrine with her father, Flannery shared that, "My dad was here every Monday until the age of 92, when he stopped driving. He's now 95. As a kid raised in Germantown, his family were regulars."

He and his brother met here weekly, says Flannery, then chuckles, "...up and through their old age." During their visit, Tom Flannery was pleased to talk with some Vincentian Priests and was surprised that they watched *The Office*.

Flannery summed up her connection to the Shrine saying, "All of the Flannery's love the Shrine. It really is one of the best places on earth."

CATHOLIC BUSINESS EVENT AT THE SHRINE

On June 6, The Miraculous Medal Shrine hosted its Catholic Business Professionals event as an opportunity for networking, faith-driven dialogue, and ideas exchange. Wawa, Inc. executive Marc Maiolino gave the keynote address on "The Wawa Way," and how values, culture, and servant-leadership fuel Wawa's growth and success. More than fifty Catholic professionals attended.

iRACE4VOCATIONS

Vincentian Frs. Luis Romero, CM, and Leo Tiburcio, CM, (then-deacons) took part in the 8th Annual iRace4Vocations on Sunday, March 31, in Sewell, New Jersey, Camden Diocese. iRace4Vocations is an annual event that welcomes people of all ages to run a 5K or walk a one-mile course while praying for and promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal was one of many sponsors of this event, which had more than 1,500 participants. The entire Vincentian community is proud of Fr. Romero, who came in first place in his age group for the 5K run. *Way to go, Fr. Romero.*

Two Vincentians Ordained as Priests

On Saturday, June 1, Vincentians of the Eastern Province (the Congregation of the Mission) celebrated the priestly ordination of Frs. Leo Tiburcio, CM (left), and Luis Romero, CM (right).

The Most Reverend Alfonso Cabezas, CM, Bishop Emeritus of Villavicencio, Colombia, presided over the ordination. For these two newly ordained priests, the occasion marked the culmination of ten years of rigorous theological study, instruction in Vincentian spirituality, and work in Vincentian ministries across the Eastern Province.

As new Vincentian Priests, Fr. Romero's first assignment is ministering in the Hispanic apostolate in Southampton, Long Island, New York, and Fr. Tiburcio is ministering at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Charlotte, North Carolina.
(See their profile story on page 32.)

Vincentians Welcome New Seminarians

On Tuesday, July 30, the Vincentians of the Eastern Province welcomed four new seminarians into the Internal Seminary and the Congregation of the Mission: Noe Garcia, Milton Lara, Wilber Mejia, and Jose Alexander Palacios.

Fr. Stephen Grozio, CM, provincial of the Eastern Province, presided at the 10:30 a.m. Mass in St. Vincent's Seminary Chapel. During Mass, Fr. John Timlin, CM, director of the Internal Seminary, formally accepted the men into the Congregation of the Mission and delivered the homily.

Garcia, Lara, Mejia, and Palacios begin a year of intense prayer, reflection, and study of the Vincentian charism, as they discern if God is calling them to make a firm commitment to the Congregation of the Mission by the year's end.

Please join the entire Vincentian community in offering prayers of thanksgiving and best wishes to these men, who are answering God's call to vocations.

Vincentian Solidarity with Venezuelans

On May 2, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity, Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, CM (pictured), released a statement and accompanying video-message expressing the Vincentian family's "…concern and solidarity in the face of the dramatic situation Venezuelans are experiencing in their country."

In his statement, released in seven different languages, Fr. Mavrič asked that, "...We join in the desire and appeal that Pope Francis has made for the transformation of the country to happen without bloodshed, and that this rebirth will lead to the total reconciliation of the country."

He ended by praying, "May Mary of Coromoto, national patron, protect Venezuela always, as we express our deepest solidarity! St. Vincent de Paul and all our Vincentian Saints and Blesseds, pray for us!"

LEADERSHIP NIAGARA HONORS A VINCENTIAN

Fr. James J. Maher, CM, president of Niagara University, received Leadership Niagara's Leader of the Year Award for 2019 at an awards luncheon on Friday, May 17. Since becoming president of Niagara University in 2013, Fr. Maher has focused on advancing the academic reputation of the university, creating a more international and diverse campus community, and growing the university's commitment to the revitalization of Niagara Falls and Western New York. Living the university's mission of Vincentian service, Fr. Maher has recommitted the university to serve the Niagara Falls community and create opportunities for individuals throughout the local area.

IN MEMORIAM

The Vincentians of the Eastern Province mourn the recent passing of four confreres (pictured top to bottom):

Fr. James G. Prior, CM, who passed away on June 15

Fr. Richard Kehoe, CM, who died on August 24

Fr. Joseph V. Cummins, who died on October 5

Fr. Thomas W. Prior, who passed away on October 17

May they rest in peace.

Photos courtesy of St. John's University

ANNUAL FAMILY DAY

On Sunday, September 22, the Vincentian Community at St. John's University celebrated its annual Family Day. The day started with the celebration of Mass.

Fr. Steve Grozio, CM, the provincial of the Vincentians of the Eastern Province, was the main celebrant and Fr. John Gouldrick, CM, proclaimed the Gospel and reflected on his fifty years as a priest. More than twenty local Vincentians concelebrated the Mass.

Following Mass, all were invited to dinner at St. John's University's D'Angelo Center. This year, Family Day also included recognition of three major priestly anniversaries: Bishop Alfonso Cabezas, CM, and Fr. John Gouldrick, CM, who celebrated their 50th anniversary; and Fr. Patrick Griffin, CM, who celebrated his 40th anniversary.

Welcome Back Novena

On Monday, September 23, college students and young adults participated in a special Welcome Back Novena at The Miraculous Medal Shrine to usher in the new school year.

This special evening of prayer and fellowship began with a Holy (Half) Hour followed by a Novena, refreshments, and socializing.

"The Shrine is sponsoring these programs to encourage young adults and young adult families to come together and actively live out their faith," says Carolina Soares, the program coordinator. "We have planned monthly gatherings to fulfill this mission and welcome all those interested to join their fellow Catholics through service, fellowship, and Mass."

To learn more about upcoming events and the Shrine's young adult ministry, visit MiraculousMedal.org/YoungAdult.

Good Friday Stations, Passion Dramatization

On Good Friday, April 19, Vincentians from Philadelphia and Long Island joined 300 lay men, women, and children for an outdoor Stations of the Cross at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Island in Manorville, New York.

About an hour away at St. Therese of Lisieux Church in Montauk, New York (where the Vincentians minister to the Hispanic community), parishioners conducted an outdoor dramatization of Our Lord's Passion. The production was only outdone by the faith and devotion of the participants and spectators.

Feast of Our Lady of Vailankanni

More than 500 people from the Indian Catholic community and St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Forane Church visited The Miraculous Medal Shrine on Saturday, September 7, to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Vailankanni.

The colorful celebration included a procession with the statue of Our Lady of Vailankanni, a special prayer for the sick, the Miraculous Medal Novena, a Solemn High Mass, the Novena to Our Lady of Vailankanni, and the rosary, which was prayed in several languages.

The feast of Our Lady of Vailankanni, also known as Our Lady of Good Health, celebrates apparitions of and miracles by the Blessed Virgin Mary in the town of Velankanni, Tamil Nadu, India, in the 16th and 17th centuries.

High Mass was celebrated by Fr. Vinod Madathiparambil, pastor of St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Forane Catholic Church and Fr. Michael J. Carroll, CM, director of The Miraculous Medal Shrine.

Inn Dwelling Honors Teachers

On May 6, during National Teacher Appreciation Week, Inn Dwelling, a Vincentian program in Philadelphia, recognized educators who have provided services to the program and the students they have impacted. Inn Dwelling provides after-school tutoring, test-preparation assistance, and related services to students in difficult economic circumstances.

The staff at Inn Dwelling includes not only academic professionals, but also experts in other fields. Some are paid tutors, other are volunteers. "All our teachers are either high-school or college teachers, or engineers, or in the medical field, or other types of professionals" notes Br. Alfred Smith, CM.

VINCENTIAN PARISH CELEBRATES 150th JUBILEE

St. John the Baptist Parish, a Vincentian community in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, celebrated the closing Mass of their 150th Jubilee Year on Sunday, June 23, the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. Bishop Nicolas DiMarzio, the seventh Bishop of Brooklyn, was the main celebrant with the parish's pastor, Fr. Astor Rodriguez, CM, and four other Vincentian priests concelebrating.

The Vincentians founded the parish in 1868, as Mary, Queen of the Isles Parish, which later became St. John the Baptist parish in 1888.

The closing Mass was the culmination of a year of lectures, workshops, and other activities guided by a quote from St. Vincent de Paul that became the theme for the year: "We are not what we were, nor what we shall be."

More than 500 parishioners attended the Mass, where Bishop DiMarzio spoke about how the Vincentians are a blessing not only to the community of Bedford-Stuyvesant but to the whole Diocese of Brooklyn.

Vincentian University Supports International Clergy

The Vincentian Center for Church and Society (VCCS) at St. John's University hosted the 18th annual Acculturation Seminar for International Priests at its Queens, New York, campus on June 17-21. This year's program enrolled ten priests serving in America who hail from six different countries of origin.

These new shepherds received instruction on the history of the American Church, public speaking, accent reduction, boundary issues, and leadership, as well as many other areas of service.

This popular seminar for clergy is an intensive, supportive, five-day residential program, where participants, who have already developed "survival skills" and a conversational ability in English, focus on twelve wide-ranging goals, like "Church Development in the United States" and "Pastoral Communication."

For this program, VCCS collaborates with the Sacred Heart Institute (SHI) in Huntington, New York. The SHI is a cooperative effort of the Archdiocese of New York and the Dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre, New York, to facilitate the ongoing formation of priests and deacons.

Established in 1994, VCCS benefits from the professional faculty at St. John's University to enrich the local church and surrounding communities.

Rock the Block Housing Initiative

Photo courtesy of Niagara University

Niagara University led the second annual Rock the Block housing initiative on May 15 in Niagara Fall's South End section. More than 220 volunteers, including employees from 30 Niagara County-based organizations, joined forces with dozens of area residents to work on minor home repairs, landscaping, and clean up in that section of the city. This year, 24 homes and 15 alleyways were improved, with an economic impact of $73,050. In Niagara Falls, about 20 percent of homes stand vacant and only 56 percent of its residents are homeowners.

Niagara University President Fr. James J. Maher, CM, says, "Rock the Block is an ideal example of the initiatives Niagara University has been, and will continue to be, committed to doing in our local community."

Photo courtesy of St. John's University

Student Pilgrimage to Lourdes

From May 24 through June 3, four students from St. John's University made a pilgrimage to the holy site of Marian apparitions and miraculous healings—Lourdes, France. The students were accompanied by Fr. John J. Holliday, CM, the university's chaplain.

For the past thirteen years, St. John's has participated in the St. Vincent de Paul Service Pilgrimage to Lourdes organized by Our Lady of Lourdes Hospitality North American Volunteers.

This year, the four St. John's students were part of a group of students from Harvard University, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Duquesne University, Florida State University, and Lee University. The service pilgrimage included two days of orientation and training where the students learned about the story of Lourdes and St. Bernadette, and also took a walking tour of the town.

"As a priest, it was an amazing experience being at Lourdes once again," says Fr. Holliday. "As an administrator at St. John's University, it was a wonderful experience to spend ten days with these students, to get to know them better, and to witness their faith and their dedication to serve others."

Will "Break" for Justice

Winter break often provides an opportunity for college students to recharge their batteries after a busy semester. However, this year, several groups of St. John's University students chose to forego rest and relaxation in order to serve and learn at various sites throughout the country.

Groups of St. John's students traveled to Houston, Texas; St. Louis, Missouri; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for a week of outreach, advocacy, accompaniment, construction, and community building as part of the university's Plunge Program. Another group of students traveled to Selma, Birmingham, and Montgomery, Alabama, as well as to Atlanta, Georgia, for a weeklong Journey for Justice immersion program in the civil rights movement and an in-depth view of that historic period of time.

Vincentian University Houses St. Vincent de Paul Letter

Niagara University Library's Rare Book Room houses a letter signed by St. Vincent de Paul 361 years ago.

Dated January 18, 1658, in Paris, the letter is to Fr. Firmin Get, director of the Marseilles mission. In the letter, St. Vincent applauds a decision by the Bishop of Marseilles to establish a seminary to be entrusted to the care of the Congregation of the Mission [Vincentians], among a few other administrative matters.

While this letter to Fr. Get was most likely penned by a secretary, St. Vincent's signature is considered authentic. It was in the possession of a London antique book dealer before being obtained by Niagara benefactors Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Plumeri, who donated it to the university.

Here is an excerpt from the letter, translated from the French by Sr. Louise Sullivan, DC, PhD:

"The grace of Our Lord be with you forever! I have received two of your letters, dated January 1st and 8th. I thank God that His Grace [the bishop] of Marseilles has made the decision to establish his seminary and entrust it to the care of the Congregation. I hope that these good works will do a lot of good and will be a source of many benefits and blessings for this diocese."

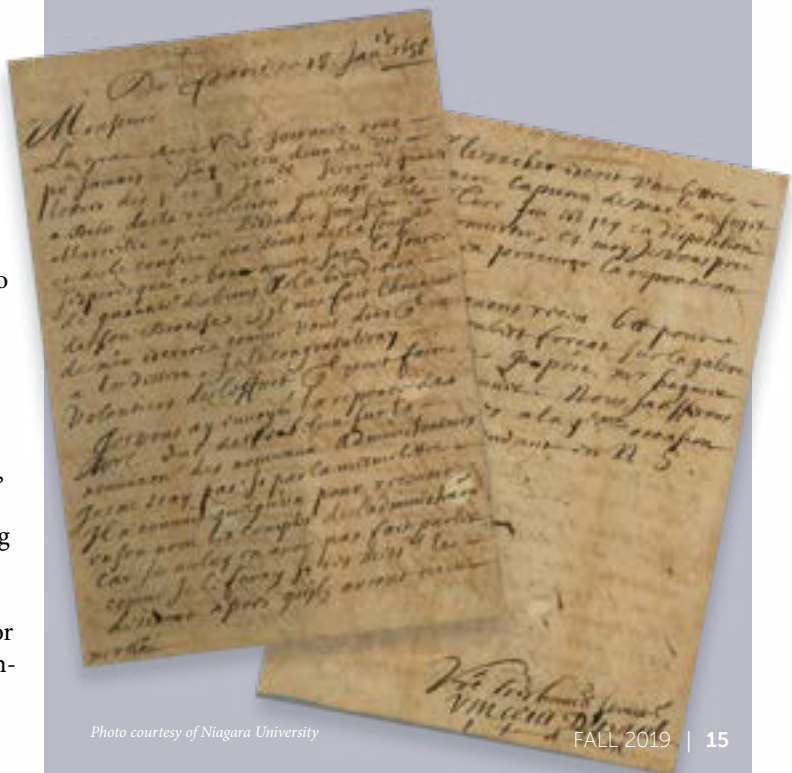


Photo courtesy of Niagara University

Historic & Modern

MARY

MARY IS THE MOTHER OF CHRIST, AND AS SUCH, SHE IS OUR MOTHER. So, what is it about the Blessed Mother that compels people to seek her intercession? Who is this woman, born more than 2,000 years ago in a remote Palestinian village, who still captures our hearts? And how can her life affect ours today?

MIRIAM, THE MOTHER OF GOD

In his article, "The Historical Mary," Fr. Robert Maloney, CM, writes that Mary was "actually called Miriam, after the sister of Moses," and was most likely "born in Nazareth, a tiny Galilean town of about 1,600 people, during the reign of Herod the Great." For the most part, the townspeople were poor peasants, tradesmen, and farmers; it was certainly not a place of wealth, commerce, or power ("Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" ~Jn 1:46) The rural inhabitants made up "ninety percent of the population and bore the burden of supporting the state and the small privileged class." At least half of their earnings were given for the Jewish triple tax: "...to Rome, to Herod the Great, and to the temple."

WORKS OF ART

All the paintings and statues in this article can be found in The Miraculous Medal Shrine's Marian Art Museum. To visit the museum or arrange a guided tour, contact Paulette Mican, pmican@cammonline.org.

In Nazareth, the people respected the laws, valued their customs, traveled to Jerusalem for the major religious feasts, and spoke Aramaic "with a Galilean accent." The culture outside of Nazareth was strongly influenced by the Greeks and Romans, so the townspeople would have regularly heard Latin and Greek in the streets, and Hebrew in the synagogues.

As someone steeped in her Jewish tradition, Mary would have followed all the practices and laws of her time. Her life would have been simple, ordinary, and hard-working. Like most women of her day, who were expected to teach their children about God and their religion, Mary would have known the Hebrew scriptures and would have maintained the home as a place of prayer.

Living in a rural village, she would have spent a majority of her time carrying water from the well; spinning and weaving cloth; making and washing clothes; cooking food; and caring for family members, both nuclear and extended. To run the household, she had to be physically and mentally strong. As Fr. Maloney notes, "It would be a mistake to think of Mary as fragile, even at thirteen. As a peasant woman capable of walking the hill country of Judea while pregnant; of giving birth in a stable; of making a four- or five-day journey on foot to Jerusalem once a year or so; of sleeping in the open country like other pilgrims; and of engaging in daily hard labor at home, she probably had a robust physique in youth and even in her later years."

MARY, THE PERFECT DISCIPLE

But Mary's strength wasn't solely physical. She had a tremendous spiritual tenacity.

In the Gospel of Luke (Lk 1:26-38), Mary freely agrees to participate in God's plan, even at the risk of her own life. A betrothal was almost identical to a marriage in ancient Israel, and, according to the law, a betrothed girl, who had relations with someone other than her intended husband, could be stoned to death. Mary's "be it done to me according to your word" is an undaunted "yes" to bear a child that was begotten of the Holy Spirit, not of Joseph. She knew the law and what her "yes" could entail, but she also knew God and His word—and she knows that He was trustworthy. In her first recorded encounter with God, Mary heard His word and acted on it, even though the outcome could have been disastrous.

At the Visitation (Lk 1:39-56), Mary is the example of perfect discipleship. Upon hearing the news of her cousin, Elizabeth, she immediately leaves the comfort of her village to serve her elderly relative, who is also miraculously pregnant. Once again, we see Mary's strong interior disposition, this time expressing itself in concrete action for someone in need.

At the Wedding Feast of Cana (Jn 2:1-11), Mary is attentive to the people around her. When she became aware of the couple's predicament, she quietly helped them by approaching her Son. Not only did she act as their intercessor, she was their

source of encounter; Mary brought the love and power of Jesus to the couple in their moment of crisis, while also pointing the couple toward Him. And throughout this event, she remained in the background, shifting the focus to her Son.

Standing at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25), Mary shows us that her "yes" to God through the angel wasn't conditional. When almost everyone else had left Him, Mary stood by Jesus with John and Mary Magdalene. She saw her Son hanging on the cross, His body mutilated from brutal torture. It was not a moment of glory for her but one of unfathomable agony. Yet in humble tenacity, she didn't turn back from the plow (Lk 9:62) or grumble against God. Instead, she quietly accepted what Jesus had allowed to happen—and what He had predicted.

Throughout her life, Mary continually assented to God's will, receiving the joyful and painful moments equally. In her interior fortitude and faithfulness, she gave strength to those around her.

MARY, OUR MODEL

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see the Apostles and Disciples gathered around Mary; together, they waited for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14). With Mary, and in imitation of her, they heard the Word of God tell them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father, and then acted on it. As they gathered in prayer and anticipation, we can safely assume that any necessary daily tasks or needs that arose within the group were handled by Mary with understanding, humility, and care.

When we gather around Mary, she guides us to hear God's word and act on it, as well. She points us to Jesus and helps us glorify Him in our lives by serving one another in humility and thoughtfulness. She helps us discern what is essential and release ourselves from the superfluous, teaching us to focus on the necessities. She assists us in our commitment to God's will, even in difficult moments. In essence, she enables us to become better disciples of Christ. And she who, with Joseph, raised Jesus to love God and neighbor perfectly, shows us how to become children of Nazareth—more peace-filled, selfless, gentle, and compassionate. Our life may be filled with the mundane, but, in her company, it can become Christ-like.

It is evident that authentic devotion to Mary encompasses every facet of our lives—not just our moments of prayers. At its core, devotion is about relationships. Thus, true devotion to Mary creates a relationship with her—and with Jesus—and it strengthens our will to serve Him. It widens our hearts, deepens our understanding, and gently pulls us into the sacramental activity of the Church. In this new, broadened horizon, not only do we pray *to* Mary, we start praying *like* her.

THE ROAD TO MARY AND JESUS

How do we start this devotion, this transformation? Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we journey the path of understanding, of sacrament, and of transformation through the Eucharist, through scripture, and through prayer. Yet there's one more element that will help us on this road, i.e., a powerful sacramental in the Church.

IT'S THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL.

The Miraculous Medal has its origins in 1830, when our Blessed Mother appeared to St. Catherine Labouré in Paris and asked her to produce a medal based on Mary's instruction. Mary told St. Catherine those who wear the medal "...will receive great graces. They should wear it around their necks. Graces will abound for those who wear it with confidence."

History has proven her words to be true. The first Miraculous Medals were created in 1832, and due to the widespread reports of miracles and conversions, it soon became known as the "Miraculous Medal."

Shortly after distributing the Miraculous Medals, Fr. Jean-Marie Aladel, CM, the spiritual director to the Sisters of Charity at the Rue du Bac where St. Catherine

had resided as a novice, wrote that the Miraculous Medals "are restoring peace and unity in families rent with discord; in fact, none of those who wear them fails to feel their salutary effect. [...] The King had a number struck in silver for himself and his court and family, and ordered a million for distribution during the outbreak of cholera, with the result that it is held in honour in nearly every house and many of the churches."

Since the Miraculous Medal's beginnings, the Vincentian family has promoted devotion to Mary and her medal. Within St. Catherine's lifetime, more than one billion Miraculous Medals were made and circulated to the most remote corners of the world. Only ten of the original medals are known to exist, and The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal houses one of them.

But the Miraculous Medal does not merely belong to the past, it belongs to us, as well. Wearing it with trust and love, and asking our Blessed Mother, "the first among the saints, to pray with us in our need," we can expect to receive graces for ourselves and our loved ones.

SPREADING DEVOTION

In Germantown, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was Fr. Joseph A. Skelly, CM, who tirelessly promulgated the devotion to Mary and her Miraculous Medal throughout the United States. And, it was he who built a Marian shrine within the Immaculate Conception Chapel.

When visitors walk through the doors of Mary's Shrine, they immediately sense her presence and tranquility. They are awed by the beauty of the architecture and art. They feel welcomed.

As Mary made her home in Nazareth a place of prayer, she makes her home in Germantown one, too. She creates a peaceful atmosphere for worship and meditation—for silence, healing, and comfort. Mary's Shrine is her home, and because she is our mother, it is ours, as well. She eagerly awaits us to come home and relate to her as a child to a much-loved mother. We can bring to her our trials, our fears, and our hopes, which she will turn into graces for us, for those we love, and for all humanity.

"We bring to Mary our trials, our fears, and our hopes."

Mary's Shrine is also a place of pilgrimage. We are a pilgrim Church and a pilgrim people. Like our brothers and sisters who followed Moses out of Egypt, we traverse through a terrain we don't fully know or understand. In our trials and difficulties, we need a place of peace and worship where we can rest in God and be assured of His love and help.

And, of course, Mary shared our human condition, as well, living her own pilgrimage of faith.

In her company, and through a personal relationship with her, we, too, will progress in our earthly journey. With Mary's help, our lives will be imbued with an abiding trust in God, a deep commitment to Him, and a strong love that expresses itself in justice, as well as contemplation. And at the end of our lives, we will discover that she's helped us become miniature icons of her Son, Jesus.

A home for MARY

The Miraculous Medal Shrine

Popes throughout the ages have encouraged the faithful to travel to shrines and holy sites. They know that our faith is enlivened when we travel with purpose and prayer to these hallowed places. Even the journey itself can be cleansing and renewing, as we leave our daily lives behind—if only for a few hours—and move from the secular to the sacred. Every step, every mile, can help us shed the weight of our daily lives.

December 8, 2019, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, marks the 140th anniversary of the dedication of The Miraculous Medal Shrine in Philadelphia. For the past 140 years, the Shrine has been a place where pilgrims can experience Our Lady, her beauty, and her grace. It is a fitting home for Our Blessed Mother and her Miraculous Medal, and people from around the world make pilgrimages to the Shrine, seeking countless graces through Our Lady's intercession.

In a 2018 Vatican address to the International Conference of the Rectors and Pastoral Workers of Shrines (whose theme was "The Shrine: An Open Door to New Evangelization"), Pope Francis acknowledges these Marian graces: "Most of our shrines are dedicated to Marian piety. Here, the Virgin Mary opens the arms of her maternal love to listen to the prayer of each person and to fulfill it. […] Here Mary becomes the companion on the path of every person who raises their eyes to her asking for grace, certain it will be granted."

In his short address, the Pope also reminded shrine leaders that these holy sanctuaries serve as both devotion and witness to the faith. "The shrine is a privileged place to experience mercy that knows no boundaries. […] In fact, when mercy is lived, it becomes a form of real evangelization, because it transforms those who receive mercy into witnesses of mercy."

How the Shrine became a place "to experience mercy" is a storied journey, filled with divine providence, faithful stewards, and the impassioned efforts of the Vincentians, who are its guardians.

FROM A HUMBLE CHAPEL TO A GLORIOUS SHRINE

The Shrine didn't begin as a shrine at all, but rather as a seminary chapel.

To accommodate a staggering increase in Vincentian vocations, the Congregation of the Mission purchased a plot of land in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, which would become St. Vincent Seminary in 1865. From a portion of this seminary, the Shrine would soon arise.

Vincentian seminarians moved from Missouri to Philadelphia in 1868 (in part because of the American Civil War), the same year the cornerstone of St.

Vincent's Seminary was laid. In 1872, the seminary construction was completed, and the next year, plans were developed to build a chapel for the Vincentian Priests, Brothers, and Seminarians. Upon hearing of the plans, then-Bishop of Philadelphia, (soon-to-be Archbishop) James Frederick Wood, asked the Vincentians to allow the chapel to be open to the public. The Vincentians agreed, and plans were redrawn so that the chapel entrance would face the predominately residential Chelten Avenue. The cornerstone of the chapel was placed in 1875, and four years later, Archbishop Patrick John Ryan of Philadelphia blessed the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception.

Fast-forward to 1915, when The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal was founded by the Vincentians with Fr. Joseph A. Skelly, CM, as its director. Empowered by the Blessed Mother's intercession and fueled by Fr. Skelly's tireless efforts, local and national devotion to the Miraculous Medal skyrocketed by 1927. In response, Fr. Skelly commissioned the building of a shrine to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception. To accommodate the Shrine, Fr. Skelly chose to extend the west transept of the chapel at the site of the altar of St. Vincent de Paul. Thus, The Miraculous Medal Shrine was established.

Building the Shrine would have been enough to secure Fr. Skelly's celebrated legacy, but he had another tribute to give to the Blessed Mother: the Perpetual Novena to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. While it is often assumed that this weekly Perpetual Novena was carried over from long-ago Europe, its genesis resides with Fr. Skelly. The "Monday Novena"—as it is popularly known—began on Monday, December 8, 1930, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, and has been held every Monday since its inception. This devotion became so popular that during World War II, 15,000 people swarmed to the Shrine every Monday.

Today, Marian devotees still flock to the Shrine. Throughout the day and early evening each Monday, hundreds gather for the Novena, and these prayers are having a powerful impact.

> *"The Shrine is a place where heaven touches earth. It is a place where people experience stillness, peace of mind, and serenity of soul."*
>
> FR. MICHAEL CARROLL, CM
> DIRECTOR, THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL SHRINE

We'd love to hear and share your story of meeting someone special at the Shrine. Send to: communications@cammonline.org.

Meet me at the SHRINE

GREAT DEVOTION, BEAUTY

In his address to the "Conference of the Rectors and Pastoral Workers of Shrines," Pope Francis explains how shrines evangelize through mercy. He reminds us that the faithful seek both personal and communal encounters when they enter a shrine. Of greater significance, Pope Francis spoke on the need for shrines to offer hospitality, "silence of the heart," the sacraments, and of course, beauty.

Thousands from around the world journey to the Shrine every year not only for its tranquility but for its beauty. The Romanesque-style church that houses the Shrine is an inspiring sight, complete with Marian artwork, sculptures, stained glass, and stunning altars.

In the upper level behind the main altar of the chapel, the Shrine's artistic and religious beauty includes registered historical murals of the Annunciation, Immaculate Conception, and Nativity painted by the celebrated artist, Virgilio Tojetti, circa 1890s. To the right of the main alter stands the central shrine to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Seven stained-glass windows are set in the semicircular wall with each panel portraying events from the life of the Blessed Mother, from her birth to her coronation in heaven.

Most noticeable in the church is a replica of the original chair that the Blessed Mother sat in when she

For more than eighty years, The Miraculous Medal Shrine has been a place where men and women go to enliven their faith. Not surprising, the Shrine is also a place where single men and women have met, gone on dates, and shared their devotion to Mary as they bound their lives together in Holy Matrimony.

Consider Angela McGowan, whose husband John (now deceased), first introduced her to the Shrine. John grew up near the Shrine, and Angela laughs as she recalls her husband once saying that local boys came to the Shrine to meet "a nice Catholic girl."

Or take Jackie Ahern, who shared this story:

"In 1956, my first date with my husband was at The Miraculous Medal Shrine. We worked next door to each other and after three months, he asked me to attend the Monday Perpetual Novena. I was in the process of converting to Catholicism and did not know about novenas. It was a great experience. I was brought into the Catholic Church in June, 1957, and married my husband in February, 1958, in Holy Child Church. Sadly, in 2006, I lost my husband to ALS after 48 great years of marriage and nine children."

And this story by an anonymous author from New Jersey that was originally shared as a Marian favor received and printed in the fall 2016 edition of the *Miraculous Medal Magazine*:

"In November 1961, I was attending the Solemn Novena in preparation for the feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. I was praying that I would meet a good Catholic boy to marry. A few days into the Novena, my sister came home from work and asked me to go on a blind date with a boy she worked with; she was dating his friend, so it would be a double date. Since the boys lived in Wilmington, Delaware, the date would have to take place right after work. I told my sister I couldn't do that since I was making the Novena, and I did not want to break it. She said, 'No problem! The guys and I will meet you at The Miraculous Medal Shrine, and after the Novena, they can take us to dinner.' That blind date turned out to be my husband. We were married in St. Benedict Church in October of 1963 and look forward to celebrating our 53rd wedding anniversary this year [2016]. Our Blessed Mother chose my husband for me, and he likes to tease me by saying he 'met me in Church,' and I've been in Church ever since."

appeared to St. Catherine Labouré on July 18, 1830. Framed beside the chair is a third-class relic, a fabric swatch from the original chair that Our Lady sat upon during this apparition.

The church also contains votive candle shrines to St. Catherine, the first apparition of the Blessed Mother to St. Catherine, and the Pietà (Mary grieving over Jesus' dead body).

The altar in the Lower Chapel of the Shrine depicts the second apparition of the Blessed Mother to St. Catherine, also known as "The Virgin of the Globe." Directly behind the altar are two exquisite mosaics: the left mosaic portrays the first apparition of Mary to St. Catherine, while the right panel depicts the second apparition. The Shrine's lower level also includes shrines commemorating other popular Marian devotions, including shrines to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Vailankanni, and Our Lady of FIAT.

A large multipurpose room is located in the Lower Shrine and serves as a space for social gatherings, educational instruction, and cultural events. There is also a popular, faith-based gift shop with devotional and inspirational items.

Outside of the Shrine on Monday evenings, visitors, neighbors, and those passing by on the street are treated to the melodious sounds of a 47-bell carillon emanating from the Shrine's 125-foot bell tower, topped by a 14-foot stature of Mary Immaculate (see the article on the Shrine's carillon on pages 28-31).

The Shrine is a public sanctuary, which is open seven days a week. In the spirit of hospitality, all are welcome to enjoy the grace and beauty of the Shrine to Our Lady, whether alone or in a group (contact Paulette Mican, pmican@cammonline.org for special group programming).

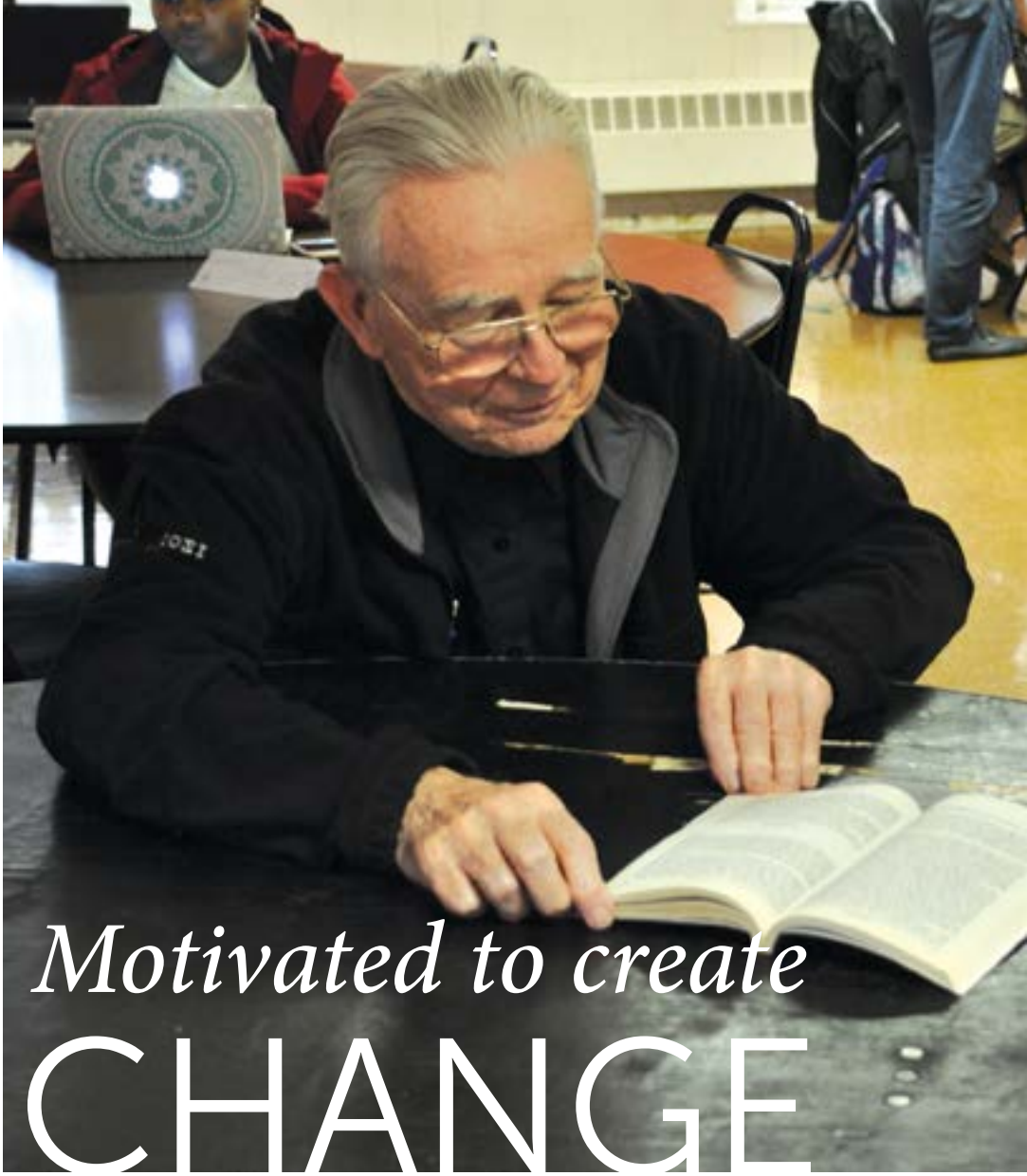
HEAVEN TOUCHES EARTH

Fr. Michael Carroll, CM, director of the Shrine, recently wrote: "The Shrine is a place where heaven touches earth. It is a place where people experience stillness, peace of mind, and serenity of soul. It's a place where our Blessed Mother is always present, always listening, always touching souls."

Throughout the Shrine, pilgrims enjoy the "silence of the heart" in private prayer. There is also a vibrant sacramental life, with daily Mass, sacrament of reconciliation, Eucharistic Adoration, weekly novenas, and many special liturgical events.

While the Shrine's popularity grows among a new generation of faithful who are embraced by Mary and her Son, its timeless gift of mercy is continually bestowed on all who enter its doors.

WHATEVER THE NEED, THE VINCENTIANS HAVE BEEN THERE TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE, SUPPORT, AND INSPIRATION. One program, Inn Dwelling, is making a communal impact by addressing what it takes to bring about systemic change to students, families, and the community.



Motivated to create CHANGE

INN DWELLING: THE EARLY DAYS

It was the early 1980s in Germantown, Philadelphia. People who have lived in the area for decades remember the struggles the city encountered. They also remember an unassuming Vincentian who seemed to be everywhere at once, working diligently to help the large number of people in need of services. Br. Alfred Smith, CM—fondly known as Br. Al—was working closely with the needs of the elderly and shut-ins. His home base was St. Vincent's Catholic church, where he, the parishioners, and many volunteers served five hundred elderly men and women who lived alone in nursing and boarding homes. Whatever their needs were, the team at St. Vincent's Parish did whatever they could to help.

Then things took an interesting turn. A local boarding home owner asked the parish if they would manage their residence, and Br. Al was asked to spearhead the effort. His first task: gathering a team that would make the home safer and more livable for its sixty-five elderly residents.

The first year of the program was a huge learning experience for everyone; expansion came sooner than expected. When an elderly community member passed away, he left the parish another home to manage. Br. Al and his band of helpers took this as a sign from God that they should continue the mission of rehabbing local homes to better serve families in the area. Soon, they developed a nonprofit program, Inn Dwelling, referring to the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believers in Christ. Inn Dwelling's mission was providing transitional housing for low-income families, while also giving them the tools and assistance needed for home ownership. Their three- to five-year program taught participants financial management skills. Monthly volunteers visited them to provide budget, mortgage, savings, and credit counseling. Believing that homeowners have more pride for their neighborhood and, as a result, take better care of their property, Inn Dwelling directed participants to open their own savings account and deposit money monthly, with the goal of saving enough for the down payment of the home they were renting.

At a time when Germantown was left with abandoned homes on every corner, Inn Dwelling started revitalizing the community. And after thirty-two years, Br. Al and his team

"Everyone was helping us: the Jewish synagogue, the Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church, the Methodist and Episcopalian Churches, the Mennonites. They all came together as one large group to serve the needs of their community. It was a great gathering of people."

BR. ALFRED SMITH, CM
Founder, Inn Dwelling

successfully established a housing program that rehabbed multiple blocks in Germantown.

Michael Stevens, a recipient of Inn Dwelling's housing program lived in Germantown. One day, he came home from work to find his house on fire. Losing everything in that fire and with nowhere to go, he walked to St. Vincent's Parish seeking help. There he met Br. Al, who helped him get housing and also invited him to do housekeeping at the parish and at some of the homes Inn Dwelling was rehabbing. Slowly, with Inn Dwelling and Br. Al's support, Stevens rebuilt his life. "Br. Al and the Inn Dwelling program are my guardian angels. I never would have made it back on my feet without Br. Al," he says.

INN DWELLING: TODAY

In the mid-1990s, Inn Dwelling began looking strategically at their mission. The Board of Directors believed that the greatest opponent to poverty is education, so they phased out the housing component of the program and focused all of their efforts on providing academic enrichment programs for high-school students. From helping students with their SAT scores to assisting them in their studies, their ultimate goal is providing more opportunities for college scholarships. To date, every single student who has completed Inn Dwelling's academic enrichment program has been accepted into college—with a scholarship.

Charles Arroyave participated in the very first Inn Dwelling pilot program. "Inn Dwelling helped me find a sense of direction; knowing that there were people who really cared about me, growing up in a difficult environment and neighborhood. It felt good to have people who were looking after me."

Arroyave attended West Catholic High School and was accepted into La Salle University. Transferring from La Salle to Chestnut Hill University, he received a bachelor's degree in elementary education and is currently the principal at St. Rose of Lima school in West Philadelphia. Looking back he says, "I never struggled in school, but I didn't perform up to my ability until I started going to Inn Dwelling."

After their immense success with their academic enrichment program, Inn Dwelling expanded to reach out to elementary-school students.

The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal

presents

The Spirit of Christmas

Starring

THE NEW YORK TENORS

DANIEL RODRIGUEZ | ANDY COONEY | CHRISTOPHER MACCHIO

Wednesday, December 11, 2019
Showtime 7:30 PM

The Miraculous Medal Shrine
500 East Chelten Avenue, Philadelphia

General Admission Tickets: $55

VIP Tickets: $115

(Includes VIP Reception, Meet & Greet, preferred seating at concert)

Colleen Buckley: 215.532.5783

For Full Details & Registration: MiraculousMedal.org/NewYorkTenors

Proceeds benefit

The Miraculous Medal Shrine

Limited Tickets Available – Buses are Welcome.

Inn Dwelling leadership team: (left to right): Phillip Hughes, Executive Director & President; Cindy Weyand, Board Chair; Jennifer Johnson, Director of Advancement; Br. Alfred Smith, CM, Founder & Director of Operations; Charles Arroyave, Inn Dwelling Alumnus; and Edgar Agudelo, Program Coordinator

> *"Greatness is really inside of everyone if given the proper tools and expectations."*
>
> CHARLES ARROYAVE
> *Inn Dwelling graduate*

That program is aptly called the Sophia Program, an advanced tutoring initiative that assists sixth- through eighth-grade students.

"I taught math for ten years and then I taught at Holy Cross, where they initiated the Sophia Program," says Arroyave. "I directed that program for five to six years. We were very successful in taking bright, but underexposed students, and preparing them for rigorous preparatory high schools—and eventually helping them transition into some of the best colleges in the area. Inn Dwelling shaped my career path. It opened my eyes to see what every student is capable of regardless of their financial conditions. Greatness is really inside of everyone if given the proper tools and expectations."

That's what Inn Dwelling and the Sophia Program do best: they connect young people to cultural experiences they might not normally have. Both programs provide opportunities for students to reach their potential by supporting them emotionally, financially, and academically. With such outstanding success rates, they hope that other cities will replicate these programs in other communities.

When asked why Inn Dwelling is so successful, Arroyave explains, "Inn Dwelling is making an impact in ways that other organizations haven't. They are changing the landscape of Philadelphia, one student—one person—at a time. They are changing the trajectory, not only for each student but for generations that follow. Now my children will go to college and get a degree. That would not have been possible had someone not advocated for me like Inn Dwelling did."

Arroyave stresses the importance of being an advocate for youth, especially youth who may not have access to the same academic resources as others. "I was held to high expectations. I was supported emotionally and aided financially by the Inn Dwelling program. They were an advocate for me and for other students who needed someone in their corner to navigate through the education system."

To learn more about Inn Dwelling and the Sophia Program visit: www.InnDwelling.org.

IN THE **NEWS** Read news story about Inn Dwelling.

THE SUCCESS OF INN DWELLING

Inn Dwelling's vision is to inspire gifted, urban students to realize their academic, human, and social capacity, so they can lead successful lives and become positive role models.

84
Students Served (2017-2018)

100%
High School Graduation Rate

100%
College Matriculation Rate

95%
College Graduation Rate

2000 Opened a second site in lower Northeast Philadelphia.

2012 Partnered with an inner-city school scheduled for closure and recruited students to participate in an all-day, rigorous, middle-school program known as the Sophia Program.

2015 Began a remediation program to reach students who were underperforming in their competitive high schools.

2019 Identified a partner school to establish a second Sophia Program location.

The BELLS *Toll for Thee*

While many enjoy the "boom and tinkle" of the Shrine's carillon, few know the storied history of this melodious, towering instrument.

MARIAN HYMNS FROM ABOVE: THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL SHRINE'S CARILLON

Every Monday evening, residents and visitors in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, which surrounds The Miraculous Medal Shrine, hear the *Ave Maria* and other Marian hymns in melodious splendor, cascading downward from high above. What they are hearing is a live performance of the Shrine's very own carillon, emanating from its 125-foot bell tower topped by a 14-foot bronze statue of Mary Immaculate.

Designed to be heard only outside of the Shrine, this carillon consists of forty-seven stationary bells manually played by a carillonneur, who uses both fists and feet to press keyboards and pedals attached to clappers that strike the bells. In fact, only manual carillons like the one at the Shrine—as opposed to automated ones—are recognized as traditional carillons by the Guild of Carillonneurs in North America.

One of the oldest carillons on the continent (the original bells are more than a century old), the Shrine's carillon has become a neighborhood fixture, welcoming visitors and neighbors alike to Monday evening Mass and the Perpetual Novena to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

As one long-ago observer wrote, "It seems most fitting that the crowds hurrying to and from the Novena devotions should enjoy the hymn melodies tumbling from the high tower over the Shrine. Our bells boom and tinkle right in the midst of the bustle of modern city life, just as the Old World carillons sound in the marketplaces of the quaint town."

A VINCENTIAN PILGRIM, A CHARITABLE "DAUGHTER"

In the late 1890s, a Germantown-based Vincentian (by some accounts, the unnamed Vincentian was still a seminarian) was on a European pilgrimage to sites related to St. Vincent de Paul. While in France, this Vincentian visited the Church of Notre Dame in Buglose, France, and was inspired by the church's sixty-bell carillon. Upon his return to Philadelphia, he and parishioners from a local parish persuaded the Vincentians to install a bell tower and carillon in St. Vincent's Seminary Chapel in Germantown, which would eventually become The Miraculous Medal Shrine.

Parishioners from a nearby parish pledged money as memorial offerings. One parishioner, Margaret Ellen Maguire, pledged $5,000 from an inheritance she received from her father, who owned a thriving liquor business, stipulating that the money be used specifically for the carillon. (Maguire would later devote her life to God, joining the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.)

The construction of the 125-foot bell tower was completed in 1899. In 1900, a carillon of twenty-six bells was ordered from the renowned Paccard Foundry in France (twenty-three bells are the minimum for a carillon). These twenty-six original bells were, and remain, dedicated to Maguire's father, John Maguire. Adorned with beautiful artwork, eleven of the original bells are inscribed with the names of saints, while the other fifteen are named in honor of the original fifteen Mysteries of the Holy Rosary.

The bells were blessed on March 25, 1901, the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and, befittingly, the carillon's inspired music debuted on Easter Sunday, April 7, 1901.

However, the carillon was often silent during its first forty years due to problems in the mechanical workings of the bells, upgrades, and experiments with new systems. When Prohibition (1920-1933) outlawed alcohol in the United States, the bells were entirely silenced, since the original donation for the carillon came from a pre-Prohibition liquor business. The silence of the carillon was eventually ended by an engineer, carillon expert, and admirer of the Vincentians, Arthur Lynds Bigelow.

"The Shrine's carillon is unique in many ways, both historic and modern at the same time."

JANET TEBBEL
Shrine Carilloneur

On September 1, 1943, Bigelow sent a letter to the Vincentians stating: "I am sending you a complete report on the bells of the Novitiate in Germantown. You will find enclosed a graph tabulating the harmonics of each bell, as we found them […] It is a shame that such a series of bells, such as you are so fortunate to have, be allowed to hang mute without realizing some of the pleasure they could afford. […] They are museum pieces, useless, just meant to be looked at. […] They are a meaningless nothingness, as void as the great bays in the tower in which they hang. I have already said too much. I'll let the report say the rest."

Years before he sent that letter, Bigelow and his wife (who he called "Jo") owed their lives to the Vincentians. Fleeing Hitler's invasion of Belgium in 1939, the Bigelows rode a tandem bike more than a thousand miles to the south of France, where they hoped to board a ship for America.

Along the way, the couple met two American Vincentian Priests, who suggested the couple stop at any Vincentian house in France for help and directions during their arduous journey. Weeks later, the Bigelows stopped at a Vincentian house in Dax, the childhood home of St. Vincent de Paul. There they found asylum with the Vincentians, and because fleeing the country was difficult, they stayed with the Vincentians for a year. During that time, Bigelow seized the opportunity to study the carillon bells in Buglose, France—the same carillon that had inspired the American Vincentian on pilgrimage nearly half-a-decade before.

In Bigelow's own words: "It just so happens that I lived that last year in France, in full German occupation, in that part of southern France where the Paccard carillon was. I often cycled the 12 miles each way to take notes on it and test the bells. […] When I first come (sic) to Princeton (1941) and learned that there was a community of Saint Vincent here, I immediately got in touch with the father […] Sometime afterwards it came to my attention that in their seminary in Germantown there was a carillon of French bells, which had long since completely fallen in disuse."

In 1943, Bigelow studied the Shrine's

Photos courtesy of Ducournau Archives

carillon, offering the Shrine's director, Fr. Joseph A. Skelly, CM, a full report on what was needed to get the bells ringing again, while suggesting the Vincentians expand the carillon to forty-seven bells (almost four octaves). Fr. Skelly agreed. All the bells were soon removed, the steel framework shored up, and the wooden beams replaced by new oak beams. Two new, larger bells were ordered from the Paccard Foundry. While in his Princeton studio, Bigelow recast two of the original Paccard bells, and cast twenty-one smaller, upper bells. The installation of the new bells and keyboard was completed in 1952, and the updated and expanded carillon was first played for the public on June 15, 1952, with Bigelow as the carillonneur.

HISTORIC, MODERN, AND MARIAN

Since 2002, the Shrine's historic carillon has been played by carillonneur Janet Tebbel, who each Monday evening enters the Shrine and climbs more than seventy steep steps to reach the manual keyboards and pedals. She is alone in the bell tower, situated stories above the many pilgrims who enter the Shrine for the Monday evening Mass and Novena.

However, Tebbel finds the accommodations in the tower to her liking. "The tower has a small fan and a few windows that open," says Tebbel. "I sometimes get a nice breeze. The heating is nicer, and there are glowing heat tubes, which can keep it almost comfortable up there, unless the wind is creating drafts. I have never had to leave the Shrine tower during a thunderstorm, because I am on a wooden platform in a stone tower with lightning rods, which deflect any problems—I hope."

Tebbel had a calling to become a professional carillonneur. "I

IN THE **NEWS** Read news story about the Carillon

started studying carillon at the University of Michigan, but I always knew what it was because I grew up with a neighboring town, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, boasting two active carillons," she says.

"I continued to play while at the University of Rochester and then went to Belgium to obtain a carillon diploma from the carillon school. I have been the carillonneur of the First United Methodist Church of Germantown for forty years, and I have played at the Shrine since 2002."

When Tebbel is deciding what to play, she likes to keep it fresh and engaging. "In my playing time of almost ninety minutes," Tebbel says, "I will play carillon compositions, arrangements of known songs, transcriptions of classical pieces, and compositions based on hymns of the Church. I try to vary the style and mood."

What she chooses to play on the famed instrument is also dictated by the bells themselves. "Bells are quite idiosyncratic in their sound and, therefore, we have to be careful when we play arrangements. There are many beautiful arrangements of hymns, songs of the Church, and popular songs. Transcriptions of classical music can be successful if done carefully. We have a wealth of compositions specifically for the carillon but, again, they have to be carefully selected and practiced in order to be accessible to a listener on the ground, who has no program to give any clue as to what they are hearing."

Tebbel is also cognizant of the Shrine's devotion to the Blessed Mother and its increasing multi-ethnic appeal. "I always begin my playing sessions at the Shrine with one of our Marian hymns and the *Ave Maria*. Since the fire at Notre Dame [in Paris, France, on April 15, 2019], I have also frequently played the [French version of the] *Ave Maria,* which people sang on the [Parisian] streets as the fire raged. I have a collection of Latino hymn arrangements, which are fun to play and, I hope, to hear."

Much like the Shrine itself, while the carillon harkens back to a long-ago age, it remains relevant today. "The Shrine's carillon is unique in many ways," notes Tebbel, "both historic and modern at the same time."

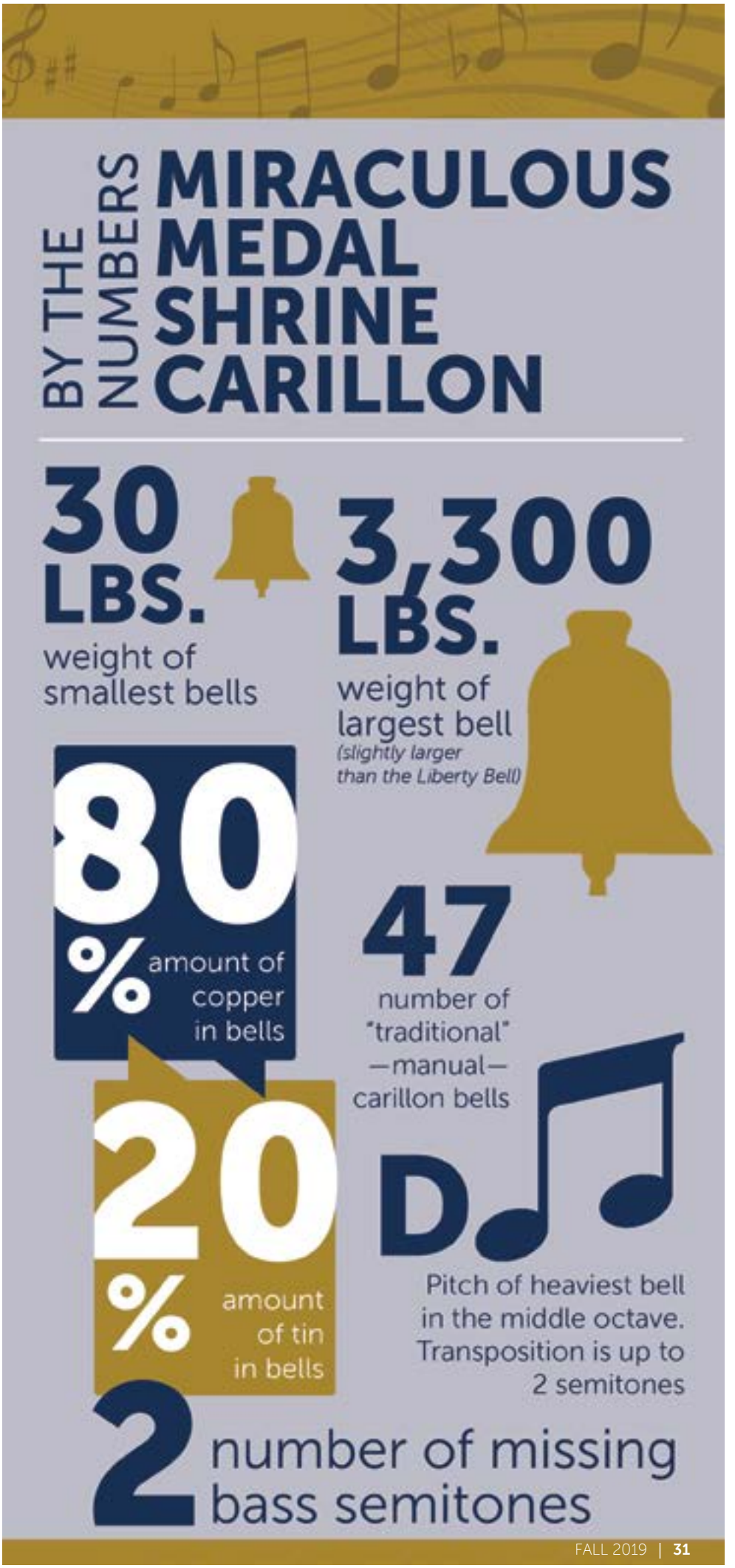


Photo courtesy of Fr. John Maher, CM

Newly ordained Frs. Leo Tiburcio, CM (left), and Luis Romero, CM (right), are joined by their newly ordained, fellow Vincentian of the Western Province, Fr. Ben Melaku, CM.

Saying "Yes" to GOD

TWO PRIESTS, SIMILAR JOURNEYS. Meet Frs. Leo Tiburcio, CM, and Luis Romero, CM, newly ordained Vincentian Priests of the Eastern Province.

"I don't want to be a priest. I have other plans." Years before he entered the novitiate, Leo Tiburcio was in a serious relationship—a religious vocation was the last thing he was considering. That was more than fifteen years ago. Now, as a newly ordained priest, Fr. Tiburcio smiles and says jubilantly, "I'm so happy; I'm meant to be a Vincentian Priest."

Fr. Tiburcio began his journey of formation to the priesthood ten years ago, as did Fr. Luis Romero, CM. Both diligently studied for a decade, learning subjects like philosophy, theology, sacred scripture, and the sacraments. Both priests lived out the teachings of St. Vincent de Paul in their ministries of helping the poor. "The

Vincentian mission is not about being self-centered, but rather reaching out and helping others," says Fr. Romero. Fr. Tiburcio agrees. "Being a Vincentian is about service. It's not just preaching service, but living it. That's what St. Vincent did. He didn't just say, 'Let's help the poor.' He really did it."

Just as important as the study and the work, both priests have prayed and drawn closer to the Blessed Mother. Fr. Tiburcio says, "Mary's whole life was a 'yes' to God's will. So, when I am about to make a difficult decision, I say, 'Mary help me. I don't know how this is going to happen. I'm afraid, but help me to say *yes* to God like you did.' She has been part of my journey."

Fr. Romero also recognizes Mary's role in his seminary experience. "The first year of my formation, I remember praying the Novena to the Miraculous Medal every week, coming to the Shrine and praying in this beautiful place. That's how I came to grow in my love for Mary."

Both priests agree that the journey has been an adventure, but it's been worth every step. As "rookie" priests (they were both ordained on Saturday, June 1, 2019), they're still learning the ropes. But they've already had some very touching moments—not surprisingly, beginning with their ordination day.

That morning, Fr. Romero received a phone call from the town in El Salvador where he was born and raised. It was the parish priest, asking him to be a call-in visitor on their radio program later in the morning. "I know many people from there were excited about my ordination," he says, "so it was a great opportunity for me to share my excitement with them." The entire parish had been praying for him during his formation years, and he knows their prayers were instrumental to his vocation.

After his ordination, Fr. Romero was able to visit the home where he received another unexpected moment of grace. Upon arrival, he was informed that one of the village women had been ill. He remembered her as a devout Catholic, who lived her faith fully, and he was looking forward to visiting her. Unfortunately, she passed away before they met. The parish secretary asked him if he could celebrate the funeral Mass, as the pastor was not available. "How am I going to do this?" he wondered, concerned that without another priest to help guide him through his first funeral, "It would be a disaster." But he trusted that God would get him through it. After the Mass, one of the woman's sons thanked Fr. Romero, and said that it was fitting for him to celebrate her funeral Mass: "She was a woman of prayer, and she was always praying for you. I'm not saying that because someone told me, but because I heard her continually praying for you."

Fr. Tiburcio's unexpected moment of grace happened as he bumped into an old friend in the parking lot of his parish in North Carolina. "He approached me, congratulated me, and asked me, 'Father, can you hear my confession?' So, I heard his confession right there, under the tree," Fr. Tiburcio laughs. "It's a graced moment to help people in the sacrament of reconciliation; we really see God's presence there." And Fr. Tiburcio should know. At his parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the lines for confession are so long, he has been known to hear confessions for three hours straight.

And, he explains, "God always provides the graces to accomplish what He asks of us, helping us to develop virtues and growth. Every time I say 'yes' to God, I receive something—virtues or capacities—that help me do my ministry." Elaborating, he continues, "I was a shy guy. I talked very little and always sat in the back. And now I'm standing in front of the community, preaching." He pauses, smiles, and adds, "I never thought that I could be so happy."

Fr. Leo Tiburcio, CM

Fr. Luis Romero, CM

Working and Living for OTHERS

HUMILITY, COMPASSION, SIMPLICITY, STRENGTH, AND CHARITY. Since the time of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, the Daughters of Charity energized and inspired others through their work with society's poorest and most abandoned individuals.

BREATHING NEW LIFE

It was an age when the poor were reviled. At best, peasants were seen as a nuisance; at worst, they were the scapegoats for the country's societal ills. But to St. Vincent de Paul, they were Christ.

Preaching to his congregation one Sunday morning in 1617, St. Vincent vividly described the plight of a destitute family who lived nearby. Every member of the family was ill and needed urgent help. Moved by his words, more than fifty women went home after Mass and brought their own food to the sick family. St. Vincent was touched by their generosity and knew that with a little organization, these women could be a powerful force for good. Three days later, he created the Confraternity of Charity to materially and spiritually assist the sick and the poor.

The Holy Spirit was breathing life into this project, and as more women joined the Confraternity, St. Vincent asked St. Louise de Marillac for assistance. Eventually, these two saints cofounded a congregation of Sisters, the Company of the Daughters of Charity, who would dedicate their lives to God by serving "the poorest of the poor." This was a radical vocation in 17th-century France.

St. Vincent was a friend of St. Francis de Sales, and he remembered the difficulties St. Francis faced when trying to establish his community of Sisters. At first, the Sisters devoted themselves to prayer while also visiting the sick and the poor. It didn't take long before he was asked to accept the norms of the day: Sisters who wore veils and made perpetual vows were nuns, and nuns lived in cloistered monasteries. St. Francis acquiesced, and the congregation he cofounded with St. Jane de Chantal became cloistered nuns.

To establish a new community of Sisters, who could serve the poor freely, St. Vincent did something entirely unique. Instead of making perpetual vows, these Sisters would dedicate themselves to Christ with simple vows that were renewed annually. Instead of wearing veils, they would wear white headdresses, which were worn by peasant women at that time. Instead of living in cloistered monasteries, they would live in communal houses among the poor they served.

Like the Vincentians, the Daughters of Charity were sent wherever they were needed, to distant regions as well as surrounding regions. With their distinctive

Photo used by permission from Burt Glinn Magnum Photos

OUR WONDERFUL DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY IN GERMANTOWN
From left to right: (back row) Sr. Mary Gilbart, Sr. Marge Clifford, Sr. Sharon Horace, Sr. Mary Ann Woodward; (front row) Sr. Jean Maher, Sr. Cecilia Negrón (currently on mission in Puerto Rico), and Sr. Felicia Mazzolla

vocation, they were able to make a tremendous impact—first in rural areas and then throughout France.

A CALL TO PHILADELPHIA

Almost 200 years after the Daughters of Charity were formed, Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton founded her congregation, the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's, in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Once again, the Holy Spirit was breathing life into a new venture. Inspired by the work of the Daughters of Charity in Europe, she adapted their rule of life for her community.

In 1814, the pastor of St. Augustine Church in Philadelphia asked Mother Seton to send three of her Sisters to run a local orphanage. As the community of Sisters grew, so did their ministries, and less than forty years after they first arrived, Mother Seton's Sisters of Charity in Philadelphia were among those who united with the French Daughters of Charity. Together, they formed the first American Daughters of Charity.

DEDICATED TO GOD AND SERVICE TO THE POOR

Fast forward another 200 years to Germantown, Pennsylvania, where six Daughters of Charity are currently on mission. For decades, these Sisters have served Christ in the poorest of the poor, and now they're blessing us with their presence: Sr. Felicia Mazzola, DC (International General Assistance Fund), Sr. Jean Maher, DC (St. Athanasius Catholic School), Sr. Marge Clifford, DC (International Vincentian Family Office), Sr. Mary Gilbart, DC (DePaulUSA Transitional Housing), Sr. Mary Ann Woodward, DC (Face to Face), and Sr. Sharon Horace, DC (St. Vincent de Paul Young Adult Center).

Sr. Maher, who was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the city's Daughters of Charity hospital, served her first two missions in the United States and was then sent to a tiny village in Haiti. The doctor in charge of the town's rudimentary hospital was eagerly awaiting the Sisters; he had written to many congregations asking for help, but the Daughters of Charity were the only ones who answered.

Immediately jumping into the mission, Sr. Maher helped the doctor and his staff create systems to manage the hospital while also working with the Knights of Malta, who generously helped pay for medicine, medical supplies, and equipment every year. But it wasn't the physical demands of the work that overwhelmed her, but the immense poverty. "When I was in the States, scripture challenged me," she says softly. "When I was in Haiti, scripture comforted me."

After Haiti, Sr. Maher was sent on mission to a university in Szechuan, China, where she taught English to the students. She loved the experience, but it was an encounter she had with an old woman in a bus station that touched her the most. "It looked like she was right out of *National Geographic*," Sr. Maher recalls. As the elderly woman with weathered skin and shabby clothes shuffled over to

her, Sr. Maher was perplexed. Why was this woman approaching her? Sr. Maher gently said that she only spoke English, to which the old woman smiled and replied, "Welcome to our country."

After graduating from college, Sr. Horace spent a year in Bolivia, where she met the Daughters of Charity. She was especially moved by a program (founded by Sr. Stephanie Marie, DC, from Emmitsburg) that took kids off the streets and placed them in homes. "She would drive out at night looking for kids to help. The mission of the Daughters serving the poorest of the poor was pretty clear," explains Sr. Horace. This experience proved to be the seed for her vocation.

Photos courtesy of the Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise, St. Louis, MO

TOURING AND LEARNING ABOUT GERMANTOWN
Sr. Sharon Horace, DC (third from left), accompanies high school students from St. Edmund's Prep, Brooklyn.

Years later, after becoming a Daughter of Charity, she was sent on mission to Kenya to assist the Sisters, who were running a nursery school and a program for the elderly. One of the Sisters from the Irish Province, Sr. Mary Shea, DC, worked with children who had disabilities. She got Kenyan health insurance for them, brought them to the clinic, and ensured they received reparative surgery. As word spread, more and more people brought their children to the Sisters to see if they could get assistance.

"I did a lot of different things when I was there," Sr. Horace says, but a highlight was working with a small group of women with disabilities. "We met every Tuesday for art projects together. Each woman had her own physical limits, so we found our niches of what we could do and worked as a community." The gathering started as a way for the women to generate an income by selling the cards they created; it was a simple, Vincentian collaboration. "Service is not sitting on the other side of the table, saying, 'I'm here to serve you.' It's giving and serving in a way where you see the face of Christ in one another," notes Sr. Horace.

As an athlete and musician in high school, Sr. Mazzola got to know the Sisters by staying after school to help them, oftentimes accompanying them to bring food and provisions to the poor. After graduation, she worked six months before entering the Daughters of Charity. Her first twelve years of mission were spent in elementary schools, teaching and serving as a principal. Then, asking her superiors for "something different," she was invited to become the treasurer for the Province.

In this new mission, which lasted twelve years, she visited other Daughters of Charity to see how the Province could help them. Later, her role was expanded to supporting Sisters around the world, including Paris—the very place where our Blessed Mother appeared to St. Catherine Labouré. She was then asked to establish an office in the United States to raise funds for international projects of the Daughters of Charity, especially in areas like Africa, Asia, and South America. She contacted the Vincentians, wrote grants, and made phone calls, and within four months, the International Project Services Office opened. From housing and clothing the needy to building churches and schools, the projects are as diverse as the Sisters who create them. In more than sixty-four countries, destitute people are benefitting from the Sisters and their projects. Of course, Sr. Mazzola prays that the financial assistance will keep growing. "The Holy Spirit is around," she says, "breathing life into new projects. We just need to get the funds for them."

Sr. Clifford "grew up Vincentian," not in an official sense, but because her mother had a "Vincentian" way of serving. "My Mother always had food for the destitute or people who were grieving—everything we had was shared," she recalls. As a nursing student, she got to know the Daughters of Charity by helping them bring groceries to the needy. Her heart was moved and her vocation ignited. "I was touched by the sensitivity and warmth they showed the poor," she recalls.

After becoming a Daughter of Charity, she was sent on mission to Alabama; it was the first time she had ever been south of the Mason Dixon Line. At St. Vincent's Hospital, she served in a family-centered maternity care unit before other hospitals ever envisioned this form of care. That unit became a model for the entire state.

But it wasn't just the work of the Sisters that was being noticed; it was the way they worked. Later, when Sr. Clifford was asked to serve in the OB/GYN unit, she commented that she knew nothing about OB/GYN nursing. The department chief quickly responded, "We'll teach you the OB part; what we need is a good Daughter of Charity."

Years later, while on mission serving the elderly, Sr. Clifford noticed that several homebound elders needed meals delivered. With the help of volunteers, she created a program, and, using her Vincentian creativity, convinced twenty restaurants to donate ten meals weekly. The result: 200 meals served weekly to the elderly homebound. "If that's what the poor need, that's what you do," she comments matter-of-factly.

Sr. Gilbart was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, to a devout Catholic family. Her first introduction to the Daughters of Charity occurred when her

father was ill and bedridden. At Christmas, the Sisters brought gifts to the house, ensuring the children had presents to open. Sr. Gilbart never forgot that beautiful act of kindness.

After becoming a Daughter of Charity, she was asked by her superiors to get her bachelor's degree in nutrition and dietetics in order to become a therapeutic dietician. "I didn't even know what a therapeutic dietician was," she says with a grin. Looking back, Sr. Gilbart explains how accepting things we're asked to do helps us grow. "You learn to say, 'This is what God wants for me.' Usually, it's something God wants us to do to prepare for the next step."

Initially, Sr. Gilbart taught health to high school students, subjects like nutrition and the dangers of smoking. But her ministry to the students went beyond the academic; she also wanted to "empower them to be their best selves and improve their situations" and to "help them feel valued."

Later, at St. Agnes Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland, Sr. Gilbart taught the staff how to fulfill their mission while serving in their various jobs (i.e., housekeepers or dietary staff). This helped spread the Vincentian virtues and way of life. "We help people see and share the mission of Jesus Christ in what they are doing, so that what they are doing is elevated," she explains.

From her earliest memories, Sr. Woodward wanted to be a nurse. While transitioning from her junior to senior year in high school, someone recommended she work at St. Mary's Hospital to get experience. Employed as an aid and then as a Licensed Practical Nurse, she got to know the Sisters. "They were energetic. I liked how they worked together. They had joy."

After becoming a Daughter of Charity, she received her registered nursing degree and continued caring for the sick. While working in a number of hospital surgical units, she saw that many patients needed specific education for their self-care when they returned home—things like dealing with their ostomies or cleaning and dressing their wounds. "All the messy things," she laughs. She eagerly provided these services in hospitals and clinics and trained others to do the same, while still making her rounds to see patients.

Up to this point, Sr. Woodward never worked with the homeless. But during a three-month internship in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, "I was thrown into it." This led her to work in day shelters, where she would give free shoulder and neck massages to the poor, who carried everything they owned in their backpacks. "That's our charism," she says, "working with people in great need."

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY LIFE

The Daughters of Charity are just as committed to their community life as they are to their missions; for them, the two are inseparable. "It's not like you can opt out of community," Sr. Horace says, "You can do service anywhere. What makes us different is our community life." And that life requires effort; it's not something that just miraculously happens.

"Community is created by the Sisters who form it," Sr. Maher explains. Another crucial element is prayer. "Our prayer life is a key factor to our community life," says Sr. Woodward. Together, they pray Morning Prayers and Evening Prayers, with time alone for private prayer. Every night the Sisters have supper and recreation together, and on Tuesdays, they have a night of shared prayer and reflection.

It is a beautiful life, one that requires living intentionally. "It's more difficult today, more countercultural, to become a Sister," Sr. Maher posits. "Back in the 1950s, young people were making life decisions much earlier. Many of them were deciding on marriage or religious life right after high school. Things are different today. Not only do young people make these decisions later in life, they're also making them against a current that tells them to be free from responsibility." But the Holy Spirit continues to breathe life into the Daughters of Charity, their communities, and their mission.

"God is good to us," Sr. Mazzola says, smiling. "It was He who gave us the gift of being Daughters of Charity."

Learn more about the merciful works of the Daughters of Charity in developing countries at www.DaughtersIPS.org.

The Lighter Side of the VINCENTIANS

BEING A VINCENTIAN PRIEST IS AN AMAZING GIFT. Every day is a new day of grace-filled moments. But there are always unexpected—sometimes out-of-the-box—experiences to be had. Such is the story of five Vincentians—Frs. James Dorr, Albert Pehrsson, Michael Shea, John Timlin, and Charles Strollo—whose "unique" religious ministries show their chameleon abilities to step in no matter what the task requires.

THE REVEREND AND THE RACETRACK

On Sundays, his day begins with a short ride to Queens, New York. He arrives at the Belmont Racetrack, presents his ID, enters the gate, and then heads to the recreation center. After assembling what he needs, he welcomes the thirty or more attendees who enter the room. But unlike those gathered, he is a Vincentian priest, who celebrates weekly Mass for the workers, owners, and jockeys of the track.

Born and raised in Buffalo, New York, Fr. James Dorr, CM, was ordained a Vincentian priest in 1958, and after a lengthy tenure in myriad Vincentian ministries, he retired from active priesthood ministries in 2010. His desire to remain vibrant led Fr. Dorr to his unique mission.

It all began in 1978 with Fr. Kenneth Slattery, CM. Fr. Slattery loved horses and the thrill of horseracing. Being a friend of personnel at the Belmont Racetrack, it didn't take him long to connect with the track personnel. Before he knew it, Fr. Slattery was celebrating Mass at the track on Sundays and holy days. He continued serving for almost two decades until his health began to suffer. Upon his retirement, Fr. Dorr stepped in. It was a ministry that had grown a devoted following from the track staff.

Ten years later, Fr. Dorr continues to serve as "chaplain" for the Belmont Racetrack. He laughs when he explains the circumstances surrounding the ministry.

"The chapel was once a betting parlor," states Fr. Dorr. "It's a small space and can only hold thirty people. Most days we are filled to capacity."

After Mass, Fr. Dorr has breakfast with the track personnel and has become a familiar part of this horse-training community.

"It has become a consuming responsibility," states Fr. Dorr, "but, I realize the importance of celebrating Mass. Most workers start at 5:00 a.m. and labor the entire day into night. They can't get to Mass, so we bring it to them."

While Fr. Dorr confesses he is not a betting man, he does admire the track community and the beauty of the sport of horseracing.

"I like horses," admits Fr. Dorr and jokingly adds, "but racing is too expensive for me. I'll stick with the spiritual aspects of the track."

HORSING AROUND
Fr. Dorr in the Winner's Circle (third from right in straw hat)

Photos courtesy of Fr. John Dorr, CM

GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD

Bread plays essential roles in both religious rituals and secular culture. It is a part of our celebrations, and, for Christians, a symbol of devotion. But for one Vincentian priest, bread is about friendship and the act of giving. It's the story of a life lesson—one that still resonates with him today.

It all began on Christmas Eve when Fr. Michael Shea, CM, was six years old. "Mike" was a typical child, eyeing his presents in anticipation of the wonders of receiving gifts the next morning. Noticing his young son's innocent expectations, his father said, "Remember, Mike, it's always better to give than to receive."

Fr. Shea admits that as a child, he didn't fully understand his father's message that night. And while he has given his time and energy to others through his Vincentian ministries, he has also created a ministry around giving that involves a simple loaf of bread.

It started during a fortuitous visit to see a fellow Vincentian Priest at St. Mary's Parish in North Carolina. Upon his arrival, he was greeted by the enticing aroma of freshly baked bread emanating from the parish kitchen. He asked the confrere about the source of this olfactory-captivating smell. The priest rather nonchalantly replied, "It's homemade bread baking. It's so easy to make; anyone can do it." Intrigued, Fr. Shea thought, "Me, a bread maker? Why not?"

Using a simple starter of butter, salt, milk, yeast, sugar, and flour, Fr. Shea experimented and eventually perfected his bread-making process. Once his baking technique was perfected, he began to share his loaves with others. The popularity of his bread rose during his years as a campus minister at Niagara University, where he brought the loaves to his weekly dinner with students. The students loved the simple staple, and soon word spread around campus about the "heavenly" baked good.

On one occasion, a student asked him the secret to his doughy delights. Fr. Shea replied, "It's simple. Take the ingredients, put them in a bread-making machine, add water, press the button, and three hours later you have bread."

While he might see his bread making as a low-maintenance process, it is his act of sharing with purpose that most resonates with others.

"Anybody can make bread," Fr. Shea once told a student and added, "What's the big deal?" The student replied, "The big deal is you make it and give it to others."

But there is an added ingredient Fr. Shea bestows on his loaves that most breads don't have, and what he claims makes giving his loaves a true sense of sharing with others in the Vincentian way.

"My final ingredient is the Vincentian blessing," admits Fr. Shea. And sharing the bread truly makes him understand the significance of his father's words, "It's better to give than receive."

Fr. Shea has graciously shared his recipe for homemade bread: MiraculousMedal.org/message/bread

Parental words of wisdom, a serendipitous visit, and a secret ingredient—the perfect recipe for Fr. Shea's doughly delights.

THE PEANUT MAN

As a young boy, Fr. Alfred Pehrsson, CM, would gather with his father and siblings on Sunday afternoons for the family ritual of reading the *New York Daily News* comic strips. Fr. Pehrsson was fascinated with strips like Dick Tracy and would trace and imitate the drawings, while adding his own unique twist to the characters. His father, a portraitist, encouraged his young son to develop his interest and talent.

Such was the beginning of what would become a lifetime hobby that Fr. Pehrsson incorporated into his Vincentian ministries.

As a young priest, Fr. Pehrsson was stationed at the Vincentian grammar and high school in Panama, Colegio San Vincente, located in the interior town of David, Province of Chiriqui. Even though he spoke broken Spanish and his students didn't understand English, Fr. Pehrsson was assigned to the grammar school, a daunting task even without a language barrier.

Communicating with his Spanish-speaking students proved problematic at first, but Fr. Pehrsson took a new twist to his instruction: drawing peanut-shaped characters on the blackboard, which served as instruction aids. His students were receptive to this teaching method and fondly referred to him as "Padre Mani" or "Peanut Priest."

The enduring success of Fr. Pehrsson's one-panel creations lies in his ability to portray simple observations that connect to his audiences. His cerebral humor is observational, nostalgic, and focused on common situations in everyday life. He admits that some of his characters are based on real people and stereotypical personality traits: Grandpa is Archie Bunker and Grandma is Edith Bunker; the little girl is often a tattletale; and the little boy is suspiciously innocent.

"I tend to create the setting and plot, and then let the characters create the dialogue, telling their story through their facial expressions," says Fr. Pehrsson. "Sometimes I get an idea and draw the characters but question, 'What are they saying to one another?' Some of my cartoons stay on my desk for hours before I can hear the chatter."

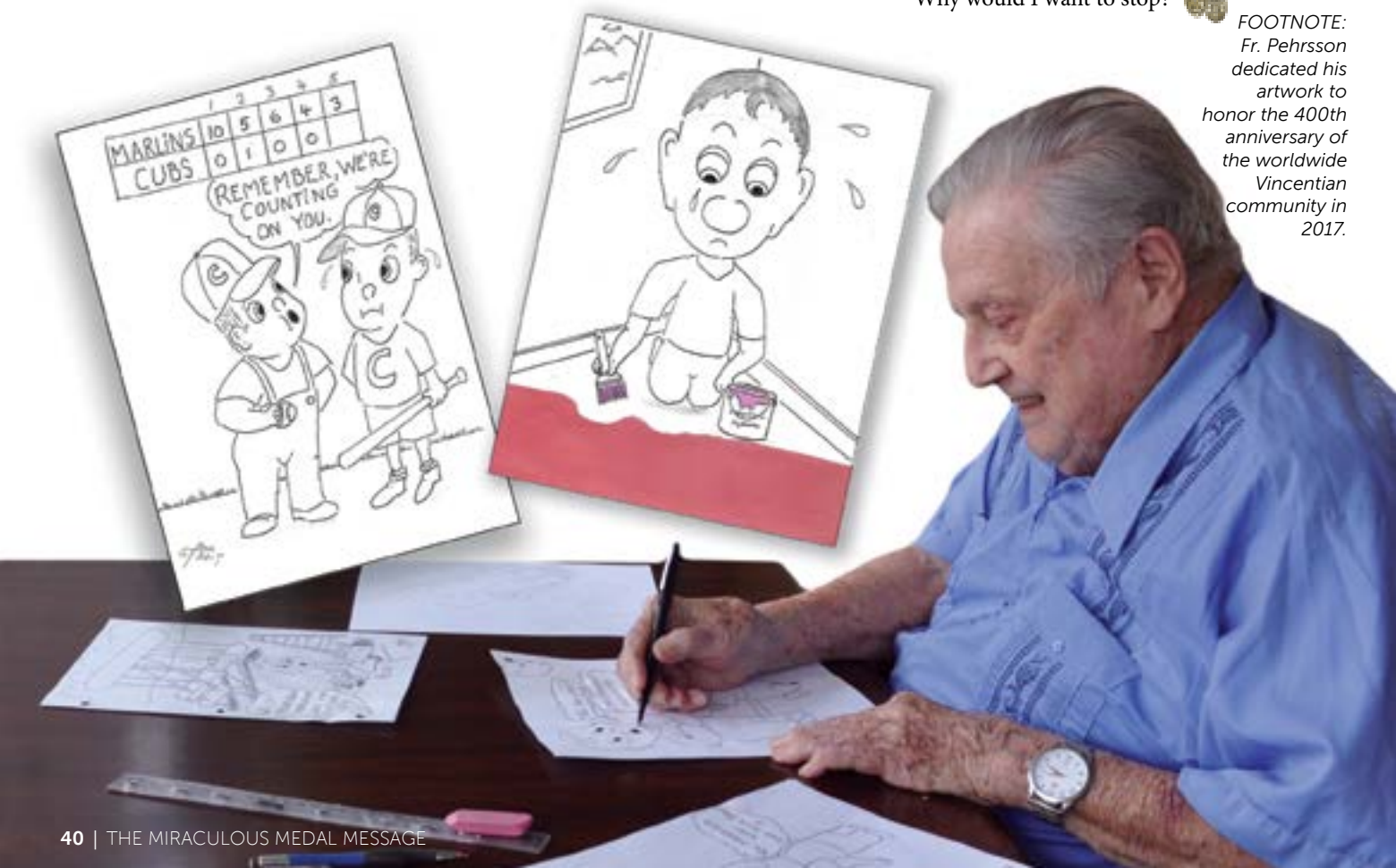
Since his arrival at the Eastern Provincial motherhouse in Germantown in 2004, Fr. Pehrsson has made it a practice to draw as many as six cartoons a week (they regularly appear in the provincial newsletter, the Notebook). Five years ago, his artwork went beyond the Germantown community when his friend, Joe Pritchard, a former Vincentian seminarian, convinced him to share his comics with a New York publisher, Bob Walsh of PBJ (Precious Blood of Jesus) Enterprises, Inc. Fr. Pehrsson soon began sending Walsh his drawings and within four years, he has submitted more than 4,000 cartoons. Today, the comic books are available worldwide through Amazon Books.

"Fr. Al's drawings are yet another way for him to effectively reach out and serve our brothers and sisters in Christ," says Walsh. "His books are unique pulpits—the other side of which are congregations around the world who can see his drawings and reflect upon their special messages."

At ninety years old, Fr. Pehrsson continues to faithfully draw cartoons; he vows to keep going until he no longer can.

"Bringing the little boys and girls into existence helps me cope with the crazy world around us," reflects Fr. Pehrsson. "Why would I want to stop?"

FOOTNOTE: Fr. Pehrsson dedicated his artwork to honor the 400th anniversary of the worldwide Vincentian community in 2017.



VINCENTIAN LINE UP
Left to right: Fr. John Timlin, CM, Tom Butler, and Fr. Charles Strollo, CM

Photos courtesy of Fr. John Timlin, CM

PUT ME IN COACH

For baseball fans, the crack of a bat hitting a ball, the roar of the crowd cheering the home team, the smell of concession stand foods, and the sound of an organ playing century-old favorites create a sports heaven. Just ask two avid baseball fans who also happen to be Vincentians—Frs. John Timlin, CM, and Charles Strollo, CM. Their love of the game coupled with their priestly responsibilities took their baseball experience to a whole new level.

BATTER UP!

Whether working as ticket sales reps, ushers, grounds and dugout crew, concession stand operators, or clubhouse staff, the Philadelphia Phillies staff members work full days during baseball season. Sensitive to their employees' needs, the director of Fan Relations wanted to provide an opportunity for them, many of who were Catholic, to fulfill their weekly Mass obligation. An Archdiocesan priest was recruited to fill this void, but during the 2000 and 2001 baseball seasons, a substitute was required while the priest recuperated from an illness. Enter Frs. Timlin and Strollo.

Fr. Timlin, then-director of the internal seminary, and Fr. Strollo, then-assistant provincial, couldn't have been happier to answer the call.

"[Securing priests to offer Mass] speaks to the Phillies' respect and care for their employees," notes Fr. Timlin. "And for two diehard Phillies fans like Charlie and myself, it was great!"

The priests offered Mass on Saturdays, which was held in one of the stadium's greeting rooms at 4:30 p.m. during evening home games. On average, twenty-five to thirty people attended.

Admittedly, they confess that the perks were a great incentive. Not only did they get to be a temporary part of their beloved hometown baseball team staff, but they were also given four free tickets in premium seating directly behind home plate for the evening's game. On one occasion, they had the opportunity to meet then-Phillies team manager, Terry Francona, who Fr. Strollo remembers as very gracious and welcoming.

"I applaud the concern the franchise has for its employees, especially coming from the managers and owners," says Fr. Timlin. "We knew they had a reputation for being good to employees and consider this a nice touch to provide [their staff with the chance] to maintain their faith while working."

Fr. Strollo also commends those who attended Mass. "These people of faith, wherever they were from, took the time to make sure they didn't miss Mass. It's admirable."

For Frs. Timlin and Strollo, being part of the organization was priceless.

"I don't care if the Phillies are doing well or not, baseball is baseball," says Fr. Timlin. "For two guys who really enjoy baseball, it was a dream come true."

KENYA *Calling*

For Fr. John Timlin, CM, a mission in Kenya was a gift from God. Upon his return to the States, he reflects on the lessons he learned from those who live in one of the worst slums in the world, where the Vincentians are needed most.

As a Philadelphia Vincentian in Kenya, Fr. John "Jack" Timlin, CM, doesn't speak fluent Kiswahili, the *lingua franca* of Africa's Great Lakes region. Yet, during his year serving in Kenya, he became quite familiar with the Kiswahili greetings, *Habari. Karibu. Habari gani. Asanti*, which translates as, "Hello. Welcome. What's the news? Thank you."

These words are indicative of a Kenyan culture that honors hospitality, as Fr. Timlin soon discovered. And welcome him they did, while he served from August 2018 to August 2019 as director of internal seminary in the Damascus House at the DePaul Center in Nairobi, Kenya (part of the Kenya region of the Vincentians of the Western Province).

The internal seminary is a year-long, immersive experience for men who have completed their undergraduate philosophy degrees and are discerning a vocation with the Vincentians. Internal seminary provides formation for the men before they decide whether to follow "Christ evangelizing the poor," as is the Vincentian charism.

If you ask Fr. Timlin what he, an American, was doing in Kenya directing four internal seminarians (three from Kenya, one from Uganda), he'll answer, "It fell into my lap. It was a gift from God."

For eight years, Fr. Timlin directed the internal seminary in Philadelphia, but from 2018-2019, there were no novices because the candidates had not reached full formation. By coincidence (or providence), the Kenyan internal seminary needed a director for that same year. Fr. Timlin sought and received the necessary permissions for the assignment, and embarked on his international mission.

He notes that directing the internal seminary in a foreign country is not as unusual at it may seem to someone outside of the Vincentians. "The basic structure of Vincentian formation is the same worldwide. We just take specific cultures into context."

This basic structure includes five pillars of formation: spiritual, intellectual, communal, service to the poor, and human growth. While internal seminarians are introduced to these pillars, all Vincentians strive to be formed in these foundations throughout their lives. "We [Vincentians] believe we are always in formation," explains Fr. Timlin. "It is a lifelong process."

He wasn't too worried about the language differences of directing an internal seminary in Africa. Most Kenyans in urban areas like Nairobi speak English (along with Kiswahili and tribal languages), so Fr. Timlin could easily communicate with the students. However, he needed to learn the nuances of how he was communicating. "The language is the same, but how you say something, and how the language is interpreted, is very specific to each culture. Early on, I had some stumbles in my approach, which was a learning experience for me."

There were cultural differences outside of language, too. "The men in internal seminary were very slow to offer criticism; they have a deep respect for mentors and older people. And I'm an older guy," laughs Fr. Timlin. "Also, their system of education is lecture-based. It took me some time to realize they weren't going to offer opinions, and that

> *"My approach is that I'll just do the best I can with a spirit of enthusiasm and love, and God will do the rest."*

I had to ask questions. They soon got used to sharing, and I'm glad they did, because they are bright men, who give great responses and insights."

Despite any initial obstacles, Fr. Timlin is confident in his assignment. "I felt I could offer something to these men," he says. "My approach was that I'll just do the best I can with a spirit of enthusiasm and love, and God will do the rest."

For Fr. Timlin, the best part of his Kenyan experience are the people—seminarians, Vincentians, Daughters of Charity, and lay co-workers—and the men, women, and children of Kenya, many of whom live in abject poverty.

He quickly notes, "At the Damascus House, we lived a simple life, but we were comfortable. However, if you go out into the surrounding villages, you see extreme poverty."

In fact, four miles away is one of the largest slums in the world. It is a land of tens-of-thousands of people (the exact number is difficult to ascertain), who live in makeshift shanty-huts in packed communities, which lack basic necessities like running water, sewers, trash disposal, schools, or medical care.

Fr. Timlin relates countless stories about the Vincentians in Kenya working among the poor, but for him, one person exemplified the best spirit of service. Each Tuesday, while the internal seminarians were out on their respective apostolates, Fr. Timlin served at The Dream Center, a program run by the Daughters of

Photos courtesy of Fr. John Timlin and Mary Jo Timlin-Hoog

"The best part of my experience [in Kenya] was the people."

Mary Jo Timlin-Hoag (left), visited her brother, Fr. John Timlin, CM, while he was in Kenya. Here they are welcomed by one of the local families.

Charity, which provides services for people living with HIV/AIDS. There, he met Momma Rosemarie, a lay collaborator and the center's cook. He describes her as "a hardworking, kind, good person," who had a simple, but profound, approach to her ministry. Momma Rosemarie told Fr. Timlin, "We have to be conscious of whom we're serving and how. We don't know what situation the people are coming from. And many of them are suffering. We have to be kind and prepare a good, nutritional meal for them."

On Tuesdays, Fr. Timlin would minister alongside his fellow Kenyan Vincentian Priests, and was moved by what he witnessed. While Kenyans have great respect for their elders, many children and grandchildren are forced to leave to seek employment, so they are not able to attend to their older family members. Therefore, each and every Tuesday, the priests, who serve the parishes (often the poorest parishes), visit the sick and isolated elderly to administer the sacraments; evaluate their needs and determine how to provide what they need; and offer comfort and companionship.

"My fellow Kenyan Vincentians may have been giving themselves to those elders in need," Fr. Timlin says, "but they received as much back. It was very inspiring to join them each Tuesday in this important ministry."

Fr. Timlin was moved by the many ministries he witnessed in Kenya. "In the eyes of the power brokers of the world, would they [the ministries] be earth-shattering? No. But to me they were, and they exemplified the mission of the Vincentians and the Daughters [of Charity], along with the men and women in formation."

Being Vincentian always means a special devotion to the Blessed Mother, who already plays a significant role in Kenyan culture.

"The Kenyan people hold

Left: Fr. Timlin meets with the Daughters of Charity at The Dream Center.
Right: Fr. Timlin with the seminarians in the internal seminary.

Fr. Timlin is surrounded and warmly greeted by the children of the village.

motherhood in high esteem, since motherhood is the source of life," notes Fr. Timlin. "And since Our Lady is the Blessed Mother of Our Savior, she is honored with great devotion." While there are many Marian shrines in that region of Kenya, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal is a popular devotion. Along with a daily rosary, Fr. Timlin and the internal seminarians said the Miraculous Medal Novena together each Monday. To honor and support this devotion to the Miraculous Medal, The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal in Philadelphia donated thousands of medals to distribute to the townspeople where Fr. Timlin ministered.

By the summer of 2019, the internal seminarians in Kenya completed the portion of formation he was overseeing and are now moving forward on the long road to becoming incorporated Vincentians (vows) and priests. Fr. Timlin, too, moved on, returning to the States to direct a new class of internal seminarians in Philadelphia.

When reflecting on his mission in Kenya, Fr. Timlin is humbled by the experience. "I received more than I gave. It was a 50/50 deal. Or maybe 70/30—I got 70 percent, they got 30."

Kenya also taught him a new way to live. "I brought back a desire to live more simply. I didn't miss all the things we have here. I enjoyed what we had there. We enjoyed one another's company."

Despite how much he loved his time in Kenya, Fr. Timlin was ready to return home. "I admit that I missed my great nieces and nephews, my family [in America], and my confreres in Philadelphia, who love and support me, and I, them. That was in tension with the great joy of interacting with the people of Kenya."

When asked if he'd go back to serve in Kenya again, Fr. Timlin doesn't hesitate. "I'd be happy to go back to Kenya or another part of Africa."

Fr. Timlin working with the local families.

And without hesitation adds, "Vincentians go where we are asked to go. If I'm asked to go someplace else, I'll say yes, and I'll go. That's what [Vincentians] do."

Giving the shoes OFF HIS FEET

Fr. Joseph A. Skelly, CM, founder of The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal, was known for his generosity. On one occasion, he literally gave the shoes off his feet.

As told by Anne Eckley Branca, a former secretary to Fr. Joseph A. Skelly, CM

While working late one evening in an alcove off Fr. Skelly's second floor office in the old headquarters of The Central Association on Price Street, I suddenly became aware of voices. They appeared to come from the reception room on the floor below, which normally at that hour would be deserted. It was during the early days of construction on Mary Immaculate Seminary at Northampton, and the supervisor of construction was expected to report that night to Fr. Skelly on the progress of the work and on any difficulties encountered.

As was his custom, Fr. Skelly had left the office before six o'clock and crossed the street to St. Vincent's Rectory for his usual light supper. I was to telephone him when Michael O'Brien, the construction superintendent, arrived.

Michael was a quiet, friendly man, low-voiced and gentle like Fr. Skelly himself, yet a man of extreme capability in his field of work. Fr. Skelly highly valued Michael's services and advice, and waited always with apparent eagerness for the hour when Michael would arrive from Northampton for a one- or two-hour discussion of problems encountered, corrective steps taken, and the progress made in the building of the new Seminary. On this occasion the construction superintendent, it appeared, would be late in arriving as it had been raining intermittently and driving was hazardous.

So, I descended the stairs to the first floor reception room to investigate the voices, which had startled me. As I approached the room, I was surprised to discover that one of the voices was that of Fr. Skelly; I had not heard him return. Yet the second voice was that of a stranger, harshly strident, almost belligerent, but with a perceptible break, which bespoke despair and frustration. "Who is this man?" I wondered.

It was no unusual occurrence for "cranks" of various kinds to drop in at the office during regular workday hours. They came bent on seeing Fr. Skelly in person in order that they might grind whatever strange, distorted "axe" their hearts and minds were carrying.

But as I reached the door of the reception room, I realized that the tall, gaunt man standing over Fr. Skelly was not a crank. Here was an impoverished [person]...a still vaguely handsome man who, somewhere along the way, had gone wrong. Father himself was seated in a chair at the far corner of the reception room, and in the process of removing the strong black shoes he had recently acquired. (The Northampton terrain was anything but gentle, and he made frequent visits to the site of construction.) When the shoes were off, he removed his black socks. Then, insisting that the [man] sit down, he himself placed on the man's feet the socks and shoes he had removed from his own. Though the man towered over him in size, Father's shoes and socks appeared to fit perfectly.

As I slowly withdrew from the doorway, the man suddenly stood up, and the still strident voice thundered, "The man gave me his shoes!" He spoke not to me, not to Fr. Skelly; he seemed to speak to the world that had hurt him, but possibly he was speaking to God. His eyes wandered wildly from picture to picture on the reception room walls to the medium-sized statue of Mary, which graced the mantel shelf. Then back again to Fr. Skelly standing in bare feet beside him. "You gave me your shoes, priest…God bless you!"

As I ascended the stairs to return to my work, Fr. Skelly called after me, "Please telephone the Rectory and ask the housekeeper to send over my slippers; they are in my room, beside the wardrobe." I promptly did so.

Some ten to fifteen minutes later, Father returned to his office on the second floor, his feet clad only in a well-worn pair of slippers.

"I met that poor fellow when I was crossing the street," he said, "I threw his torn shoes in the waste-basket."

"Insisting that the man sit down, he himself placed on the man's feet the socks and shoes he had removed from his own."

Photo courtesy of Ducournau Archives

This was his only comment.

Michael O'Brien arrived within the next half hour, and together he and Father plunged into an earnest discussion of the work completed that day on the new Seminary and the facets of construction to be tackled next morning. I interrupted to say "Good night," then gladly left for home, for the hour was growing late.

There was a real chill in the air as I walked to Germantown and Chelten Avenues to board a bus. I kept thinking about the poorly clothed [man] Fr. Skelly had befriended little more than an hour earlier. Over and over, I heard his thundered words, "The man gave me his shoes!"

I prayed that God would clothe the "poor fellow," through some other kindly soul, with a coat or possibly a warm sweater.

Then there came to my mind, as the bus moved along, an unforgettable but totally unrelated proverb, which Fr. Skelly had once quoted in a letter to the Promoters and Members of Mary's Family of the Miraculous Medal: "I had no shoes, and went about complaining, until I met a man who had no feet."

As the bus passed Mary's Central Shrine on Chelten Avenue, I whispered a word of thanks for the privilege of having as my "boss" a man of God as priestly and Christ-like as was Fr. Skelly.

HELP US BUILD OUR LADY OF KNOCK SHRINE at the Miraculous Medal Shrine

We welcome volunteers to help us build a shrine to Our Lady of Knock. This sacred space will house one of the most venerated Marian images and serve as a universal message of devotion, hope, and trust for all the faithful.

100% of the funding for this project will be raised from private contributions in the name of The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Sheila O'Hagan McGirl, Director of Institutional Advancement at 215.848.1010, ext. 212, or smcgirl@cammonline.org.

For 10 days, follow in the footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul and experience beautiful sites throughout France.

All-inclusive trip includes:

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www.miracolotours.com/camm-france-2020

The Babe & the Miraculous Medal

On August 16, 1948, the magazine *Guideposts*, a non-denominational inspirational magazine, received an autobiographical article written and submitted by Major League Baseball icon and American legend George Herman "Babe" Ruth, Jr.

In a twist of tragic irony, the same day *Guideposts* received the article at their office, Ruth died of cancer. The Babe—as he was affectionately called—had composed the article weeks earlier with the help of friends, and it was eventually published in *Guideposts* in October 1948.

In this, his final message to his adoring fans, Ruth wrote about his troubled youth, his Catholic education, his zeal for life, his faith journey, and how he was introduced to the Miraculous Medal.

Ruth ended his article by detailing his experience in 1946 of facing a difficult surgery and his own mortality*: "In December, 1946, I was in French Hospital, New York, facing a serious operation. Paul Carey, one of my oldest and closest friends, was by my bed one night.

"'They're going to operate in the morning, Babe,' Paul said. 'Don't you think you ought to put your house in order?'

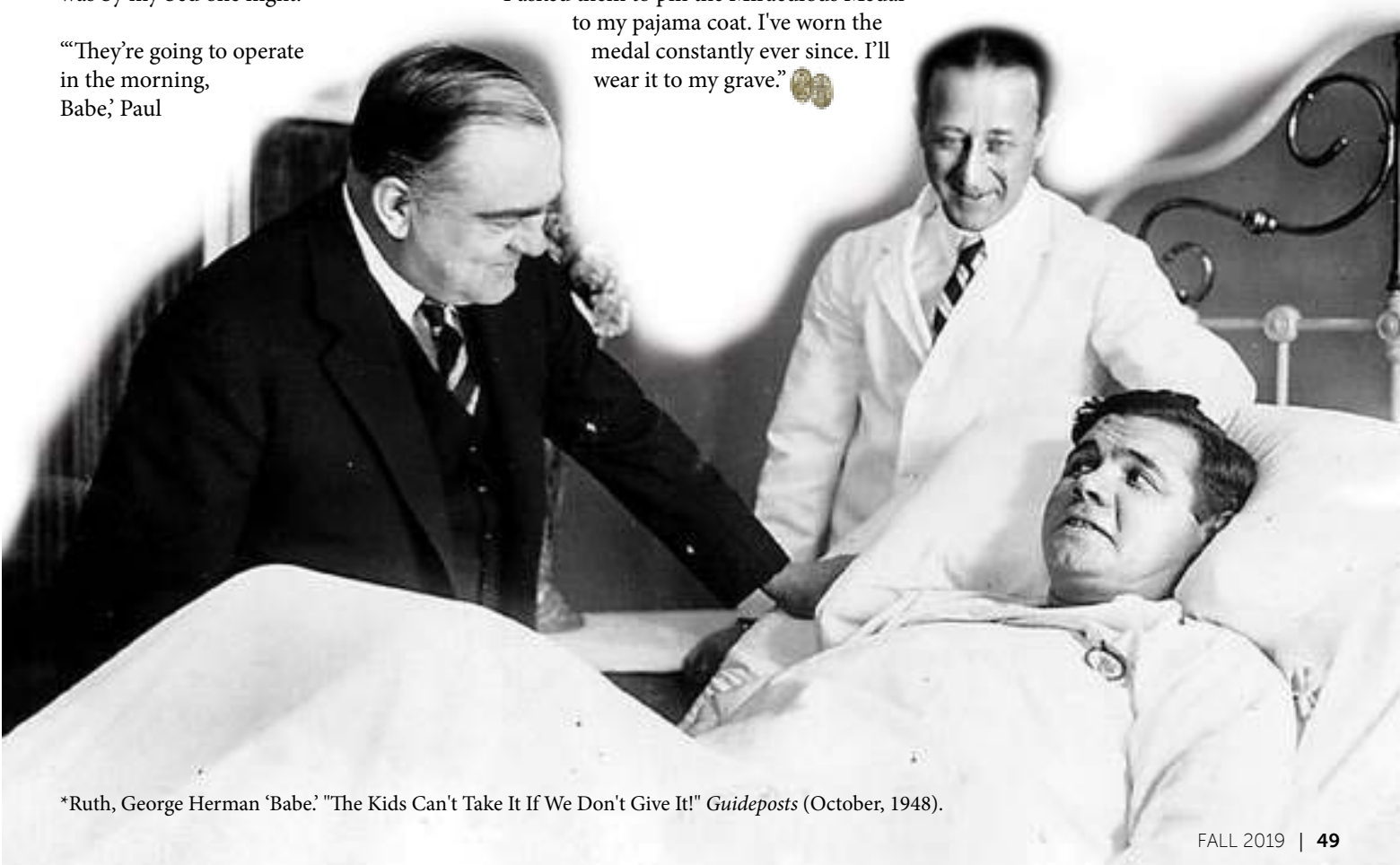
"I didn't dodge the long, challenging look in his eyes. I knew what he meant. For the first time, I realized that death might strike me out. I nodded, and Paul got up, called in a chaplain, and I made a full confession.

"'I'll return in the morning and give you Holy Communion,' the chaplain said, 'But you don't have to fast.'

"'I'll fast,' I said. I didn't have even a drop of water.

"As I lay in bed that evening, I thought to myself what a comforting feeling to be free from fear and worries. I now could simply turn them over to God. Later on, my wife brought in a letter from a little kid in Jersey City. 'Dear Babe,' he wrote, 'Everybody in the seventh grade class is pulling and praying for you. I am enclosing a medal, which if you wear will make you better. Your pal—Mike Quinlan. P.S. I know this will be your 61st homer. You'll hit it.'

"I asked them to pin the Miraculous Medal to my pajama coat. I've worn the medal constantly ever since. I'll wear it to my grave."



*Ruth, George Herman 'Babe.' "The Kids Can't Take It If We Don't Give It!" *Guideposts* (October, 1948).

Promoters

Please pray for our recently deceased promoters from February 2019 to August 2019.

Rev. Mr. James V. Kerrigan, Woburn, MA
Sr. Mary George Senderak, Convent Sta., NY
Mrs. Anita Albo, Winnipeg, MB Canada
Mrs. Irene M. Altendorf, Meza, AZ
Angela Andneo, Delray Beach, FL
Mrs. Rose Auburn, Edmonton, AB Canada
Anna Bachmurski, Chambersburg, PA
Helen Baier, Lousiville, OH
Mrs. Dorothy Beausoleil, Danielson, CT
Richard Bielinski, Sheboygan, WI
Mrs. Mary Bird, Wasaga Beach, ON Canada
Dolores M. Black, Yorkton, PA
Marietta Blanchet, Ames, IA
Mrs. Helen Blasé, Mount Carmel, PA
Edmund T. Buckley, Middle Vlg, NY
Mrs. Kathleen E. Burd, New Alexandria, PA
Rita Bustin, Towanda, PA
Barbara Cartwright, Wilimington, DE
Alice Castonguay, Chicopee, MA
Terence Churchill, Duluth, MN
M. Lee Cimino, Baltimore, MD
Patricia Cody, Marco Island, FL
Eileen Collins, Brunswick, GA
Fury Colubriale, Philadelphia, PA
Mrs. Robert Cooper, Tacoma, WA
James Davos, Hornell, NY
Mrs. Catherine Delaney, Conception Bay, NL Canada
Mrs. Wilfred Deon, W Pubnico, NS Canada
Kenneth Dias, Santa Rosa, CA
Mrs. Veronica Douglass, Danbury, CT
Mrs. Marie Drenick, Westchester, CA
Mrs. Yvonne Drouillard, Windsor, ON Canada
Mrs. Barbara Drury, Louisville, KY
John Duby, Northville, MI
Mrs. Loretta Dullinger, Saint Joseph, MN
Mrs. Leon Dupont, Winnipeg, MB Canada
Mrs. Helen Durlacher, Ambler, PA
Glenn Erwin, Huntingdon Beach, CA
Mrs. Henrietta Festa, Los Angeles, CA
Hubert Forrey, Westlake, OH
Doris Fournier, Salem, MA
Mrs. Elsie A. Gardner, Salem, OR
Mrs. Marie A. Gray, Middle Village, NY
Mrs. Dorelene Guindon, Ottawa, ON Canada
Natalie Hanus, Bryan, TX
Mrs. Patricia Hanus-Dussman, Tinely Park, IL
Mrs. Gail Harper, Windsor, ON Canada
Mrs. Harry Harris, Elmira, PE Canada
Mrs. Kathleen Haywood, Halifax, NS Canada
Mrs. Peggy Herndon, Bethesda, MD
Anne Hubert, Sudbury, ON Canada
Aileen Jefferson, Gulph, ON Canada
Mrs. Lillian E. Johns, Jackson, MI
Mrs. Sherry Karen Johnson, Annandale, MN
Sandiford A. Joseph, Overland Park, KS
Olga Kondra, Yorkton, SK Canada
Mrs. Alice Kotzur, Falls City, TX
Mrs. Donna Kramer, Pewamo, MI
George Kronberger, Ellendale, DE
Mrs. Gertie Lambert, Grand Falls, NL Canada
Eleanor Lukanski, Lansdale, PA
Rose F. Martz, Neptune, NJ
Mrs. Carmel E. McGarr, Guelph, ON Canada
Albert Middeke, Breese, IL
Virginia Mika, Mt Prospect, IL
Peg Miller, Towanda, PA
Robert P. Miller, Norristown, PA
Mrs. Anita Moneghan, Lancaster, PA
Eva Mooney, College Station, TX
Mrs. Elizabeth H. Moreau, Spartanburg, SC
Mr & Mrs. John Mueller, Bakersfield, CA
Mrs. Alice Neideffer, Livermore, CA
Maryanne Nemeth, Parma, OH
Mrs. Louis Noske, Richmond, MN
Geraldine O'Connor, Bronx, NY
Helen Patrick, White Haven, PA
Mrs. Marcella Perpetua, Carnegie, PA
Mrs. Anne Pfieffer, Cream Ridge, NJ
Mrs. Clara Quartiero, Walsenburg, CO
Mrs. Ervin Roemen, Dell Rapids, SD
Mrs. Catherine Romig, Chesterfield, VA
Margaret Schierbrock, West Point, IA
Mrs. Helen Schultheis, Union, NJ
Mrs. Florence Sczesny, Cheektowaga, NY
Alfie Stamplecoskie, Wilno, ON Canada
Frank Stoppa, Jacksonville, FL
Patricia Swanson, Deep River, CT
Mrs. Rita Tanner, Edgewood, KY
Mrs. Frances Tassi, Plainview, NY
Mrs. Catherine Tobin, Sydney Mines, NS Canada
Gordon Traverse, Ferndale P Bay, NL Canada
Mrs. John Vargoshe, Shelton, CT
Mrs. Anita Vasil, San Jose, CA
Mrs. Kathleen E. Vercelli, Monroeville, PA
Mrs. Marian S. Volk, Vero Beach, FL
Mrs. Vernon Vonnahme, Carroll, IA
Mrs. Patricia Wallace, Villa Park, IL
Mrs. Josephine Weidman, Wheeling, WV
Mrs. Emarencia Wolf, Linton, ND
Mrs. Potenciana M. Yatco, Mississauga, ON Canada
Mary C. Zacharias, North Ridgeville, OH
Mrs. Katherine P. Zaretski, Wyckoff, NJ
Mrs. Ruth Zuccher, Aliquippa, PA

Below are a few of the hundreds of favors reported since March 2019 to August 2019.

I always wear a Miraculous Medal around my neck, and so does my son. He was in an accident, and his knee was fractured completely. Even a piece of his bone had fallen apart and had to be fixed with a screw. He is healed without any defect in his leg, and it functions as if nothing ever happened. The doctor said that based on his injuries, the speed at which he recovered is a miracle. Mother Mary saved him and protected him.

I have been coming to the Monday Novena for eight years (since I retired). I love asking Mary to help people in need. About a month ago, I was upset over my health care not covering my wife and I (we pay for private health care, not Medicare). No matter whom I spoke or wrote to at my healthcare office, they said I was not covered. When I came to the Novena that week, I knelt down and immediately asked our Blessed Mother to please help with this issue. As I finished praying, I sat down and picked up the weekly bulletin, and on it was a woman's thank you to Mary for solving HER healthcare issue. I was stunned and knew right then and there that this was a sign from Mary, and my issue was solved as well. When I got home, I was notified that my bills were paid. Thank you, Blessed Mother, Mary!

In 2017, I was having horrible time at work. The new manager wanted to get rid of me. I tried very hard to do exactly as I was asked, but it was to no avail (you could not please this manager). I was being mentally abused by him and another manager and cried almost every night. It felt like there was no way out, and I was on the verge of quitting but prayed for a good closure. My prayers were answered in the form of a buyout. Thank you, Mary.

Mary protected my daughter while she was lost. I prayed for intervention, and Mary sent authorities to rescue her; a judge guided her into a program that gave her housing, medical care, counselling, and job training. My daughter has been saved by the grace of our Mother Mary.

I've worn a Miraculous Medal for most of my adult life, and I have no doubt whatsoever that it has saved my life. I have fallen ten meters to a steel floor in a shell refinery and only broke nine bones; I spent one week in the ICU and walked out of the hospital; I've been in two separate car accidents and have walked away from both; and I had a pulmonary embolism twice and was given last rights. Thank you, Blessed Mother, for helping me survive all of this.

My brother was diagnosed with Stage Four Bladder Cancer thirty-six months ago, and the outlook was grim. Within the next twelve months, my youngest sister was diagnosed with breast cancer, and shortly after that, I received the same diagnosis. Now, thirty-six months later, my brother is cancer free, and so are my sister and I. Thank you, Mary.

Our Blessed Mother protected my aunt when she was in a car accident. A truck started merging into her lane (she was in its blind spot) and as she saw this, she panicked and veered into the next lane, and hit another car. All the cars involved had damage, but no one was physically hurt. She had the Miraculous Medal on her key chain, which I truly believe protected her and everyone involved. We are eternally grateful for Mary's unending protection to our family.

I was suffering from heart and kidney problems, and was in the hospital on a ventilator and undergoing dialysis. With everyone's prayers and Mary's intercession, I was taken off the ventilator and dialysis, and was even discharged from hospital with part of my hospital bill waived. Thank you, Mamma Mary, for saving me and answering our prayers.

I was in a car accident in 2017. The other person involved was by himself and was medically fine. After a year and a half, he decided to sue me for more money than the insurance covered. I presented my case to Mary, and last week I got a letter from the lawyer telling me that the case will settle for an amount that will be covered by the insurance. Thank you, Mary, for your intervention.

I was brought up Catholic but never practiced my faith. One of my patients would come in wearing this beautiful medal that I always admired. She gifted me a lovely one, and I started wearing it daily after my mother passed away in March 2014. On January 1, 2015, while on vacation with my sister-in-law, I went to Mass. As I sat there waiting for Mass to start, I said to myself, "This is my first year starting without my mother." Immediately a "voice" told me, "But aren't I your Mother?" At that moment, I knew I had never been alone—and never would be. I have not missed Mass, have become a practicing Catholic, received a medal from the order of Malta for deeds performed for the poor, and am totally in love with Mother Mary. If she concedes me no graces, I am fine with just feeling her love. I wish everyone could feel what I do.

On December 12, 1997, two Vincentian priests celebrated Mass on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas. They did this at two different locations that were three hours apart. One of the priests travelled to the morning Mass in a rural area, where migrants lived in a trailer camp. While the priests agreed to concelebrate the 11:00 p.m. Mass, one of them he had to make a court appearance in the afternoon to help settle the alleged theft of a used mattress outside a Goodwill receptacle box. (Several migrant men had taken it, thinking it was trash. They were arrested and spent some time in jail.) The priest contacted the National Goodwill Director to explain the mishap and was assured there was no legal charge against the men. When he arrived for the 11:00 p.m. Mass, he whispered to is fellow celebrant that the men were exonerated, but they had to pay court fees of $500. The priests made no mention of this as they began the Mass. When it had ended, the people started taking a collection, passing a large sombrero among themselves. The money raised was used to help pay the men's court fees. Almost $500 was collected. Before everyone left, the priests knew that Mary had worked a miracle on her feast day. She brought together two groups who didn't even know one another: the first group needed the gift from this second group, and it was Mary who inspired them to give.

Central Association
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Students from Our Lady of Calvary Parish School received Miraculous Medals, which they placed on their book bags to carry with them throughout the school year.

See full story on page 5.