

A PUBLICATION OF



The Miraculous Medal Shrine

THE MESSAGE

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A Medal
that changed the
World





ALTARation

Stuck in lockdown due to the coronavirus, the Vincentians of the Eastern Province had to use their creativity and on-hand resources to honor Mary during May. Honoring Mary is a pillar of the Vincentian life. St. Vincent de Paul told his followers to “honor the Mother of God with daily devotion.”

Following the guidance of their founder, the Vincentians donned their thinking caps and came up with some innovative ideas to honor Mary during the month of May. Wanting something different, they placed a statue of Mary in the seminary courtyard below a Japanese Maple, and then adorned the area with lights and added cut flowers from their garden.

On Sunday, May 3, Frs. Timothy Lyons and Michael Shea, CM, conducted a small ceremony to bless the commemorative Marian shrine, reading from the *Catholic Book of Blessings*, and wearing the vestments from St. Catherine’s canonization. 🪙🪙

IN REMEMBRANCE

Frs. Michael Shea, and Timothy Lyons, CM, (left-right) with Fr. Mark Pranaitis, CM (Western Province), conducted a small ceremony to bless a commemorative Marian shrine in the Eastern Province Seminary courtyard and prayed the rosary for a confrere, who recently passed away.



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 Miraculous Medal Shrine and the Eastern Province ministries. Contact tshea@cammonline.org or follow us on social media.

- Mary's Miraculous Medal Family
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MESSAGES

Dear Devotees of Mary Immaculate,
May the strength shared with the Blessed Virgin Mary fill your hearts.
I'll never forget Monday, March 11, 2020. For weeks, we had been hearing about the virus and the dangers of infection, and accordingly, we began to make changes. We emptied the Shrine's Holy Water fonts, and no longer offered the relic of St. Catherine Labouré for veneration at Mass nor shared the sign of peace.

That same day, word came that there were so many unknowns surrounding this virus that it was best for everyone's safety to end the day with the noon Mass and to remain closed for two weeks. Immediately, I began to think of two things.

First, our Monday Novena is a Perpetual Novena, and devotees have prayed it every Monday since December 7, 1930 (see Novena story on page 24). I needed a plan for Monday, March 18, so we could continue this perpetual prayer to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. On that day, we switched to online Mass from the Community Chapel of St. Vincent's Seminary. Using his cell phone, one of our priests livestreamed our devotional services to Marian devotees. We did this every Monday until June 15, when we returned to the Shrine.

Second, I placed a vigil light before the statue of Mary in the Shrine (see article on page 7) invoking her care for all of her children during this pandemic. The light still burns for our faithful and will continue until the pandemic has ended.

Yours in Mary Immaculate,
Fr. Michael Carroll, CM
*Director, The Miraculous Medal Shrine
Spiritual Director
Central Association of the Miraculous Medal*

Dear Miraculous Medal Family,
As I write this editorial sitting at the dark, wooden desk that once belonged to Fr. Skelly, three things immediately come to my mind. The first is the Miraculous Medal around my neck. That might be obvious for someone who has dedicated herself to continuing Fr. Skelly's legacy, but especially during the pandemic, I've found an even greater peace, comfort, and hope in wearing it and praying to Mary throughout the day. The second is a lovely bronze statue of St. Joan of Arc, which I've been told also belonged to Fr. Skelly. It sits on the desk as a reminder of his courage in founding CAMM more than 105 years ago. The third is a well-worn, leather-bound personal Bible. It, too, was Fr. Skelly's, and it evokes his relentless faith in our Church and in Mary. These three treasures remind me of why I'm at CAMM. They motivate me to keep pressing forward to spread Our Lady's message, so that everyone who wears her Medal around their neck will receive great blessings.

Much has changed at CAMM since I first arrived, but its purpose hasn't. The faithfulness of the staff—who usher everyone to “come to the foot of the altar” for Mary's graces—hasn't. Neither has the importance of sharing our Blessed Mother's message. In fact, it's more important now than ever before. Armed with prayer, Mary's promise, and our wonderful supporters—like you—I'm convinced that her message will, indeed, continue spreading throughout the world.

Thank you for your support of Mary and her Holy Mission.

Yours in our Blessed Mother,
Mary Jo Timlin-Hoag
*Chief Executive Officer
Central Association of the Miraculous Medal*

A GARDEN GROWS IN GERMANTOWN

There are many reasons why growing a vegetable garden has become a hot trend: It's eco-friendly, saves money on groceries, improves health, and can be an effective and enjoyable workout. Fr. Gregory Cozzubbo, CM, who planted a vegetable garden on the Seminary grounds, and his confreres experienced this first hand. They've been reaping the benefits adding their homegrown produce to meals. As Fr. John Freund, CM, says that the garden is also aesthetically pleasing. Fr. Michael Shea, CM, agrees. “A photo cannot properly capture [Fr. Greg's] colorful garden.”

OTHER SHRINE NEWS SOURCES



GET SOCIAL
The Shrine's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter platforms carry the most up-to-date prayers, news, events posts, and Marian reflections.



GET ONLINE
The Shrine has a modern look to its website. Enjoy more Marian-focused information, news, and devotional interaction.



GET UPDATES
Receive our monthly newsletter, InSPIRE, by signing up at miraculousmedal.org/request-newsletter

Features



MIRACULOUS MEDAL
The story of the Miraculous Medal begins with a young novice and a request directly from Mary.



PERPETUAL NOVENA
Every Monday for 90 years, the Vincentians have prayed Mary's Novena at The Miraculous Medal Shrine.



VINCENT'S HOMES
Joining the global Vincentian homeless initiative, the Vincentians respond to a plight affecting their region.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING
Members of the Daughters of Charity are committed to ending modern slavery.

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Messages by and remembrances from the Miraculous Medal community, past and present.

We Won an Emmy®—No really, we did!

On Saturday, September 19, The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences awarded the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal (CAMM) an Emmy® Award for its video, *A New Way of Thinking*. This video was a part of a yearlong series by CAMM to capture the history and ministries of the Vincentians of the Eastern Province as they celebrated 170 years in Philadelphia.

Presented during the virtual broadcast of the 63rd Annual Mid-Atlantic Emmy® Awards, the recognition is a first for CAMM. Under the category of “Public / Current / Community Affairs / Program Feature / Segment,” the video was chosen “...for excellence in a program, series or special on general public interest or concern, especially those dealing with current community, social or political issues.”

The video focuses on the work of the Vincentian Priests and Brothers in prison ministry, including the programs, counseling, and support they provide for incarcerated people and returning citizens. This ministry was very dear to St. Vincent, who believed we are obliged to attend to the salvation of others where the need is the greatest. *A New Way of Thinking* captures the emotion, honesty, and truth encountered by the Vincentians and those they serve.

To watch this video and other CAMM videos, visit [vincentiansusa.org/videos/](https://www.vincentiansusa.org/videos/)



Image: Pond5

Summer Novena of Hope



While the Summer Novena of Hope was different this year due to the pandemic, The Miraculous Medal Shrine still hosted it via livestream for nine Mondays from June 1 through July 27. This year's theme was “The Many Faces of the Blessed Virgin Mary within the Shrine.” The numerous shrines that reflect the various faces of the Blessed Mother serve as a source for prayer and reflection, and highlight the many cultural interpretations of Our Lady.

Join our livestream nine-day Solemn Novena, Nov. 16-24. This year's theme is Men on a Mission: Nine Young Vincentians Go to China, 1921.

For full details, visit: [miraculousmedal.org/events/solemn-novena-events-2020](https://www.miraculousmedal.org/events/solemn-novena-events-2020)

A Crown on Her Head and a Light at Her Feet

It all started back in 1943. Like thousands of other young men, two brothers, Nicholas and Anthony Massaro, were fighting in the South Pacific. With the horrors of World War II raging on, thousands of Philadelphians flocked to The Miraculous Medal Shrine.

Filomena Angelone was one of the 15,000 people who visited the Shrine every Monday for the Novena Masses and prayers. She asked Mary to bring her nephews, Nicholas and Anthony, home safely, and she promised Our Blessed Mother a gold crown for her statue in the Shrine when they returned.

With joyful hearts, the family greeted the two men when they arrived home after the war, and Filomena gratefully fulfilled her promise. She approached Fr. Joseph Skelly, CM, the founder and director of the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal, who helped her in getting the golden crown made and dedicated to Mary. Fifty years later on November 27, 1997, the Feast of the Miraculous Medal, the Massaro and Angelone families assisted the priests in crowning Mary with her refurbished crown at the Shrine. Since then, on Mary's feast days during May and October, we honor her statue with the glorious resplendence of this beautiful crown.

Regardless of the tumult of our current pandemic, and in keeping with the tradition of honoring Mary in May and October, the priests placed the crown on Mary's head and lit a vigil lamp at the foot of her statue, which will remain lit until the pandemic ends.

We continue to place your intentions at Mary's altar. To submit your prayer requests, mail intentions to CAMM, 475 East Cheltenham Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19144, or visit [miraculousmedal.org/worship-and-prayer/prayer-requests](https://www.miraculousmedal.org/worship-and-prayer/prayer-requests).





If you are interested in joining the Knock campaign, contact Shelia O'Hagan McGirl at SMcGill@cammonline.org or 215.848.1010, x.212.



If you are interested in learning more about Shrine preservation efforts, contact Shelia O'Hagan McGirl at SMcGill@cammonline.org or 215.848.1010, x.212.



Fr. Richard Gibbon, the rector of the Knock Shrine in Ireland, offered a greeting and prayer.

Devotion to Mary Links Across the Ocean

On Sunday, August 16, the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal (CAMM) along with the Mayo County Council, and the Mayo Society of Philadelphia celebrated the feast day of Our Lady of Knock and the launch of a collaboration to build an outdoor shrine to Our Lady of Knock.

The livestreamed event included a prerecorded broadcast from County Mayo, Ireland, the site of the apparition of Our Lady of Knock. Fr. Richard Gibbon, the rector of the Knock Shrine, offered a greeting, and Irish Tenor Cathal Gavin

gave a moving performance. We continued with a livestreamed Mass and celebration at The Miraculous Medal Shrine followed by a virtual reception, including wonderful songs by Andy Cooney and his son, Ryan, bagpipers and Irish step dancers from the Rince Ri Irish Step Dancing School.

CAMM continues its efforts to build the shrine, which will be adorned with the culture and customs of Ireland, including Our Lady, St. John the Teacher, St. Joseph, and the Lamb of God.

As a gesture of gratitude and unity, Fr. Gibbons blessed a County Mayo flag to

be displayed at the Shrine until the Knock Shrine is completed. In addition, CAMM was gifted a stone (relic) from the gable wall where the apparition took place.

The shrine will be located in an outdoor space surrounded by a Rosary Walk and Meditation Garden.



Want to get a special Irish keepsake for yourself or someone special? Our Claddagh Ornament is a true symbol of Irish heritage. Visit our Gift Shop and click on the Specialty Items category. giftshop.miraculousmedal.org



GIVE A GIFT WORTH GIVING

Shop Catholic

at the

Miraculous Medal Shrine

Gift Shop

giftshop.miraculousmedal.org

Shrine Window Dates Back to 1875

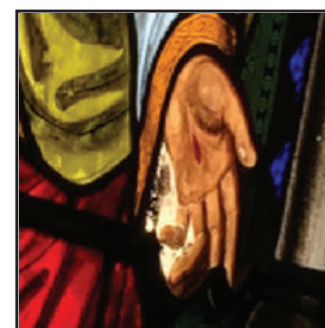
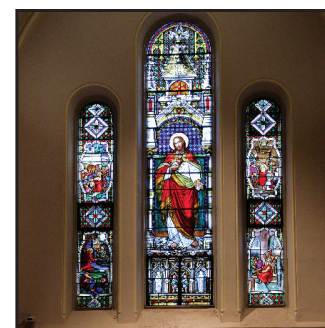
The Sacred Heart stained-glass window in our Holy Agony Shrine is one the oldest windows in The Miraculous Medal Shrine. It was installed in 1875, when the church was the Immaculate Conception Chapel.

The Holy Agony Shrine, which commemorates the passion of Our Lord, lies within the eastern transept of the Shrine. Its focal point is the Sacred Heart stained glass window. The famous Studio of F.X. Zettler (Francis Xaver Zettler) in Munich, Bavaria, produced the beautiful artwork.

The stained-glass window depicts Jesus pointing to His Sacred Heart, which is surrounded by thorns and burning with

love. His left arm extends outward, a gesture of sharing His Divine Life with us. To the left and right of the window are four panels (two on each side) depicting the sorrowful mysteries.

For the past 145 years, moisture has damaged this exquisite work of religious art. This moving image, which has inspired generations of devoted Catholics to reflect on the sorrowful mysteries, is in dire need of major restoration. While there is evidence of the window having been “worked on” over the years, it appears that the window hasn’t been removed since the day it was installed. If you would like to help restore this work of art, please contact us (see above).



Retreats Going Virtual

Teaching has taken on a new challenge due to the pandemic crisis, and it can be a greater challenge to prepare meaningful retreat experiences for students and young adults. To continue helping schools, churches, and youth ministries learn and grow their faith in an engaging way, our Office of Youth and Young Adults has developed a virtual program for sacramental, youth, and young adult retreats.

These unique, online retreats complement your sacramental/religious instruction and can be tailored to your needs. The retreats include exciting interactive presentations, virtual tours, a personal and spiritual journey with St. Catherine Labouré, and other fun group activities. We offer this programming virtually, in-person, or in a safe-environment classroom onsite at the Shrine.



To learn more, contact Carolina Soares Nemo by emailing csoares@cammonline.org.



Bells Ring to Honor Frontline Workers

A consortium of mayors from throughout Pennsylvania asked state churches and houses of worship throughout to ring their bells for three minutes that at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 3. Known as “Bells across Pennsylvania Day,” the ringing of the bells was a symbol of gratitude and honor to all who put themselves at risk by working on the front line during the COVID19 health crisis. The Miraculous Medal Shrine gladly participated and played their carillon bells to show their appreciation to the area’s brave hometown heroes.

Four Men Pronounce Good Purposes

On Friday, July 31, four young men made Good Purposes as they concluded the Internal Seminary (Novitiate) in the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians). The Mass and making of Good Purposes were held virtually in compliance with pandemic restrictions. While contained to a small audience, Noe Garcia, Milton Lara, Wilbur Mejia, and Jose Alexander Palacios (pictured) “declared their intention of faithfully dedicating themselves in the Congregation of the Mission, for the whole time of their lives (Stability), to the evangelization of the poor, after the example of Christ evangelizing” (*taken from the Formula for Good Purposes*). They committed themselves, with the help of God’s grace, to continue to live chastity, poverty, and obedience and grow in the Vincentian charism. They will take the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience in the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) during the time of their Theological studies (becoming incorporated members of the



Pictured left to right are Noe Garcia, Milton Lara, Wilbur Mejia, and Jose Alex Palacios during the Good Purposes ceremony held in The Miraculous Medal Shrine.

Congregation of the Mission), making their commitment permanent.

All four men are May 2019 graduates of St. John’s University with degrees in Philosophy. They served in Vincentian ministries in New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Alabama.

In August, they began a four-year program of theological studies at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, while residing at De Andreis House of Studies in Manayunk, Pennsylvania.

During the Mass, the Congregation admitted and received Vy Tuan Nguyen, Juan Carlos Perez, and Peter Dai Tran into the Internal Seminary (Novitiate) and the community as they begin the Internal Seminary.

The Vincentians of the Eastern Province are fortunate to have these young men, who are committed to following Jesus Christ in the way of St. Vincent de Paul.

Learn more about Vincentian vocations at menonamission.net.

Fr. Luis Romero, CM, New Director of Vocations



The Vincentians of the Eastern Province have assigned Fr. Luis Romero, CM, as their new Vocation Director, replacing Fr. John Maher, CM, who finished his extended term overseeing the office. Fr. Luis was ordained in June 2019 and served a year ministering in Southampton, Long Island, New York.

New Website Focused on Vincentian Values



Fr. John Freund, CM, recently launched his new website, “Vincentian Mindwalk.” He encourages conversations among people seeking to follow Christ the Evangelizer of the Poor in daily life. Posts offer thoughts that invite further reflection and discussion.

To visit or subscribe, go to johnfreund.net.

Sr. Françoise Petit, DC, New Superior General, Daughters of Charity



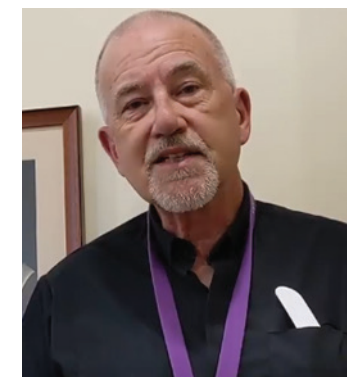
Sr. Françoise Petit, DC, the Assistant General, of the Daughters of Charity, has assumed the role of Superior General after the death of Sr. Kathleen Appler, DC, the former Superior General. She will continue to serve in this capacity until the next General Assembly, which is scheduled for 2021. The new Assistant General is Sr. Iliana Suárez, DC.

Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, CM, Superior General, Congregation of the Mission, stated in his April 1 letter to the Daughters of Charity:

“The death of Sr. Kathleen leaves us all saddened. I trust you will give Sr. Françoise the same support and prayer that you accorded to Sr. Kathleen. She had been a wonderful assistance to Sr. Kathleen, especially throughout the latter’s illness, and will count on your help.”

Take a Minute and a Word

Fr. Aidan Rooney, CM, Vice President for Mission Integration at Niagara University, shares reflections every Thursday on how to live the Christian life and respond to the Gospel in his short video, “A Vincentian Minute.” On Sunday’s, Fr. Rooney presents “The Word: A Journey from Outside In,” a weekly reflection on the Sunday scriptures from the Roman Catholic lectionary.



To follow Fr. Rooney’s videos, visit vincentiansusa.org/reflections/vincentian-minute and vincentiansusa.org/reflections/the-word.

Vincentian Confraternity of Lay Advisors for Vincentian Family

As reported by famvin.org, on Saturday, June 20, branches of the Vincentian family met online to consolidate the creation of the Confraternity of Lay Advisors for the Vincentian Family. The meeting was part of a community process, which arose in FAVILA (The Latin American Vincentian Family) to unite members of the Vincentian Family who share the same trade or profession in order to

communicate their knowledge of their professional skills, thereby strengthening the Vincentian charism. Vincentians from Latin America, the United States and Spain attended the first virtual gathering.

If you are interested in participating in the confraternity, contact Alejandra Chacón at alexache33@hotmail.com.

VINCENTIAN NEWSLETTER



On June 16, *Vincentian Voices* premiered as the new monthly, digital newsletter of the Vincentians of the Eastern Province. This newsletter is published the third Tuesday of every month and features reflections, news, profiles, video, social posts, trivia, and much more. Its content is centered on the Eastern Province family—both religious and laity.

Vincentian Voices is replacing *Around the Province*, which concluded at the end of May. Yet, many of the authors you’ve come to love in *Around the Province* still have content published in *Vincentian Voices*.

If you would to subscribe to *Vincentian Voices* or have content suggestions, contact Christopher Grosso, at cgrosso@cammonline.org.

IN MEMORIAM

Fr. Robert J. Stone, CM
May 5


Fr. Michael D. Whalen, CM
June 2

Fr. Henry M. Bradbury, CM
June 13

Fr. Joseph V. Daly, CM
June 14

Fr. John W. Carven, CM
September 11

Br. Joseph Zurowski, CM
September 12

 If you would like to incorporate our materials into your lesson plans, contact Carolina Soares Nemo by emailing csoares@cammonline.org.

Eastern Province Parishes Respond to COVID-19

NOTES FROM QUARANTINE
Churches are empty. Parish halls are idle. Parish schools are quiet.

This is the current reality for parishes around the world during this pandemic. Yet, ministry continues, and pastoral life lives on in new ways. Traditional activities in Vincentian parishes, like other faith communities, are adjusting. Here's how some of the Vincentian Priests have adapted and learned to cope with the situation.

At St. Celia Church in Baltimore, Maryland, Fr. Gene Sheridan, CM, pastor, wrote, "We are in the same situation as others. We're fortunate to be a small community [house], having Mass and prayer each day. I had one funeral, which had to be a private Mass and limited in number, but worked out well." He goes on to report, "The Daughters of Charity called the Vicar to see if they could have Sunday Mass in their private chapel. The Vicar told them the priest had to be under 50, and so Gemechu [Fr. Gemechu Raga, CM, Parochial Vicar] went, and will continue each weekend."

Fr. G. Gregorio Gay, CM, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Charlotte, North Carolina, reported that they, too,

made modifications to align better with the new reality: "Sunday, we exposed the Blessed Sacrament and allowed 10 people at a time to pray for 10 minutes. We had 336 visits. We have begun to celebrate Sunday and weekday Masses online."

The situation, Fr. Gay noted, keeps evolving. "As of tomorrow, we are asked to stay home for three weeks. We will continue to celebrate the Mass online. Noe Garcia, our seminarian, together with the young adults and youth group leaders, are coordinating a Way of the Cross online. We have cancelled all activities in the Church up until and including April 4."

Fr. Sylvester Peterka, CM, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, described ministry during the pandemic: "It's like trying to learn ministry all over again in a new, surreal realm!"

However, ministry must go on. Fr. Peterka reported that they phoned as many parishioners as possible and learned how to use Zoom with parishioners and livestream Mass. He also goes to the local Daughter of Charity's residence each Sunday to celebrate Mass.

While the food pantry is closed at St. Vincent de Paul parish because many volunteers are in the high-risk age group, several parish young adults, Fr. Jack Timlin, CM, and Fr. Tom McKenna, CM, joined together to prepare food packages and safely delivered

them to parishioners by calling ahead and leaving the packages on the doorstep.

Through it all, Fr. Peterka remains steadfast in using the most powerful tool we all share: "At home in the rectory, the pandemic encourages the Confreres [Vincentians] to pray more with a greater sense of urgency."

Fr. Astor Rodriguez, CM, pastor of St. John the Baptist Parish in Brooklyn, New York, reported that on March 24, thirty people received help from the parish's food pantry. Recipients waited outside while the groceries were placed in bags and safely handed out. This call-to-action was just one example of Fr. Rodriguez's response to his congregants' needs. Going virtual, he created a Zoom-to-Facebook Live (pictured bottom left) Pentecost Mission for three nights from June 1-3. For a parish community that is predominantly Latino and Caribbean-American, he had one night's mission in English, one in Spanish, and one that was bilingual. Catherine Reed-Grant (St. Louis, Missouri) and Denise Lebron (Brooklyn, New York) led the group in praise and worship. Fr. Joe Agostino, CM (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), preached all three nights on the theme of "Our Life in the Spirit of the Risen Lord," and Fr. Rodriguez led prayer each night.

"It was certainly a unique experience—praying, singing and preaching via Zoom onto a Facebook Live feed," reported Fr. Rodriguez. "And it was a beautiful experience—sharing that moment with each other and more than 1,000 other people (the average number of viewers of the Pentecost Mission for each evening). In the end, more people participated through this virtual experience than they would have with only an in-church event."

Image courtesy of Fr. Astor Rodriguez, CM

Special Thank You

Fourth-grade students at St. Gregory the Great Catholic School, Virginia Beach, Virginia, participated in a special lesson plan about Our Lady and her Miraculous Medal. Barb Mytych, an instructor at the school, has a strong devotion to Mary and her powerful Medal and teaches a class on that subject. During the pandemic, she reached out to us, and our Youth Ministry program gladly contributed to her curriculum materials.

We sent 80 Miraculous Medals, investiture certificates, coloring pages, and books about the Miraculous Medal and St. Catherine Labouré to Mytych. The students enjoyed learning about our Blessed Mother and her Medal, and after their class, wrote their prayer intentions



and mailed them to us. St. Catherine Labouré (performed by Victoria Rose Bonito pictured above) carried their petitions to the foot of Our Lady's altar at the Shrine. We created a special video of this moment, during which she thanked the students for their petitions.

"I just watched this most beautiful video

and tribute to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal... WOW!" said Mytych. "It was like receiving a huge hug from our Blessed Mother. The children will be so happy to see and hear their names/petitions being placed at the foot of Our Lady's Altar. Being able to share this with others and to help them grow in their faith is a gift, and if we can pass it on, it's a gift that keeps on giving."


Vincentian Mission to Read

To promote the summer book-reading pastime, the Eastern Province developed a new series, "Vincentian Mission to Read." Each week from May through June, a different Vincentian Priest or Brother recommended a book reviewing and explaining how it had influenced them.

Reviews included novels, biographies, short story compilations, and (of course) spiritual books.

The book reviews were published via social media and e-blast outlets and listed by (book reviewed in parenthesis): Fr. Patrick J. Griffin, CM (*Jesus: A Pilgrimage, A Memoir* by James Martin, SJ); Fr. Dennis Holtschneider, CM (*The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance during the Blitz* by Erik Larson); Fr. Sylvester Peterka, CM (*The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren); Fr. Bruce Krause, CM (*Deep Down Dark: The Untold Stories of 33 Men Buried in a Chilean*

Mine, and the Miracle That Set Them Free by Héctor Tobar); Fr. Tom McKenna, CM (*Team of Rivals* by Doris Kearns Goodwin); and Fr. John Maher, CM (*He Leadeth Me* by Fr. Walter Ciszek, SJ, as told to Fr. Daniel Flaherty, SJ).

 To view the recommendations, visit vincentiansusa.org/vincentian-mission-to-read.





Birthday Greetings Launch 150th Anniversary Celebration

September 5 marked the 150th anniversary of the opening of St. John's University. The sesquicentennial commemoration, "Faithful to the Mission," will take place the entire school year. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic forced the university to think creatively about what events, programs, and activities will look like during this milestone

occasion. Therefore, the celebration was launched with the debut of a birthday greetings compilation video (view at stjohns.edu/150th-anniversary/events-and-initiatives/photo-and-video-gallery). All members of the St. John's family—past, present, and future—are invited to be part of this special celebration that has been 150 years in the making.

Through Service and Research, Class of 2020's Ozanam Scholar Explores Issues of Social Justice

St. John's Ozanam Scholars Program is a highly selective, academic initiative that combines service, research, and global learning. Through the program, scholars examine and seek solutions to real-world social justice issues, travel around the world to serve those in need, and complete a capstone project during their senior year.

For J'mi Worthen (pictured), a biology major in St. John's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, with minors in social justice and international studies, the aspiration to become an Ozanam Scholar came from a deep desire to explore social justice at a higher level.

The Ozanam Scholars Program provided J'mi with that space, while inspiration for her capstone project came from an unexpected place.

"My brother, Jalen, and I were watching a baseball game and when it went to commercial, I asked him if he had seen any black people in any of the ads," she recalls. "He told me that he had not seen any since we started watching the game."

That initial observation was a catalyst for



further exploration—which revealed a dearth of black female roles in the media and countless racial stereotypes—and became the cornerstone of her capstone project, "The Portrayal of Black Women in the Media."

J'mi explored that question through intensive investigation, which included two focus groups. Her original plan was to collaborate with different campus organizations and host an annual event about her research. However, her faculty advisor encouraged her to think bigger and

turn her findings into a college course.

While J'mi's research focused on media in this country, her service work took her around the world. Closer to home, she volunteered at Project ID at St. John's Bread & Life in Brooklyn, New York, where she assisted clients in the retrieval of documents such as birth certificates, death certificates, and non-driver identification cards. She also worked with Homes for the Homeless Youth after-school program in Queens and GEAR UP, where she created a college prep program for juniors at Long Island City High School.

Image and photo courtesy of St. John's University

Niagara University Student's Service to the Needy

Niagara University's Vincentian Scholar, Valerie Garcia-Batiz (pictured), a biology major from Williamsville, New York, has been a volunteer at Heart, Love and Soul for almost three years. Although the coronavirus has changed the way the food pantry and dining room serves its guests, Garcia-Batiz is still a vital part of the team who serves those in need.

The global pandemic has been challenging for the nonprofit in other ways, as well, including the fact that there has been an increased need for food since its onset. "We have already started seeing some new guests come," Garcia-Batiz said. "I think we'll eventually become very busy, as unemployment rises."

The additional safety precautions haven't changed the guests' appreciation for the services they receive—"They have been awesome!"—nor the community's commitment to support the organization. "It's been extremely helpful and encouraging seeing so many people come together to help fill our pantry shelves," says Garcia-Batiz.



Photos courtesy of Niagara University

Unique Student Project

As part of her capstone course, Projects in Public Health, Niagara University senior Joy O'Brien decided to install Little Free Libraries throughout the city of Niagara Falls, New York, to increase and promote children's literacy. Working with her course professor and community partner, Brian Archie from Create a Healthier Niagara Falls Collaborative, O'Brien was well on her way to construct six libraries, which serve as neighborhood book exchanges and operate on a "take a book, leave a book" basis. Then the coronavirus pandemic forced her to leave the Niagara University campus and return to her home in Blairstown, New Jersey.



While not sure how she would be able to complete the project before the semester ended, O'Brien was able to continue working to identify locations and obtain the necessary materials to install the libraries. She also secured funding for building supplies and six library charters from the Niagara University chapter of the Lions Club.

When she returned to campus to gather her belongings from her residence hall, O'Brien stayed in Western New York to help with the actual installation of the libraries she worked so hard to create.



Cartoon by Fr. Al Pehrsson, CM, a resident of St. Catherine's Infirmary, Philadelphia

Today's Innovative EVANGELIZATION

THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 HAS FORCED SPIRITUAL LEADERS TO REASSESS THEIR MINISTRY STRATEGIES.

Today's young adult leaders have responded with agility, encouraged by modern-day technological tools, which increase evangelistic efforts to limitless virtual borders.

The coronavirus pandemic has put an unprecedented halt on the world's social gatherings. In a mere six months, large community events look like relics of the past. In Philadelphia, many scheduled young adult activities had to be postponed or cancelled. However, event leaders have navigated through uncharted territory by maintaining strong virtual connections with their communities. It's been challenging, but these intrepid young leaders have discovered blessings along the way.

Laura Baldassari, the Youth Ministry Coordinator at Visitation BVM in Norristown, Pennsylvania, has always kept a busy schedule, whether volunteering at her parish, helping out at a crisis pregnancy center, spending time with family and friends, or taking on new hobbies like paddle boarding. Little did Laura know that 2020 would create an unforeseen Virtual Age that would require her to develop new skills. Since the pandemic began, she's learned different virtual platforms, participated in video conferences, and hosted online youth events,

"With this pandemic, my schedule definitely changed, but it also opened up a great deal of time for us to host a youth program over Zoom," Laura explains. "Thank God for Zoom! I never knew it existed."

The Virtual Age has also created ample opportunities for those who might not have been able to participate in these events because of obligations surrounding families, work, or travel. According to Kyr

Malamood, Young Adult Leader and Facilitator for Jack's Yacs in Philadelphia, their virtual events have attracted young adults from Rhode Island, Maryland, and Ohio.

"There are people who have never personally been to our events but have been able to attend them virtually," she states. "Although we can't meet them in person, we're still fulfilling their needs."

Carolina Soares Nemo, Young Adult Leader at The Miraculous Medal Shrine, believes that this pandemic serves as a learning curve for more innovative evangelization. "It's challenged young adult leaders to be more creative with outreach and programming. We've been granted a unique opportunity to evangelize beyond the boundaries of Philadelphia. We are literally 'one click' away from connecting with the 'disconnected,' especially those who are still searching or even struggling with their faith."

Dr. Julie Burkey, who specializes in New Evangelization within the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, believes that the Virtual Age has borne forth many spiritual fruits among the faithful and secular. "We're providing a plethora of opportunities for the curiosity of faith to boom. You can tell just by the numbers of those participating that the audience has become much wider. You give people an opportunity to open their hearts and minds without pressure at all. It's not that most people want an invitation, they need an invitation. This is the time for us to

We are literally 'one click' away from connecting with the 'disconnected.'

encourage individuals to acquaint, or even reacquaint, themselves with the Church."

Though the social scene has become more virtual, young adults around the country are quickly adjusting to, and reaping benefits from, these online programs and events. While the workload has substantially increased for leaders like Baldassari and Malamood, the blessings that have come about make it all worthwhile. This brings to mind Christ's Beatitudes and the possibility of adding one more during these extraordinary times: Blessed are they who connect the disconnected, for theirs is the Kingdom of God. 🌐



The Young Adult program at The Miraculous Medal Shrine hosts events and programs designed to engage young Catholics in faith, fellowship, and service. Learn more at miraculousmedal.org/fait-communities/young-adults or email Carolina Soares Nemo at csoares@cammonline.org.



MODEL *of Peace*

FROM THE AWE-INSPIRING VATICAN BASILICA, POPE FRANCIS DELIVERED HIS FIRST HOMILY OF 2020 ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

It was a message of celebration, rebirth, and hope.

Within the context of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God Mass, Pope Francis offered a vision of Mary as redeemer and salvation of humankind.

It is easy to venerate Mary, the Immaculate Conception, Mother of God. However, Pope Francis added another layer on the image of Mary for us to reflect upon.

“Mary,” he states, “is both woman and mother. This is what is essential. From her, a woman, salvation came forth, and thus, there is no salvation without a woman.”

Without Mary, God and humanity could have never become one. She “wove the humanity of God,” as Pope Francis eloquently states. If we seek to find hope in humanity during times of darkness, we need to start again by venerating woman. It is not just Mary who Pope Francis illustrates as a model of peace but all women.

Pope Francis lamented our world’s casual and all-too-often caustic attitude toward women; the abuse, the neglect, and the cultural degradation they face. He made it clear that any form of violence inflicted upon women is an act of violence against God, who was born of a woman. In reflecting on the nature of the Blessed Virgin Mary and womanhood, Pope Francis explained a path by which all humankind can reach a better understanding of our true purpose in life.

Mary, as the Bible tells us, “took everything to heart.” In her heart, she kept her joys, sorrows, and emotions, and then entrusted

all to God. This is Mary’s lesson, which gives us a deeper insight into our path to salvation and meaning.

“Women show us that the meaning of life is not found in making things, but in taking things to heart,” Pope Francis explains. “Only those who see with the heart see things properly...they know how to ‘look into’ each person...they see God in all persons and things.”

It is imperative that we reach a deeper understanding and appreciation for the women in our own lives. Through Our Lady, the tools to reach these goals are available. We often consider Mary as separate from us, beyond our comprehension. However, as Pope Francis points out, she is here amongst us, where we cherish her. She is our mother, our sister, our wife, and every woman who we need, and who needs us in return.

The role that women play in society is paramount. They have distinctive traits, and a unique way of “taking things to heart,” which enables them to provide insight and guidance that we must appreciate and value.

“Women are givers and mediators of peace; and should be fully included in decision-making processes,” Pope Francis says bluntly, “because when women can share their gifts, the world finds itself more united, more peaceful. Hence every step forward for women is a step forward for humanity...”

On June 20, 2020, at a memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pope Francis once again made a public gesture about the incomparable importance of Mary, approving three new titles to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary (also called the Litany of Loreto). The new invocations: *Mater misericordiae* or “Mother of Mercy,” *Mater spei* or “Mother of Hope,” and *Solacium migrantium* or “Solace of Migrants.” The Litany of the Blessed Virgin is an official collection of the formal and informal invocations of Mary, in the form of a prayer, meant to offer a range of devotion to all who seek out her guidance.

Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for the Divine Liturgy and the Discipline of the Sacraments, conveyed the announcement in a letter to the presidents of bishops’ conferences.

“Even in this present moment,” Cardinal Sarah writes, “which is marked by feelings of uncertainty and trepidation, devout recourse to her, which is full of affection and trust, is deeply felt by the People of God.”

It is in these prayers to the Blessed Mother that we seek redemption, salvation, or simple comfort in dark times, Our Lady is always there to heal and protect us—always in our hearts and on our minds. And, she is always much closer than we think. 🙏🙏

“Mary is both woman and mother. This is what is essential.”

POPE FRANCIS



A MEDAL that changed the WORLD

IT'S VERY TINY, BARELY AN INCH LONG AND HALF-INCH WIDE. There's nothing elaborate or stunning about it. It's not even made out of silver or gold. How can something so small and simple be such a momentous force in the world? And yet, it is.



Our Catholic Faith is filled with sacramentals that work with, and point to, the spiritual. They are visible reminders of invisible realities. The Miraculous Medal is a powerful reminder, regardless of its size. A pebble thrown into a lake may make some large ripples, but a Miraculous Medal worn with faith and love makes tsunami-size waves.

What makes this Medal so powerful? In one of his Perpetual Novena homilies, Fr. Kieran Moran, CM,¹ told the congregation that the power of the Miraculous Medal isn't based on the material it's made of, just as the kind of paper a check is written on doesn't determine the check's value. The source of the Medal's power is heavenly: it's the promise made by our Blessed Mother that has the Church's blessing and approval.

THE APPARITIONS

It began on the night of July 18, 1830, when a beautiful child, dressed in white and emanating heavenly light, awakened a young Daughter of Charity novice, Catherine Labouré, from her sleep. She followed him to the Chapel, where all the candles were lit, as if for midnight Mass. After hearing something that sounded like the rustling of a silk dress, Catherine saw a beautiful woman walk in and sit on the chair used by the director of the community. She remarked, "I went closer and, throwing myself on my knees, rested my hands on the knees of the Blessed Virgin. At that instant, I tasted the sweetest joy of my life—a delight beyond expression."²

The next time Mary appeared on November 27, 1830, she was standing on the world with her feet crushing the head

of a serpent,³ with a "globe in her hands. Her eyes were lifted up to Heaven, and her countenance was radiant as she offered the globe to Our Lord."⁴ Then, Catherine saw that Mary had rings of precious stones on her fingers. Rays of light beamed from the stones enveloping Mary "in such a dazzling light that I could see neither her feet nor the robe. ... It is beyond my power to give an idea of the beauty and magnificence of the rays."⁵

During this apparition, Mary told her that the rays symbolize the graces that she bestows to all who ask for them. The stones that shed no light represent the graces that people forget to ask for. Then an oval appeared around the Blessed Mother, with the words "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." Catherine heard the words, "Get a medal struck after this model. Those who wear

it when it is blessed will receive great graces, especially if they wear it about the neck. Graces will be abundant for those who have confidence."⁶ Then the image turned, and Catherine saw the letter M, intersected at the top with a cross and a bar. Underneath were the hearts of Jesus and Mary with twelve stars surrounding the entire image.

THE MEDALS

When Catherine Labouré told her spiritual director, Fr. Jean-Marie Aladel, CM, about what she had seen and heard, he wanted to take every precaution to ensure that the apparitions were authentic. It wasn't until he spoke to the Archbishop of Paris and received his approval that Medals were made.⁷ This task was initially entrusted to Adrien-Jean-Maximilien Vachette, one of the official jewelers of Louis XVIII's court, in June of 1832. He started by producing two thousand Medals.

The Daughters of Charity began wearing them and giving them to the elderly and sick. Almost immediately, miraculous healings, cures, and conversions occurred; people began clamoring for the Medal of the Immaculate Conception (as it was originally called). The Medal quickly spread throughout France and then the

world. Before long, people were calling it the Miraculous Medal; everyone wanted the Medal that Mary had brought from Heaven.⁸ Not only did the Archbishop of Paris request some of the first Medals, Pope Gregory XVI put one at the foot of the crucifix on his desk; and the founder of the Sister Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (in the United States) put the image of the Miraculous Medal on his ordination card.⁹

The demand for the Medals became so great that between 1832 and 1836, Vachette made more than two million of them.¹⁰ There were eleven other engravers in Paris producing Medals, as well.

In 1846, sixteen years after the Miraculous Medal was shown to Catherine, the bishops of the United States unanimously declared Mary Immaculate as patroness of the country. And while Mary's purity had long been held as a truth of the Church, it had not yet been infallibly proclaimed. The Miraculous Medal helped pave the way for that step by promoting devotion to Mary who was "conceived without sin."

Indeed, the Medal is a condensed catechism on Mary. On it we see her as the woman who crushes the serpent's head

in Genesis (3:15) and the woman clothed with the sun in Revelation (12:1). We see the Hearts of Jesus and Mary united at the Cross. The wording confirming Mary's purity circles around her, and the rays from her hands depict her as the dispenser of God's graces. So it wasn't a surprise when on December 8, 1854, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was officially defined by the Church.

THE MOTHER

The Medal is a heavenly gift to us from Mary. It's everyone's Medal, because she is everyone's Mother. Moreover, she wants us to wear it with love and trust—not superstitiously like a lucky charm.

It's a reminder, a tangible sign through which she expresses her Motherly love and desire to help us. We need to wear it as her true children, trying our best to imitate her virtues, to grow deeper in our faith, and to see beyond our own needs and reach out to help the poor, the forgotten, and the lonely.

It's a reminder that she is always ready to listen, to ease our suffering, to comfort us when we mourn, to heal our souls and bodies, and to rescue us in times of trial. She wants to be our companion, our

Have a medal struck upon this model. Those who wear it will receive great graces.





friend, and our guide. However, all of these things require reciprocation on our part.

And it's a reminder of her powerful intercession. Mary is not divine nor omnipotent. She is not the author of grace. But she dispenses God's grace, and, at the same time, her immaculate soul makes her uniquely powerful with God. As Fr. Moran pointed out in his sermons, God sees power differently than we do. To Him, power is measured by the amount of grace in one's soul. We know that Mary, while on earth, was "full of grace" [Luke 1:28], so her power with God was substantial even then. The Wedding Feast of Cana depicts this beautifully. At His Mother's four words, "They have no wine," Jesus willingly changed His future "hour" to the present moment. Now, as Queen of Heaven, Mary has immeasurable power to obtain graces for us. And those graces can be quite formidable.

In a 1962 sermon for the Solemn Novena of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Bishop Francis Furey, Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia, says that Mary "wants to protect us from the evils that threaten us. When powerful hostile forces threatened the Church and Western civilization in the 16th century, Pope St. Pius V had recourse to Our Blessed Mother, and Don Juan of Austria led the Christian navies to victory at Lepanto. When, in the 17th century, powerful armies again tried to overcome our Christian civilization, Blessed Innocent XI invoked the aid of Mary, and again the threat was turned back—this time through the victory of John Sobieski, King of Poland, outside the city of Vienna."

In our own era, nine months after the United States entered World War II, our Blessed Mother was once again called upon to pour her blessings upon the armed forces. Encouraged by the Vincentians of the Eastern Province,

pastors organized Mary's Kneeling Army of Prayer, a movement of people who made the commitment of wearing the Miraculous Medal and praying for peace. At least ten million civilians and members of the military, signed up to be part of this cause and prayed "for the protection of America's defenders."¹³ The Western and Eastern Provinces both heard from men who returned from war and credited Mary and her Miraculous Medal for their safety.

Our Mother and her Medal are, indeed, powerful. We've witnessed that countless times at Mary's Shrine. Therefore, we know the importance of getting her Medal to people in need. Whether sending them to missions in Africa or Panama, or getting them to people in emergencies, we want as many people as possible to know that they are not alone—that they have a tender Mother who is always there to help, comfort, and guide them.

THE CURE

Mary and her Miraculous Medal are just as important today as they were back in 1830. They are the solution to all of the difficulties we're facing. Now more than ever, we need our Blessed Mother's comfort and protection. Now more than ever, we need to discover her peace. Now more than ever, we need to know that our Mother is with us. And she is.

In a sermon given in the 1930's, Fr. Moran told the attendees of the Perpetual Novena that:

"In a certain sense, you were present in that chapel at Paris on that evening when Our Lady appeared. You were present in Mary's heart because at that time she was thinking of you. ...

"Our Blessed Mother asks you to look upon [the Medal] not as an ornament but as a sign that she has fashioned, as a sign that has come out from the great depths of her love for you. This Medal brings to you a message, an assurance not only that she is concerned with everything that worries you, but the

Medal brings to you a guarantee that she has for each one of you—saint or sinner, fervent or negligent—that thing which we call love, that thing which we call affection.

"Every time you look upon your Medal, she wants you to remember that when she made her promise to obtain great graces for those who were devoted to her through her Medal, she meant you in particular."

Let his words sink in: "You were in Mary's Heart when she appeared to St. Catherine." Mary remembers her promises and keeps her word. Her Medal, which rests close to your heart, is a reminder of her love for you.

Then come to Mary's Shrine. It's her home, filled with her gentle presence. Pour out your troubles to her for all she's accomplished in your life, for all the graces—big and small—she's given you. Let her love and peace permeate your soul. Commit yourself to always wear her Medal. And, try to become so much like her that anyone who sees you would say, "You're just like your Mother."

STILL RELEVANT

During the pandemic, we sought ways to get Mary and her Medal to people who were suffering. With the help of our staff and Fr. Sanjai Devis, VC, we were able to distribute more than 3,500 Miraculous Medals to frontline workers; and 18 hospitals and healthcare facilities. The bags (pictured below) were warmly received and handed out to those who wanted them, bringing comfort in a time of stress and pain. One palliative care nurse manager wrote, "I can't tell you how much the prayer bags help the patients and families."



SYMBOLISM OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL

MARY'S INTERCESSION
Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

12 STARS
"A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of 12 stars." [Apoc. 12:1]

CROSS WITH BAR
The Cross symbolizes the Passion of Christ. The Bar across the bottom represents earth.

"M"
The interweaving "M" and the cross shows Mary's close collaboration with the Passion of her Son, Jesus, for the redemption of humankind.

RAY OF LIGHT FROM HER HANDS
The graces that Mary will give to those who ask her.

SHE STANDS UPON THE SERPENT
Her obedience to the will of God crushes the disobedience of the devil.

SHE STANDS UPON THE GLOBE
Mary is queen of heaven and earth.

HEART CROWNED WITH THORNS
The Sacred Heart of Jesus represents His love for us.

HEART PIERCED WITH A SWORD
The sorrowful heart of Mary represents her love for us.

¹Vincentian priest of the Eastern Province (b. 1879, d. 1958)

²*Our Lady, Her Medal and Her "Central Association,"* The Central Association of the Miraculous Medal, 1945

³Genesis 3:15

⁴*The Miraculous Medal, Its Origin, History, Circulation, Results,* by Fr. M. Aladel, CM

⁵IBID, and *Souvenir of a Soul's Tryst with the Virgin Immaculate,* Sisters of Charity, Emmitsburg, MD, 1922

⁶*Souvenir of a Soul's Tryst with the Virgin Immaculate,* Sisters of Charity, Emmitsburg, MD, 1922

⁷In 1836, after a thorough Church investigation started by the Archbishop of Paris, the apparitions were declared as genuine.

⁸*Our Lady Her Medal and Her Central Association,* 1950


⁹vincentians.com/en/st-catherine-laboure-and-the-miraculous-medal/

¹⁰wikipedia.org/wiki/Adrien_Vachette

¹¹*American Vincentians,* chapter 7, by Fr. John Rybolt, CM



The Miraculous Medal Gift Shop has a vast selection of Miraculous Medals in every size, style, and price range. Check out our Medals by visiting miraculousmedal.org/product-category/miraculous-medals



“Accordingly, we Priests at the Shrine, who have witnessed the rise and swelling flow of the Novena stream for twenty years, take no personal glory for its success. We say rather, ‘The hand of God is here.’”

FR. JOSEPH SKELLY, CM (1950)

DIVINE Composition

IT HAS BEEN CALLED THE PRAYER HEARD AROUND THE WORLD. As stewards of Mary and her Miraculous Medal Shrine, the Vincentians of the Eastern Province celebrate 90 years of upholding the tradition of praying the Novena uninterrupted every Monday.

It was an age of unbelief and hostility to religion. France was still recovering from the Revolution, which decimated churches, monasteries, and religious communities throughout the country. The Reign of Terror (roughly 1792-1794) was responsible for killing more than 16,500 people suspected of being “enemies of the Revolution.”¹ By 1830, the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, like many religious congregations, had lost so many members they “were only a remnant, two very small communities comprised of the survivors of the Revolution.”²

It was in this situation that our Blessed Mother brought the splendor of heaven to a quiet and humble Daughter of Charity, Catherine Labouré on November 27, 1830. This was not her first visit to Catherine (the first occurred in July 1830), but it was the occasion in which Catherine received her heavenly commission: to make and distribute the Miraculous Medal to the faithful. (See “A Medal that Changed the World” on page 20.)

During the apparition, Mary instructed Catherine to “have a medal struck after this model. Persons who wear it will receive great graces especially if they wear it around the neck.”

CHILDREN OF MARY

Catherine brought Our Lady’s request to Fr. Jean-Marie Aladel, a Vincentian priest and her spiritual director. This was the second time Catherine approached him with a message. In Mary’s July apparition, she told Catherine that she requested Fr. Aladel to found and direct a confraternity of “Children of Mary.”

As its name implies, the confraternity would comprise children who imitated the virtues of our Blessed Mother—especially purity, charity, humility, and obedience—and honored Mary through acts of devotion. Although it took him several years to respond to this request, Fr. Aladel finally created the confraternity and then asked the Pope to establish

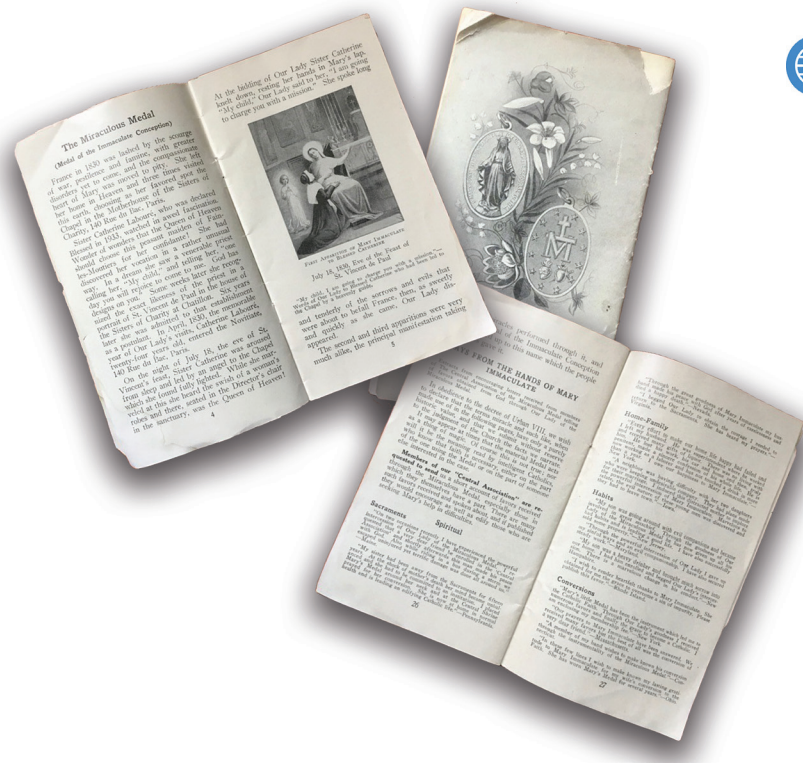
it as a pontifical association. The Pope agreed and granted it all the indulgences entitled to an association of its kind. The Daughters of Charity were already promoting it, but now, as Mary had promised, God blessed the work so abundantly that the Children of Mary³ rapidly spread throughout France.

In 1909, the Vincentians began promoting it as well, and they asked their Superior General and the Pope for authorization to start something similar for adults. In addition to honoring our Blessed Mother, the members of this new confraternity would “wear the Miraculous Medal and honor it with a Christian and apostolic life, each member doing so according to his/her state of life. Working together, they [would] seek to foster a more perfect life in communion with others, and accomplish apostolic activities through spreading the 1830 message of the Blessed Virgin to [Saint] Catherine Labouré.”⁴ On July 8, this new venture, the Association of the Miraculous Medal, was officially approved by Pope St. Pius X. Having Papal recognition for both organizations, the Vincentians could now disseminate the Medal and devotion to it at an accelerated pace.

A GERMANTOWN MIRACLE

A mere five years later, Fr. Joseph Skelly, CM, was sitting at his desk surrounded by stacks of fund-raising letters he had written to build St. Joseph’s Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey. While putting the letters in the envelopes, he did something that, on the surface, could appear rather insignificant. He inserted a small Miraculous Medal in each envelope, imploring Mary to bless his efforts. Surely, he counted on her intercession, but he didn’t expect the response he received. It was overwhelming—a true sign of Mary’s intervention. Fr. Skelly was so grateful, he wanted to find a special way to thank her. Little could he have imagined that his next actions would create a prayer heard round the world.

He began by establishing an organization, the



The Perpetual Novena prayers are available on our website at

miraculousmedal.org/product-category/miraculous-medals/

To order a booklet or pamphlet from our Gift Shop, visit

miraculousmedal.org/gift-shop or call 215.848.6073.

Fr. Skelly insisted the new Novena format be no longer than a half hour and would still include Benediction, prayers, and a short sermon. Once again, Frs. Drennan and Moran came to Fr. Skelly's aid, keeping some of the old Novena prayers and gathering new ones from the *Raccolta*. It was Fr. Moran who composed the "Act of Consecration" prayer.

The Monday Novena services were such a success that soon diocesan priests asked permission to celebrate the Perpetual Novena in their parishes.⁶ In the July 1931 issue of the *Miraculous Medal Magazine*, Fr. Skelly wrote:

"The Perpetual Novena of Monday nights has grown marvelously popular. Every Monday night, the crowds are so great that the capacity of the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, at Cheltenham and Magnolia Avenues, is overtaxed, though the Chapel is as large as any ordinary church. And, the fervor of the crowds, their praying and their singing in unison, and the many favors reported, are more extraordinary even than the great multitudes who come, rain or shine, to ask their generous Mother to help them in time of need."

By 1934, there were eighty-nine parishes in the United States offering the Perpetual Novena: thirty-five in the city of Philadelphia, twenty-two in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, four in other areas of Pennsylvania, seven in New York, seven in New Jersey, and the remaining fourteen spread out in Connecticut, Delaware, Ohio, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Michigan, and West Virginia.⁷ One pastor wrote to Fr. Skelly telling him that within six months of starting the Novena, "apart from many blessings conferred on the parish in general, fifty-four special favors have been received by individuals, which they attribute to the intercession of Our Blessed Lady under the title of the Miraculous Medal."⁸ Another

priest wrote that the Miraculous Medal Novena "is the answer to Communism."

Three years later, 842 churches held Perpetual Novena services. Twenty years after it started, the Novena had spread to more than 3,300 churches and chapels throughout the world⁹ and was translated into various languages—including Braille.

90 YEARS UNBROKEN

Just as impressive, the Perpetual Novena has remained unbroken in the past 90 years—winter storms, summer heat, and even the pandemic—could not stop the Novena. When the Shrine was temporarily closed during of the pandemic, we still placed Mary's resplendent crown on her head for the month of May (read the article on page 7); we continued to pray the Novena prayers every Monday; we still livestreamed our (private) Monday Masses, which were offered in the St. Vincent's Seminary for the sick and dying front-line workers and caregivers, those affected by the coronavirus, each person who sent their intentions to us, and, of course, for an end to the pandemic.

We also placed a vigil lamp at the foot of Mary's statue in the Shrine, along with the intentions of everyone who contacted CAMM or the Shrine. We posted daily videos of the Vincentians' prayers on our website and social platforms. We united our prayers to yours, lifted your intentions to Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted, and asked for immense graces, because our God gives graciously through her.

The Vincentians, who were quarantined at the Seminary, also combined their efforts to create a lovely outdoor altar to Mary, where they went to pray their rosaries, read scripture, or meditate—and they encouraged others to build their own "Mary altars" at home (see photos on pages 2-3 and read the full story at miraculousmedal.org/blessing-of-the-shrine/).

SOLIDARITY OF PRAYER

Even in the midst of the pandemic and social unrest we've experienced, we know the solution is a greater love for our Blessed Mother and her Divine Son—a love that plays itself out by helping our neighbors and "the least among us." The solution is the Miraculous Medal, not as an object of art or jewelry, but as something we wear close to our hearts to remind us of

her pledge to us and our pledge to her (see the article, "A Medal That Changed the World," on pages 20-23). The solution is prayer: prayer to Jesus through Mary and her Perpetual Novena.

In July 1931, Fr. Skelly wrote:

"Of course thousands who live at a distance make these Novenas in their own churches or in their homes, joining their intentions with those of the thousand or more people who every Monday night fill every seat and practically every foot of standing room in the Chapel. And in this sense, assuredly, you can 'pay us a visit' during these summer months. Indeed, we particularly desire our readers and Members to join in heart and spirit in these Monday night Novenas. We ask them to pray for the intentions of all who are making the Novena, whether at the Shrine or at home. And those who make the Novena at the Shrine are asked invariably to pray for the intentions of the thousands of others who cannot come. We need this solidarity of prayer. ... There is no force [as] mighty as that of thousands of united hearts, joined in faith and love, asking Mary's intercession."

THE ROMANCE OF THE NOVENA

Six years later, he wrote that the romance of the Perpetual Novena is all about loving and honoring the "dearest of all women, our Mother, and the fairest of all mothers." He called the Miraculous Medal Novena "a love theme" and attributed its attraction to not only seeking Mary's gifts, "but Mary herself."

While Fr. Moran acknowledged the love story between Mary and her children, he approached it from a slightly different viewpoint. In one of his Perpetual Novena sermons, Fr. Moran told the congregation that when we pray the Novena to our Blessed Mother, she makes a Novena to us. She comes to each of us individually and asks us to turn to her in prayer. She comes to each one of us and asks us to turn away from the things that are destroying or enslaving us. She comes and asks each one of us to turn our life into a generous gift for others.

If you can, come to Mary at The Miraculous Medal Shrine in Germantown, turn to her, and pray the Novena with us. Our Blessed Mother showers extraordinary

graces here, "remarkable cures of soul and body," as Fr. Skelly once said. But if distance prevents you from visiting the Shrine in person, watch our Masses online and unite your Novena prayers with ours—this not only touches Mary's maternal heart, it also makes our prayers more powerful.

And in return, the investment of the few minutes we give her in praying the Novena will yield us "such rich returns in so many ways," as Fr. Moran said in one of his sermons, "you may look upon it as a weekly deposit in the Bank of Our Lady; a deposit that she loves to receive, that she safeguards jealously; a deposit that she invests wisely so that the interest upon it may come to you in those crises of our lives when you need it most."

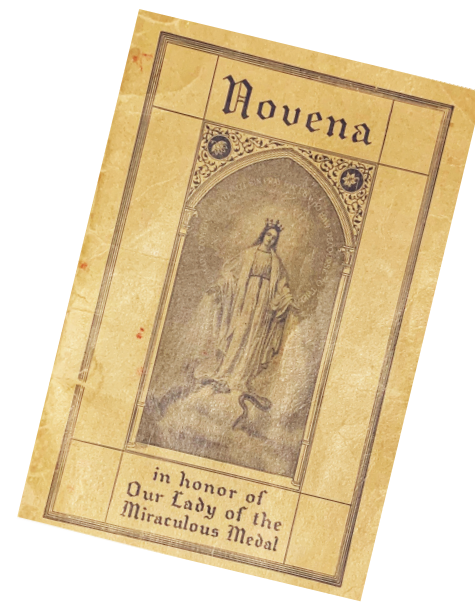
Although his sermons date back almost ninety years, Fr. Moran's words remain relevant:

"Oh my friends, in these days of evil, in these times where fierce enemies are threatening to destroy us, when so many forces are leagued together to battle against our faith, to destroy all the decencies of life, why do we not give the strong Mother of God the chance that she desires to protect us? ... It may well be that God has inspired these Novena devotions in honor of Mary in order that through them we may find effective protection against whatever may come to pass."



¹patriotspoint.org/news-and-events/battle-of-ia-drang-valley-symposium-recalls-intense-vietnam-war-fight/

²warfarehistorynetwork.com/2019/12/10/bloody-clash-at-the-battle-of-ia-drang/



“*Vincent’s Homes will help restore hope, dignity, and faith.*”

FR. ROBERT MALONEY, CM

AS THE VINCENTIANS ENTER THEIR 171ST YEAR OF SERVICE TO THE POOR AND THE MARGINALIZED IN GERMANTOWN, they recognize the urgent call to continue to be witnesses of hope and dynamic change in response to their founder’s words: “We must evangelize and serve the poor not only spiritually, with tender compassion, but also corporally...”

To do this, they didn’t have to look any further than their own backyard.

One key ministry that sits squarely in the Vincentian mission is homelessness. According to Fr. Robert Maloney, CM, the Congregation of the Mission’s former Superior General, the Vincentian Priests and Brothers are actively engaged in the problems of Germantown residents. They stress the need to continue bringing support and hope to the immediate community.

“The Vincentians seek to address systemic change and the plight of the local homeless population by working on ground-level efforts,” states Fr. Maloney. Reflecting on Marian devotion in Germantown, he adds, “Mary had no dwelling place at the time of Jesus’ birth. There was no room in the inn for her, Joseph, and the newborn Jesus. St. Vincent pointed out that Mary, better than anyone else, understood what the gospels teach us about hearing and responding to the cries of the poor.”

Drawing inspiration from their founder, the Vincentian Priests and Brothers in Germantown have joined in a recent Vincentian Family global initiative, in

conjunction with the United Nations, to address and eradicate homelessness worldwide.

FOUNDER’S LEGACY

In 1643, King Louis XIII endowed today’s equivalent of \$1 million to St. Vincent, which he used to launch a project to build thirteen houses to care for abandoned and orphaned children, who would otherwise have died. Additional financial support from the Ladies of Charity and operations management by the Daughters of Charity allowed this project to not only save the lives of thousands of children, but also deliver aid to displaced people and refugees fleeing the battle zone of Alsace-Lorraine. The success of these efforts eventually gave rise to a global commitment to develop residential recovery programs.

Inspired by St. Vincent’s practical response to homelessness, the Vincentians launched a campaign in October 2018 to address the issues of those without adequate housing. Known as the “13 Houses Campaign,” this



Image: 123RF

VINCENT'S HOMES



“Help us end homelessness, one house at a time.”

VINCENT'S HOMES MOTTO



... This global initiative is in conjunction with the United Nations' call to address and eradicate homelessness worldwide.

global initiative aims at transforming the lives of at least 10,000 people in the next three to five years in the 156 countries where the Vincentian family is present. Currently, 52 projects have already been launched in 37 countries and nearly 5,000 people have been helped. The Campaign's motto is: "Help us end homelessness, one house at a time."

Community collaborators are also heeding the call for investing in a tailored version of 13 Houses in Germantown. Known as "Vincent's Homes," this initiative branches out from the Shrine and the Vincentians' residence in Germantown by acquiring, rehabilitating, and leasing properties to individuals living on the edge of homelessness.

WHAT MUST BE DONE?

The Vincentians and CAMM announced the "Vincent's Homes" campaign during their 170th Anniversary Gala celebration in 2019. They described the initiative as a

unique opportunity for addressing and furthering their own region-specific efforts. The Germantown neighborhood, where the Priests and Brothers reside, is nestled in an urban setting where the surge of unemployment and instability has plunged the most vulnerable citizens into poverty. This involves a number of interrelated challenges: 40% of the residents have less than a high school degree; 21% of the homes are vacant; and 37% of individuals plus 44% of whom are children live below the poverty line. There was no question that the time to build and sustain a safer, better, and more prosperous community is now.

"Vincent's Homes will be a resource for building communities, uniting families, and strengthening partnerships in order to restore hope, dignity, and faith," states Fr. Maloney. "It will also help [the Vincentians] maintain an active part in restoring and revitalizing a historic section of Philadelphia, which has been a longtime center for devotion to Mary."

THE BUILDING BLOCKS

Within the context of the 13 Houses campaign's goals and vision, Vincent's Homes' organizational committee and urban development partners devised a model in which they would acquire, rehab, and then lease the homes at affordable rents to qualified low-income candidates. The committee will begin by acquiring thirteen homes, with the goal of expanding to 100.

The target development area follows the natural boundaries of the East Germantown neighborhood, radiating roughly eight blocks in each direction from the Vincentians' campus. Acquisitions will be single family (two-four bedroom) properties.

Tenant health and energy efficiency are key factors for rehabbing the homes to maintain a high standard property. Acquisitions will be single family (two-to four-bedroom) properties, which will be open to lower-income families and families with vouchers from particular housing programs. Wrap-around social

services such as job training, workforce placement, and health services will also be provided. Additionally, an appointed property manager will establish an ongoing relationship with tenants to help address any issues and challenges they encounter before they affect the family's housing stability.

This chosen model is replicable and scalable within East Germantown. The committee wants to ripple outward to adjoining neighborhoods in Philadelphia, to other areas in the United States, and eventually worldwide.

One unexpected component of the plan is the use of solar energy for utility services to the homes. Solar panels are capable of providing a positive, indirect effect on the environment and reducing, if not negating, utility costs for the residents. The panels will be installed on the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal's (CAMM) roof across the street from the Shrine. This makes CAMM one of the first Catholic institutions using its building to generate energy for a surrounding community.

address blight and build the aesthetic appeal and pride for residents and their surrounding community. It has the potential to foster collaboration between local, city and regional groups. It has the goal to alleviate the underlying currents of poverty and create safe living environments.

Fr. Maloney is overjoyed on the prospects this campaign can ignite.

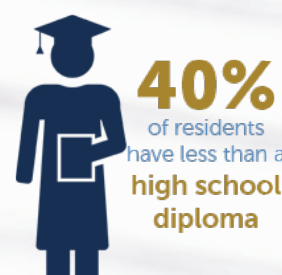
"What a joy it will be to dedicate our time, resources, and talent to accomplish what the Lord and St. Vincent called us to do," states Fr. Maloney. "As Vincentians, we must continue to be a resource for building communities, uniting families, and strengthening unity of partnerships that collaborate to restore hope, dignity, and faith." 🙏



To learn more about Vincent's Homes and follow updates on the initiative, visit [VincentsHomes.org](https://www.vincentshomes.org) or visit [VincentsHomes.org](https://www.vincentshomes.org).

To learn more about the FamVin Homeless Alliance, contact the office by either email (FHA.info@famvin.org) or visit their website at [vfhomelessalliance.org](https://www.vfhomelessalliance.org)

GERMANTOWN REGION CHALLENGES



IT'S A WIN-WIN

This ambitious endeavor has propelled the Vincentians' service to the poor to a new, broader level of engagement. Not only will it affect the Germantown community, but it will also help tell the story of poverty and homelessness, educating the public on the need for systemic change cultivated through affordable housing. It is geared to create an environmental stewardship to



FROM ITS VERY BEGINNINGS, OUR BLESSED MOTHER HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE GUIDING FORCE for the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal (CAMM). A century later, CAMM continues to serve Mary and her devoted followers.

More than one hundred years ago, CAMM's Founder, Fr. Joseph Skelly, CM, declared, "[CAMM] came into being, we believe, through Mary's inspiration. We feel certain that throughout every day of its existence thus far Mary's guidance has led it, Mary's protection has sheltered it, and Mary's prayers have granted it growth and stability."

These words still resonate today through the halls of CAMM. And throughout the building, located across the street from The Miraculous Medal Shrine, there are images of Mary everywhere. Since its establishment on Thursday, March 25, 1915 (the Annunciation of the Blessed Mother), CAMM has faithfully upheld its primary mission to usher the faithful to "come to the foot of the altar" for

Mary's graces. And even though times, technology, and people have changed throughout the decades, CAMM's mission is still as relevant today as it was 105 years ago.

HISTORY SHAPES THE FUTURE

It all began with a young Vincentian priest, who was called to do the herculean task of fundraising for a new seminary to be built in Princeton, New Jersey. Even by today's standards, this was an audacious undertaking. Devoted to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Fr. Skelly called on her assistance, and her response was overwhelming (see the article "Divine Composition," on page 24).

As a show of gratitude to Our Lady, Fr. Skelly, with the blessing of the Vincentian Priests and Brothers, established "an organization devoted to the spread and increase of devotion to Mary Immaculate by means of her Medal." Christened the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal or CAMM, this organization was among Fr. Skelly's crowning achievements: the first Marian organization in the United States dedicated to spreading devotion to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

Fr. Skelly witnessed CAMM's tremendous growth during his forty-eight years as CAMM spiritual director. Millions of people responded to his direct mail solicitations. By 1950, CAMM claimed the second largest mail volume in Philadelphia only to be surpassed by Sears, Roebuck and Co. The faithful's devotion to Mary mixed with Fr. Skelly's marketing savvy and engaging support created an extraordinary Marian legacy that remains relevant today.

MISSION

In spreading devotion to the Blessed Mother, none of Fr. Skelly's works outshone his building The Miraculous Medal Shrine in 1927, as the "Heart of the Central Association, as well as the heart of their love for the Miraculous Medal."

But that was just the beginning.

The second mission Fr. Skelly ascribed to CAMM at its inception was to financially support the formation of young men for the Vincentian priesthood. In fulfilling this mission, Fr. Skelly proved himself equally adept.

In funding the education and formation of Vincentian seminarians of the Eastern Province, he helped oversee the construction of four seminaries: St. Joseph's College, Princeton, New Jersey (1914); Mary Immaculate Seminary, Northampton, Pennsylvania (1937); St. Vincent de Paul Novitiate, Ridgefield, Connecticut (1954); and St. Vincent de Paul Seminary, Boynton Beach, Florida (1963).

Spreading Devotion to Mary and financially helping to support the formation of seminarians remain one of the cornerstones of CAMM.

CAMM's current CEO, Mary Jo Timlin-Hoag, recalls her years as a graduate student when one of her professors noted that "... a company's



THE MANY FACES OF CAMM

Pictured left to right: Colleen Buckley, Sr. Director of Events and Youth and Young Adults Programs; Florence Dellisanti, Institutional Advancement Team Member; Norman Lewis, Sr. Director of Finance.

mission statement is its public-facing language, which tells the world who you are and what you stand for."

Fr. Michael Carroll, CM, CAMM Spiritual Director since 2018, sums up "what CAMM is" as "promoting the revelations presented to us by Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal and St. Catherine Labouré." He then adds, "CAMM also assists the Vincentian community in telling the Province's story of who the Vincentians are, what their mission is in the Church, and where and who they serve."

Additionally, CAMM helps support finances for the apostolic works of the Eastern Province in their charity and service for the poor and marginalized in myriad communities, including Panama.

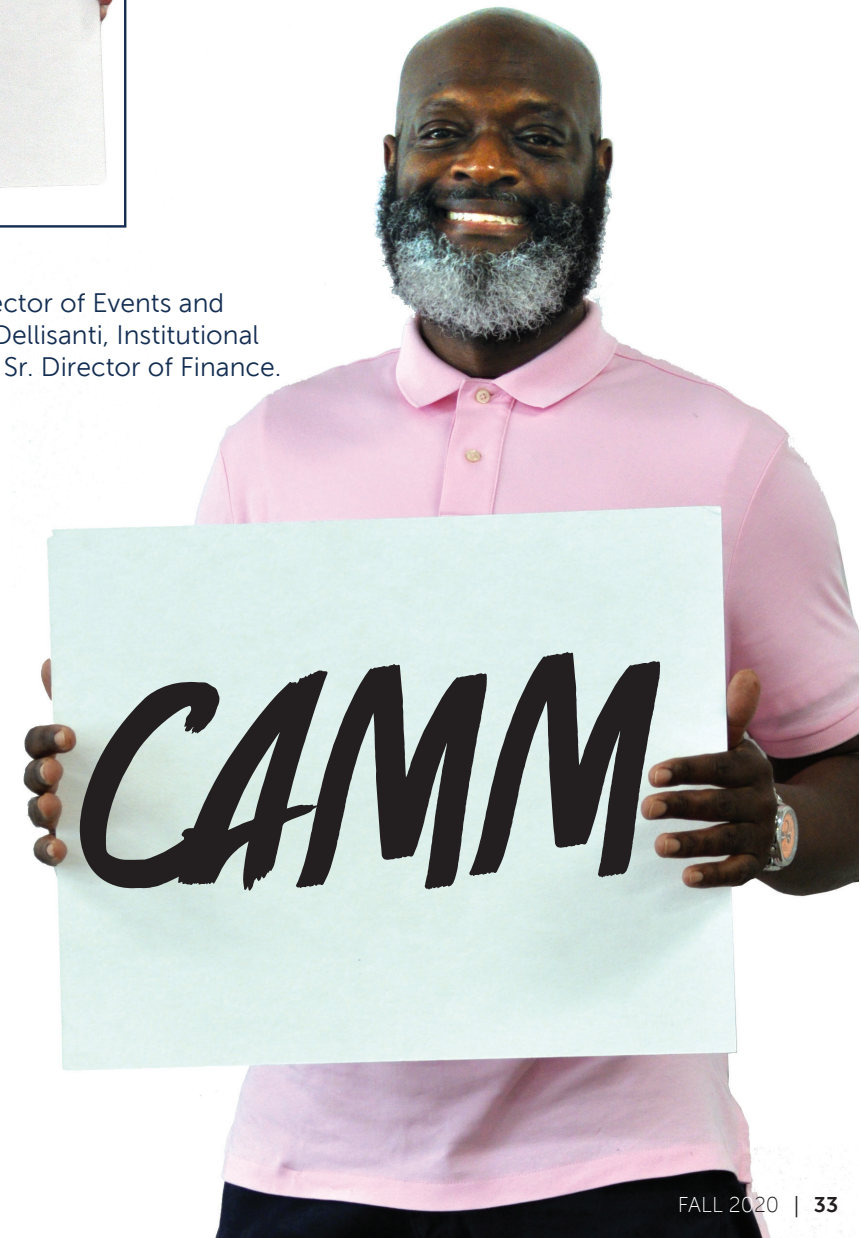
I AM CAMM

As a man of vision, strategy, and modern-day entrepreneurship, Fr. Skelly created and established numerous vehicles for CAMM to promulgate devotion to Mary. In May 1928, he published the first issue of the *Miraculous Medal Magazine*, introducing it as "the

Organ of the Association, in order to bind by closer ties all workers for the cause of Mary Immaculate."

Years later came the establishment of the Miraculous Medal Art Museum. It started as a natural outpouring of love for Mary. Mary's devotees gave Fr. Skelly and the Vincentians their Marian artwork as donations, and soon Fr. Skelly had amassed a large collection of original and rare pieces. As a result, he formed an art advisory commission, whose sole purpose was to guide and direct the housing and funding of the collection. Today, the museum contains hundreds of Marian paintings and sculptures from different times—all of which pay homage to Our Lady. As Skelly stated, "The Miraculous Medal Art Museum has been opened by the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal with one object: to make Our Lady better known and loved."

Historically, CAMM has been responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Shrine, preserving it as a monument of beauty to Mary and an architectural masterpiece. As a historical building, this requires constant and costly repairs and renovations: restoring interior and exterior artwork and murals; providing air conditioning; updating technology for our livestreams (our Monday Perpetual Novena and Mass, as well as



special feast days); repairing elevators; revitalizing and refitting the organ and carillon bells; making roof improvements and repairs; and expanding cultural Marian shrines.

FINANCIAL BASE

To sustain CAMM and its mission to support the Shrine and the Vincentians, Fr. Skelly instituted a fee-based membership program.

This program remains a significant part of CAMM’s financial resources, which relies on the enrollment of living or deceased members. In Fr. Skelly’s time, this was done by “promoters,” who paid an annual fee of 25 cents for each person they enrolled. Today, we no longer have “promoters,” but we still rely on the generosity of people who enroll themselves, as well as friends and family members, to Mary’s Miraculous Medal Family. Each person enrolled shares in every Mass offered by the Vincentians throughout the year. Members also receive a Miraculous Medal, a magazine subscription, a membership card, and a membership booklet.

Timlin-Hoag acknowledges that supporting the spiritual mission of CAMM through solid business practices will

ensure CAMM’s success for another 105 years. “The Vincentians do a brilliant job supporting the spiritual side,” explains Timlin-Hoag, “but we constantly address, ‘How can CAMM move the mission forward?’ We are always asking, ‘How can we ensure the message of Mary and the Miraculous Medal is spread far and wide? How do we engage youth and young adults in this message?’”

The answer is simple: deliver solid messaging through aligned initiatives, events, and programs. To help engage new and future communities of Catholics in learning about Mary and her Miraculous Medal, we’ve established youth and young adult ministries programs; organized events for community engagement; collaborated with cultural faith communities to build “mini” shrines; and expanded our communications strategies.

Recently, CAMM undertook a two-year initiative to share the story of St. Catherine and our Blessed Mother by updating both the Shrine and Vincentian websites, social media platforms, videos, mass media recognition, and newsletters.

Along with technology, CAMM sought a novel approach by creating the Living Saints Program where an actress portraying St. Catherine Labouré visits the Shrine every Monday (pre-pandemic); leads retreats and guest pilgrimages; and performs at nursing homes, parishes, and schools, to not just tell Catherine’s story of meeting Mary, but to show it. “It’s storytelling at its best,” exclaims Timlin-Hoag.

Another initiative includes renovating the lower level of the CAMM building for an event venue—consisting of a large banquet hall, catering kitchen, and three conference rooms—to draw more people to the Shrine for events, retreats, and conferences.

CAMM I AM

Fr. Skelly acknowledged the hard work and dedication of the CAMM staff at his Golden Jubilee as a Vincentian Priest in 1965. “No recital of the Association would be complete without ... those loyal employees who have tirelessly aided me in looking after the tremendous amount of clerical detail...” Timlin-Hoag echoes these sentiments. “Our mission is only as good as how well our CAMM family brings it to life.”

Over the past hundred years, staff members have come and gone, processes have changed, and technology has advanced. But CAMM leadership recognizes that its intrinsic values have forged through time because of its committed employees.

Longtime staff member Florence Dellisanti has worked at CAMM in numerous capacities for fifty-five years and can attest to the changes—big and small—that CAMM has experienced over the years. She recalls the “old days” when bells beckoned the staff to begin the workday, take coffee breaks, recess for lunch, and dismiss for the day. She remembers the staff praying the Rosary together every day, a tradition that has been recently revived, but on a weekly basis.

The overall operational structure has changed, as well. Since the beginning of Dellisanti’s tenure, CAMM’s Director was always a Vincentian priest. The priests also held other jobs, such as editor of the *Miraculous Medal Magazine* and director of finances. In the past few decades, CAMM’s governance has transitioned to mainly laypeople, and CAMM’s decades-old organizational model was modified to keep up with the need for technology in today’s world.

“CAMM’s reorganization was driven by the diminishing number of vocations, as well as the many changes that technology had introduced to communications and business practices,” explains Fr. Carroll. The result was the creation of two jobs from one: the Executive Director of CAMM, who became the CEO of CAMM,



“Operations includes both customer service and behind-the-scenes activities at CAMM,” Wise notes. She cites the Shrine Gift Shop as a prime example. “The Gift Shop is usually the first stop for many visitors to the Shrine, where they receive a warm welcome along with a brief overview of Shrine highlights and directions to those highlights, as well as an opportunity to purchase religious goods.”

THE FUTURE

While the structural organization and outreach to current and future faithful have changed, Timlin-Hoag acknowledges how CAMM’s standards and ethical values remain true to Fr. Skelly’s mission. Indeed, CAMM’s progress isn’t possible without that.

Fr. Carroll believes CAMM will always be faithful to Fr. Skelly’s vision. “Fr. Skelly gave his life to tell others about Mary’s great gift in the Miraculous Medal,” he says. “He is smiling as that mission is continuing in 2020.”

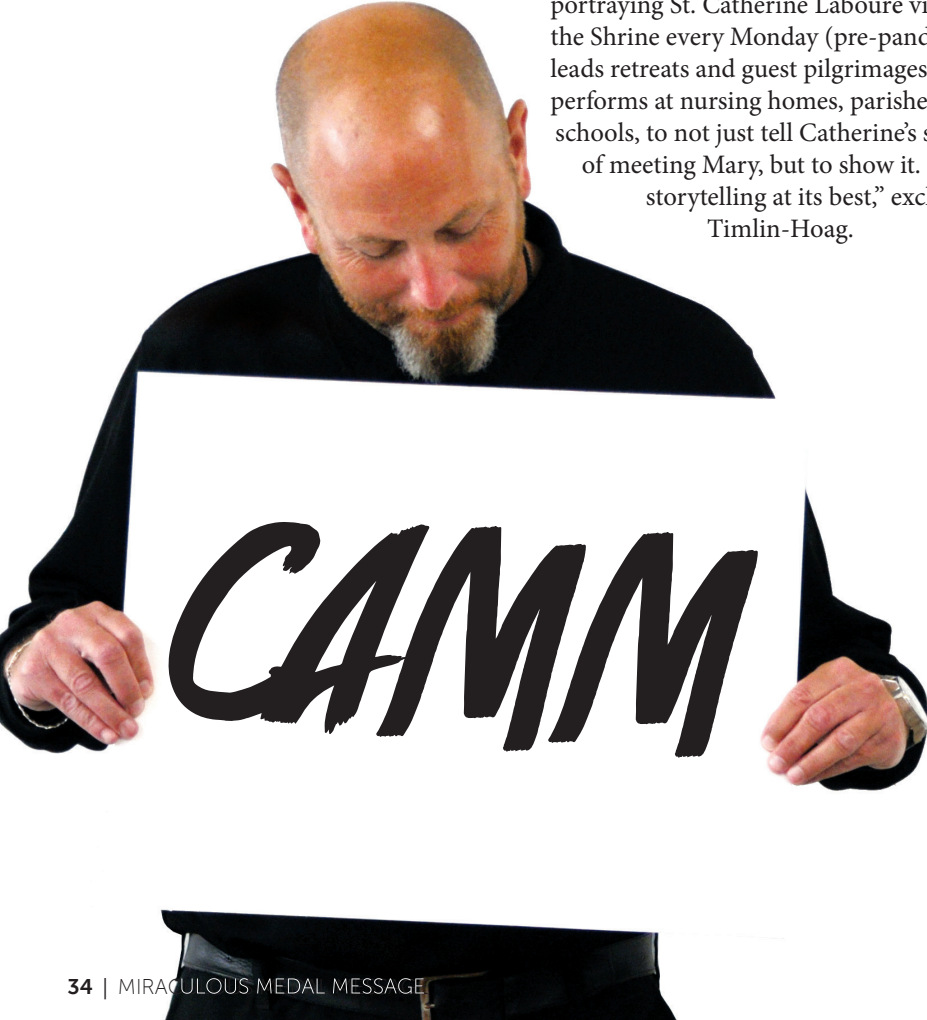
THE MANY FACES OF CAMM
Pictured left to right: Christopher Grosso, Communications Manager of Vincentians of the Eastern Province; Gwen Mercer, Bookkeeping; Megan Brogan, Major Gifts Officer.

and the establishment of a spiritual director of CAMM, who provides guidance to employees in their faith journey.

Timlin-Hoag is the first female to hold the Executive Director and CEO titles at CAMM; she has also reorganized the operational structure to one of department teams. In today’s economy, CAMM leadership knew this transformational shift needed to occur.

Today, CAMM consists of several departments: operations of requests and orders; institutional advancement; marketing and communications; the Gift Shop; pilgrimages; events; youth and young adult ministry; cultural ministries; and finance.

Anne Wise, operations manager, explains how operations is the “work processing” department, serving as the nuts and bolts by fulfilling orders and answering mail; monitoring and reviewing donations received; and processing donations. Along with these activities, prayer and vigil light intentions are gathered by operations staff and brought to the Shrine so they can be placed at Our Lady’s altar or in the Vigil Light area.



Exposing HUMAN TRAFFICKING

SR. MICHELLE LOISEL, DC, WILL GIVE A PRESENTATION TO ANYONE, ANYWHERE, AND ANYTIME about the scourge of modern-day slavery, also known as human trafficking. When she speaks with groups in America, she is often asked, “Is slavery here?” Her answer is resolute: “Yes, slavery is here. Human trafficking exists here, and we all have a role in stopping it.”

Photo by Lucas Pezeta from Pixels

Yes, slavery is here!

Sr. Michelle Loisel, DC, knows about working to end human suffering.

As a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Sr. Loisel describes herself as “an activist for the poor in this world.” In fact, she has spent most of her religious life serving in the Middle East (she speaks fluent Arabic), Africa, India, Haiti, and other areas of conflict. She then came to the United States and became the executive director of Dawn’s Place, a safe, residential, and holistic program for women who have been victims of sex trafficking.

Fast-forward to the 2015 General Assembly of the Daughters of Charity of America and Canada, when the Daughters (of Charity) decided to “... share commitments to end modern forms of slavery,” which include sex trafficking, forced labor, and migrant exploitation, among other forms of bondage.

The Daughters created a new position within the Province of St. Louise—Coordinator of Provincial Response to Migrants and Issues of Modern Human Slavery. Naturally, Sr. Loisel was the first Sister appointed to this position because of her experience leading Dawn’s Place.

Sr. Loisel, along with Sr. Mary Catherine Warehime, DC, want to educate the

public about the scope of human trafficking, and communicate how each person can work to combat this extreme violation of human rights.

Yet, Srs. Loisel and Warehime were surprised to find that people didn’t want to know. “They don’t want to hear from us because they don’t want to hear the reality,” Sr. Loisel said from her office in Baltimore, Maryland.

“The reality,” Sr. Loisel emphasizes, “are real human beings are suffering unfathomable harm and trauma.” Take for example Rosy, an American girl. As detailed on the Daughter’s anti-trafficking website justfreedom.org:

Between the ages of 4 and 13, her stepfather abused her. From the age of 8 until 14, she was also abused by her stepmother’s father. At 14-years-old, she [Rosy] was on a train and followed a man who acted interested in her as a boyfriend. He brought her to a motel and he became her first pimp.

When she gave birth to her daughter, he sold her to another pimp. The child was adopted and Rosy was forced to marry the new pimp’s friend. She had two more children, who were both adopted.

Rosy was assaulted many times. Traffickers abused her repeatedly, both



emotionally and physically. She was gang raped at the age of 14. She was kidnapped and held in a room for weeks at a time, made to do drugs.

Eventually, Rosy was forced to cash fraudulent checks and sell drugs by her pimp. She was found in possession of heroin. She was arrested and sent to jail. Once there, she reported to the police what had happened to her and the FBI got involved.

Rosy was referred to a safe, residential program. Rosy's life had been saved.

To begin combatting such a large-scale plague that affects so many individuals, Sr. Loisel believes that "action follows awareness." Therefore, the first step in creating that awareness is through education, collaboration, communication, and advocacy.

DEDICATED DAUGHTERS

Srs. Mary Catherine Warehime, DC (left), and Michelle Loisel, DC, want to educate the public about the scope of human trafficking and communicate how to combat this extreme violation of human rights.

This happens on a number of levels. Sr. Loisel gives presentations to parishes, educators, government agencies, non-government organizations, and anyone who will listen. She has created a digital infrastructure through social media and a website—justfreedom.org—that offers statistics, victims' stories, resources, and other information related to trafficking and migration.

She also collaborates with other groups and persons involved in ending trafficking, including FamVin (Vincentian Family Network), the United Nations, state task forces, Catholic Charities, Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), and local organizations in her Baltimore area. The Daughters are also members of USCSAHT (U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking) and CCOAHT (Coalitions of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking).

While Sr. Loisel is working on local, national, and international efforts to end the many forms of human trafficking, people often ask her what they can do in their own lives to combat modern slavery. First, she reminds us that what drives trafficking is consumer demand—demand for paid sex, for pornography, for cheap labor, for inexpensive goods. Eliminate demand and trafficking will dissolve.

Next, she says to be aware of red flags that someone might be a victim of exploitation, and to speak up about it. Signs of someone who is being trafficked include (among others):

- Being fearful of police and authorities
- Having no passport or ID or mentioning that someone else is holding his/her documents
- Exhibiting signs of physical and/or psychological trauma (anxiety, lack of memory of recent events, bruising, untreated conditions, etc.)

- Avoiding eye contact and/or social interaction
- Having very few possessions

Additionally, she reminds us to be responsible consumers by being aware of the products we purchase and to be diligent in buying only fair trade certified products when available. Fair trade products ensure no forced labor was used in producing the product, and that fair and equitable prices are being paid to workers. Fair Trade products also monitor for safe social conditions and environmental stewardship.

Equally, Sr. Loisel points out that traffickers exploit vulnerable people (teens, runaways, migrants, etc.), and entice them into situations that aren't what they seem. Today, this often happens online. Therefore, we all need to practice internet safety, but we especially need to teach children the dangers of being lured into dangerous situations on websites that seem harmless, or by predators posing as peers. For example, from justfreedom.org:

"...a 15-year-old girl walked into Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, and asked for help. Along with four other girls between the ages of 12 and 18, she had been sold for sex at truck stops across Missouri, Florida, Texas, and New Mexico for almost two months. She was lucky to be alive. According to her police report, another girl traveling with her during those months had died in her arms. The 15-year-old girl who walked into Cardinal Glennon, like the majority of children who are sold for sex in the United States today, was trafficked using [the website] Backpage."

While the website "Backpage" has been shut down after numerous trafficking cases were associated with it, other similar sites continue to exist and predators continue to pose as teenagers or friendly adults on many social platforms.

Sr. Loisel, however, remains hopeful and prayerful that with an increase in awareness leading to action, we can—and will—stop the violence of trafficking. She believes it is worth repeating: "Yes, slavery is here. Human trafficking exists here, and we all have a role in stopping it." She adds, "If all of us start repeating that message to our family, friends, faith communities, neighbors, coworkers, elected officials, and so on, we can each play a role in stopping this violation of human rights."



If you or someone you know needs assistance, call the toll-free National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) at 1.888.373.7888 or text BeFree to 233733.

THE REALITY IS SHOCKING.

4.8 MILLION

The number of individuals who were trapped in sex trafficking as estimated by the International Labor Organization in 2016.



MORE THAN AN ESTIMATED

28,000 INDIVIDUALS

consume pornography at any given second, and the victims of pornography may include those who are also being trafficked for sex.



In 2016, the International Labor Organization estimated that there were

2.49

million individuals trapped in labor trafficking.

As of 2018, the United States Department of Labor has identified

148 goods from **76 countries** made with forced or child labor.

Full report and lists of goods at www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods

CELEBRATING JUBILEES

In May and June 2020, many Vincentians of the Eastern Province celebrated jubilee anniversaries of their ordination to the priesthood or brotherhood. We thought this was good opportunity to recognize those celebrating jubilees of 25 years or more, and to ask them to share a moment or experience in their ministry when they felt that they were walking in the footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul.



FR. G. GREGORY GAY, CM

I have felt I have walked unworthily in the footsteps of St. Vincent for these 40 years of priesthood: as a chaplain to retired and infirmed DC's in Emmitsburg, as a formator in Niagara Falls, as a campus minister at NU, as a Missionary and formator in Panama for 15 años, as visitor in America Central, as Superior General for two six-year terms, and as missionary in an immigrant parish in Charlotte, North Carolina. Perhaps the most challenging of these years have been as Superior General...accompanying and animating the entire Vincentian Family to walk together in the charism St. Vincent de Paul, evangelizing and serving those most abandoned by society. I often imaged how St. Vincent from heaven would be filled with joy to see the effective love so many had for the most marginalized of our world. I experienced first-hand the deep love that many laypeople, Daughters, Sisters, Brothers, and Priests have for our lords and masters, the poor.

40 years

FR. JOHN FREUND, CM

The Vincentian priests teaching at St. John's Prep awakened in me a call to walk in their footsteps. Armed with my high school diploma, I remember the car ride to our Minor Seminary. Ten years later, I was ordained beginning a journey I had no idea would be so unlike what I anticipated.

For the first half of that journey I was deeply involved in higher education. When I discovered this thing called the 'World Wide Web,' I began to discover a vocation within a vocation.

For the last 25 years (I can hardly believe it), I have been increasingly involved in what our General Assembly of 1998 called "new means of communication."

Along the way, I was part of the birth and maturation of the Vincentian Family's presence in the digital world via a network of sites under the umbrella of FamVin.



55 years



60 years

FR. JOHN CARVEN, CM

I have recently celebrated sixty-eight years as a Vincentian, since I was accepted on June 10, 1952, into the novitiate. I began eight years of formation: the start of a life-long process in knowing and loving God in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and the special virtues of the community he established; and the spirituality and teaching of God in the Scriptures.

After ordination to the priesthood (May 26, 1960), I began the apostolate of evangelization in the works to which Superiors assigned me: four years teaching at St. John's Prep; thirteen years at Niagara University teaching history (during which time I also earned a Doctorate in History from the University of Buffalo); from 1978 to 2010, I was part of a team translating the fourteen volumes of the Letters, Conferences, and Documents of St. Vincent de Paul, edited by Pierre Coste; and from 1994 to 2018, I established the present site of the Provincial Archives and conserved the on-going history of the Eastern Province of the Congregation of the Mission.

From 2018 to the present, I have been involved in the apostolate of "prayer and suffering" in St. Catherine's Infirmary, a distinct apostolate of which St. Vincent spoke in his conferences to the Priests and Brothers of the Congregation of the Mission and to the Sisters of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

Having known, loved, and served God in the apostolates to which he gifted me, I am awaiting God's summons to join Him in the happiness of heaven.

FR. STEVE TRZECIESKI, CM

It was a cold winter's night when my phone rang waking me up. It was the daughter of one of our faithful parishioners who said to me, "Fr. Steve, my father is very sick in ICU, and he wants to receive the sacraments before he dies."

The family was there when I arrived and prayed with me as I administered the sacraments.

Since it was about 2:00 a.m., I decided to stay awhile with the family. I thought it was my duty. I could see the peace on the faces of the family and father. Such a precious and memorable scene I could never forget.

Neither can I forget that whenever the daughter writes to me she always mentions how grateful the family is to me and how often they recall THAT NIGHT and how much it still means to them even after so many years.

May I add I feel the same way and how much THEY MEAN TO ME because THEIR FAITH has deepened mine.

60 years



2020 CELEBRATIONS

65 YEARS

Fr. Richard Devine, CM
Br. Alfred Smith, CM

60 YEARS

Fr. John Carven, CM
Fr. Stephen Trzeciecki, CM

55 YEARS

Fr. John Freund, CM
Fr. Gerard Luttenberger, CM

50 YEARS

Fr. Stephen Bicsko, CM
Fr. John Kane, CM
Fr. Thomas McKenna, CM
Fr. Michael Shea, CM

40 YEARS

Fr. G. Gregory Gay, CM
Fr. Carl Pieber, CM

25 YEARS

Fr. Michael Nguyen, CM

Sadly during production, Fr. Carven passed away. Before his passing, he shared his reflection with us. We are fortunate to have been able to capture his sentiments on his years as a Vincentian.

Not Your AVERAGE JOE

JOE MARM IS RETICENT TO TALK ABOUT HIMSELF AND SWIFTLY DIVERTS THE CONVERSATION TO THE BRAVERY OF HIS COMRADES. On all counts, he is a hero who endured the struggles and ravages of war. In his humility, he credits wearing his Miraculous Medal to surviving to tell his story.

Joe Marm's life began in Washington, Pennsylvania, a small town in the western part of the state that's known as the home of the Whiskey Rebellion and P.O.N.Y. League baseball. His parents, Walter and Dorothy Marm, were devout Catholics who regularly attended Mass and sent their children to the local parochial school, which was where Marm learned about the Miraculous Medal and first began wearing one. Every evening in May, his family would kneel and pray along with a radio broadcast of the Rosary. In seventh grade, Marm became an altar boy; he laughs recounting how his "claim to fame" was being the first altar server to learn Latin. Not only did his family support him, but he and his father frequently rose early to attend morning Mass.

Fast forward to Duquesne University, where Marm was studying business. His future sergeant told him, "Marm, you're gonna get drafted. Why don't you enlist under the college option program and go to OCS (Officer Candidate School)?" That sounded like sound advice, so five days after graduating college, Marm began Basic Training, went to Advanced Individual Training, followed by six months of Infantry OCS (one of the toughest and most intense courses in the Army), and then Ranger School. While in Ranger School, his orders were changed to a unit at Fort Benning that was getting ready to deploy to Vietnam. Finally, in August 1965, Marm and 15,000 other soldiers (along with 400 helicopters) left for Vietnam. It took an entire month to get there.

When they arrived, they set up their base camp in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam. "When you think of Vietnam, you think of heavy jungle, but it was not like that

in our area," Marm explains. "It was elephant grass and trees and shrubs. A lot of our soldiers received upper body wounds in the chest or the head."

Within three months, the first major battle—and one of the bloodiest—between the United States Army and the North Vietnamese Army erupted: the Battle of Ia Drang. The Americans were surrounded and outnumbered; the battlefield was heavy with dust and smoke; and the firepower against them "was so tremendous, it seemed impossible for anyone to survive." The details of the battle are captured in the book, *We Were Soldiers Once... and Young*, as well as the 2002 movie, *We Were Soldiers* (Marm laughs as he explains that the title of the book was too long for a movie marquee, so they shortened it). "It was one of the better Vietnam movies," he reflects. "They did an outstanding job with it. My name is not in the movie; they had to combine names and people."

In the film, it was 2nd Lieutenant Jack Geoghegan who heroically charged the bunker. However, in reality, it was Marm, a 2nd Lieutenant and platoon leader of A Company, 7th Cavalry Regiment (Airmobile). He was part of a two-company effort to rescue a platoon where "the entire chain of command was either killed or wounded," Marm explains. These were Marm's classmates, men he knew and respected. "So a young buck-sergeant named Ernie Savage took over." Surrounded by enemy forces, Savage put "a ring of steel—artillery and mortar fire—around his position" to keep the rest of the platoon alive until they could be rescued.



“We made a two-company attack to try to get up there. But there was an enemy to our front, so we had a lot of resistance.” The “resistance” was using a well-concealed machine gun, and the attack on the companies was intense with soldiers “dropping all over the place.”² Men were crawling through the elephant grass, amidst the smoke and commotion of combat, trying to dodge the machine-gun fire. To determine the precise location of the machine gun, Marm stood up, armed only with a rifle, to draw fire to himself. He saw that the attack was coming from behind a solidified rock anthill, about seven feet high, with trees and shrubs around it. He instructed one of his men to shoot an anti-tank weapon into the bunker, but with the humidity, it misfired. Marm grabbed it, rearmed it, stood up again, and fired. It worked, but it wasn’t enough.

“We were getting more fire, and I told one of my men—using sign language because of the battle noise—to go up there and throw a grenade over the top. He thought I meant to throw it from where we were, so he did.” It landed in front of the rock and went off but didn’t do any damage. “Rather than waste any time, I told my men to hold their fire (I didn’t want to get shot by my own men) and ran forward about thirty meters across open terrain. I got to the bunker, threw a grenade over the top, and ran to the left side, shooting some guys who were trying to shoot me.” At that moment, Marm was hit in the jaw. “The bullet went into my left jaw, pointed downward, and went out my right jaw. I never experienced that much pain before.”

That Marm survived is a miracle. That the bullet missed his jugular vein by an inch or so is another. But Marm was still wearing his Miraculous Medal from his



... MEDAL OF HONOR
... Today, Joe Marm wearing his Congressional Medal of Honor.

parochial school days. And he can clearly echo the words of (St.) Pope John Paul II after being shot in 1981, “One hand pulled the trigger, another guided the bullet.” Mary unmistakably guided the bullet for Marm, too, who through his willingness to die for his men, saved their lives.

For his bravery and selfless actions, Marm received a military medal on December 19, 1966: the Congressional Medal of Honor. Part of the citation reads: “1st Lt. Marm’s selfless actions reduced the fire on his platoon, broke the enemy assault, and rallied his unit to continue toward the accomplishment of [their] mission. 1st Lt. Marm’s gallantry on the battlefield and his extraordinary intrepidity at the risk of his life are in the highest traditions of the U.S. Army and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country.”

However, he doesn’t see the medal as a personal achievement; he believes he’s the custodian of something that commemorates the heroism of his fellow soldiers. “It’s a true honor to wear the

medal, and to represent all the men I served with, because this medal belongs to them as much as it does me. There’s so much valor that goes on in combat and not all of it is recognized.” He then cites examples of that valor: his Company Commander, Captain Tony Nadal, who told the men, “Come on. There’s a platoon out there and we need to get them”—and was the first to lead the rescue mission. Or Ernie Savage, who had to take charge of the trapped platoon, and while being attacked and almost overtaken, kept the survivors safe. “He was just a young sergeant, but he took initiative, and they were able to survive.” Or Rick Rescola, who Marm describes as “a great soldier who was also very calm in combat” (his picture is on the book cover of *We Were Soldiers Once*). Decades later, as Director of Security for Morgan Stanley at the World Trade Center, Rescola successfully evacuated 2,687 employees on September 11. “Like a good soldier, he went back in to make sure the building was cleared,” Marm said. Then, the tower collapsed.

After receiving the Medal of Honor, Marm returned to Vietnam.

“I hated war,” he said, “but I thought I should pull my share of the hardship tours. My contemporaries who were staying in were going back for a second tour. Some of the helicopter pilots were doing a third tour because of the need for


helicopter pilots. So I volunteered to go back.”

The Army won’t send a Medal of Honor recipient back into combat, so Marm had to sign a waiver declaring that he was choosing to place himself in harm’s way by returning to Vietnam. He remained in the Army until he retired as a Colonel in 1995.

Marm’s faith sustained him during his years in Vietnam. “When you’re sleeping outside every night, you look up into the stars, and you think about God and about what you’re doing there. There’s a lot of praying for everybody in combat. My closeness to Mary and to God helped me get through the tough times.” Marm also prayed the St. Michael Prayer frequently and can still recite it verbatim. “The rumor is,” he says smiling, “if you say that prayer for nine straight days, you won’t die in combat.”

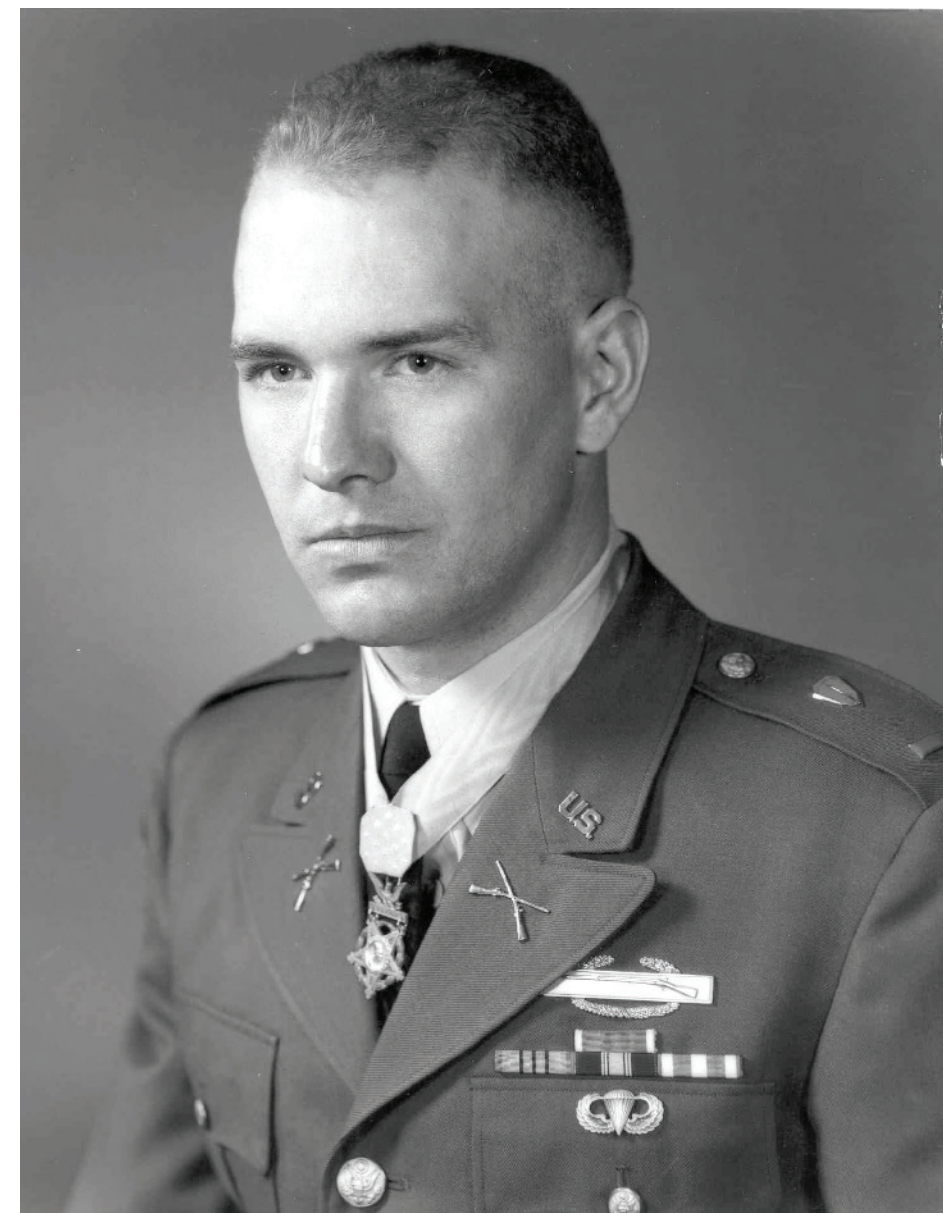
His life is much calmer now, but he continues to pray the Hail Mary “for different people who have passed and for my relatives.” Not surprisingly, his parish church is St. Mary’s.

Reflecting on what it means to be a leader, Marm states, “If you wear a patch, it’s called ‘Follow Me.’ We lead by example; you don’t ask your men and women to do anything you wouldn’t do yourself. And that can be tough. Sometimes courageous.”

Of course, the example of “Follow Me” leadership par excellence is Jesus—and then our Blessed Mother. They have lead Marm throughout his life. Through Mary’s hands, Heaven’s graces were poured upon him: graces for his safety; for his willingness to return to combat for our country and the men fighting for it; and for his perseverance in faith through trials most of us can’t begin to fathom. And for all of that, he has medals of highest distinction: the Medal of Honor, which, Marm says with a smile, was first made in Philadelphia, and the Miraculous Medal, which was “made” in Heaven. 

“My closeness to Mary and to God helped me get through the tough times.”

JOE MARM



... FOR HEROISM IN VIETNAM
... Captain Joe Marm at age 27 gave up a desk job to return to head an airborne unit in Vietnam. He was the first of sixty-one Medal of Honor recipients to return to Vietnam after receiving the award.

“The rumor is if you say [the St. Michael Prayer] for nine straight days, you won’t die in combat.”

JOE MARM

Oh, what a night!

“It was fortunate that the Novices were on hand and quickly reacted.”

“It was a day like every other day,” wrote an unknown Vincentian seminarian in his diary on May 15, 1940, until his 6:30 p.m. entry declared, “Now starts the excitement.”

The excitement was like nothing the Vincentians of the Eastern Province living at the Germantown Seminary had ever experienced. John Sinon, a novice, was in the quadrangle behind the seminary on his way to ring the bells for dinner, when he discovered smoke pouring from the roof of the building. He quickly spread the alarm to his fellow Confreres. The fire had started at 6:20 p.m. in the fourth floor quarters of Fr. William Agnew, CM, while the Novices were assembling on the first floor for prayers.

Upon seeing what headway the fire had made, several Novices and a Brother hastened to remove whatever furniture and furnishings they could handle from the third floor rooms. This proved to be a wise move, since the water used to douse the flames began pouring through the ceiling to these quarters.

Fifteen priests and fifty-three novices aided by six lay Brothers used water buckets and fire extinguishers to fight the blaze, which rapidly swept the fourth and fifth floors of the

Seminary. Smoke eventually forced them to retreat, but seventy-five firefighters from local Engine Company 9 soon responded to the two-alarm emergency alert. Low water pressure hampered the efforts, which hindered them from checking the flames for an hour and a half. A chemical hose was eventually used until lines were attached to distant hydrants.

The fourth floor, which was formerly the students’ corridor, had recently been renovated and partitioned into double rooms for the Priests. It was this floor together with the “Mountains”—the fifth floor—which was ruined.

A stone wall, which separated the center of the building from the east wing, prevented the fire from spreading in that direction. The only danger to this section would have been if the cupola crashed onto the lower roof, but fortunately that did not happen.

When all possible preventative measures had been taken, the Confreres went out to the yard to assess the damage. For the first time that night, the magnitude of the fire was realized: two upper floors of the seventy-three-year-old building and a wooden cupola on the roof were badly damaged.

While, thankfully, there were no fatalities, eight respondents sustained injuries from falling debris and loose nails or were overcome by smoke inhalation.

Thousands came out to view the spectacle. By 8:30 p.m., most of the fire was contained and eventually extinguished, although patches were burning in numerous places along the roof. These were extinguished and all endangered sections secured by 9:00 p.m. The firefighters, however, remained on the scene the remainder of the night due to the possibility of igniting a new outbreak.

The following morning, the full extent of the damages could be examined more closely. Several ceilings of the rooms even as low as the first floor had caved in, due to their being weakened by the water that had seeped through the floor boards. The entire fourth floor, with the exception of the west wing, was completely ruined. The fifth floor was in a similar condition, and the tower above it sustained badly burned uprights.

Although there was considerable damage, the Priests were thankful that it did not occur late at night when there might have been loss of life or serious injuries. As it was, none of the Confreres suffered more than temporary inconveniences and the loss of the use of their rooms. “It was fortunate that the Novices were on hand and quickly reacted,” noted one Priest.

What those present experienced that night was not what was damaged, but rather what was not. To their amazement, the cross surmounting the cupola, was not even singed by the flames. In addition, a statue of Our Lady, which stands in the stairway between the fourth and fifth floors where the fire did the most damage, was likewise untouched.

The seminarian reporting the incident in his diary wrote, “Surely such a remarkable occurrence should move us to have complete trust and confidence in the all-powerful protection of Our Blessed Lord and His Immaculate Mother Mary.”

SEMINARY ABLAZE

On May 15, 1940, flames engulfed the fourth floor of the Vincentians’ Seminary in Germantown. The destruction of the tower is evidenced in these photos. Thankfully, there were few injuries and no fatalities.



RESTORING

Masterpieces



They stand tall and reverent in St. Vincent de Paul Seminary courtyard. They are monuments to our Catholic faith and inspire us in our daily lives. The courtyard statues of Jesus, Mary, and a Guardian Angel, which adorn the outdoor terrain behind the Seminary, recently received a “face lift” to help preserve and enhance their presence as focal points for prayer and devotion.

This past spring, the Vincentians contacted Matthew Szczepanowski, a renowned, local artist and art conservator, to restore and repair the statues. Szczepanowski has done numerous restoration projects for the Vincentians and The Miraculous Medal Shrine over the past few years. His eye to detail and connecting the artwork with its surroundings have brought his talents to an expertise, making him the perfect person for the job.

Painting these 19th century French, wrought iron statues is no easy task. He studies the art carefully to ensure his restoration creates a richness to the work. “There is a way of painting three-dimensional painting. It’s a very specialized type of painting with depth as an underlying enhancement,”

claims Szczepanowski, “It is important to maintain the depth and the balance of color.”

He doesn’t take this task lightly. “When choosing colors, I must keep in mind the generations of faithful, who came and continue to come to the statues to pray. I approach the process with faith and love.”

Szczepanowski’s knowledge and experience in creating durable and aesthetically pleasing restorations are inspired by the subject of the statues and their natural surroundings. He notes that he used more intense colors for Our Lady’s statue, because the area around her statue called for it. It took experimentation and understanding to expertly paint the artwork, which he believes must portray the beauty and faith of our Christian beliefs.



BEFORE



BEFORE



BEFORE



PROMOTERS

Please pray for our recently deceased promoters
(March 2020 to August 2020).

- Mrs. Joyce Agnew, Saddle Brook, NJ
- Mrs. Rose Alagna, Nesconset, NY
- Mary Amicangelo, Sebastian, FL
- Frances Atencio, Monte Vista, CO
- Betty Brownfield, Indianapolis, IN
- Dolores Campbell, Brookfield, IL
- Mr. Charles G. Conklin,
Manchester, NJ
- Joan Corres, Rahway, NJ
- Mrs. Jeanne Cote, Baltic, CT
- Mr. William Crisp, East Northport, NY
- Mrs. Margaret B. Curley,
Pittsburgh, PA
- Mr. Sydney Diggles, Philadelphia, PA
- Mr. & Mrs. John Duby, Northville, MI
- Mrs. Rosalia Freiss, Pittsburgh, PA
- Theresa Galant, Albertun, PEI Canada
- Mrs. Patricia Gallant, Glace Bay, Nova
Scotia, Canada
- Mrs. Rose Marie Gibson, Harris, MN
- Marian Goveia, Provincetown, MA
- Mrs. Joanne Green, Romeoville, IL
- Myrtha Hammer, Vancouver, WA
- Mrs. Lorraine Hebert, Plaquemine, LA
- Mr. Gene Heitz, Aurora, IA
- Mrs. William L. Helbling, Sun City
Center, FL
- Mrs. Gene Huttes, Pana, IL
- Mrs. Dora Ieni, Boston, MA
- Mrs. Irene Jesiolowski,
The Villages, FL
- Susan Joerger, Woodside, NY
- Ethel B. Kakes, Antigonish, Nova
Scotia, Canada
- Mary Patricia Kilty, Exton, PA
- Mrs. John Kinzer, Watkins, MN
- Mr. Andrew A. Larsen, Clinton, SC
- Mrs. Catherine Lucia,
West Des Moines, IA
- Mary M. Madigan, Detroit, MI
- Joan Martella, Wallingford, PA
- Mrs. Carol Martin, Melbourne, FL
- Maria Mata, Miami, FL
- John McGill, Magnolia, De
- Theresa McKinnon, Antigonish, Nova
Scotia, Canada
- Mrs. Dorothy Meier, La Porte City, IA
- Sue Ann W. Merrill, Laconia, NH
- Marlene L. Moon, Sedalia, MO
- Mrs. Cecelia Niebauer, Northern
Cambria, PA
- Mrs. Martha O'Brien, Danbury, CT
- Mrs. Anne O'Donnell, Lansdale, PA
- Mrs. Jean Olenik, Crown Point, IN
- Mr. Jules M. Olive, St. Thomas, VI
- Rosemary O'Neil, Evanston, IL
- Frances Pepich, Richland Center, WI
- Lucille M. Peschl, Saint Cloud, MN
- Donna Phoenix, Missaula, MT
- Hedwig Pieloch, Mount Sinai, NY
- Mr. Herman Reis, Rockford, IL
- Mrs. Herman Schomaker,
New Baden, IL
- Mrs. Irma Schweitzer, Cincinnati, OH
- Dolores Stachnik, Lemont, IL
- Mrs. Maryann Studer, Melbourne, KY
- Mrs. Patricia Sueck, Littlestown, PA
- Mrs. Betty Suellentrop,
St Charles, MO
- Mrs. Beulah C. Thibodeaux,
Branch, LA
- Angela Tognelli, Bayside, NY
- Mrs. James Towell, Valley Stream, NY
- Mrs. J. Trifiletti, Upper Darby, PA
- Mrs. Virginia Valva, Great River, NY
- Mrs. Margaret Wallace,
St. Augustine, FL
- Mrs. Leatrice Wlock, Bensalem, PA
- Mrs. Helen R. Ziehr, West Bend, WI
- Dorothy Zipprich, Moro, IL

RAYS

During the time of my mother's last illness, I purchased a Miraculous Medal prayer card, a Lourdes prayer card, an Immaculate Heart prayer card, and an Our Lady of Perpetual Help prayer card from the hospital gift shop.

My mother had a maximum amount of medical care during May through September 2017. She was 81 and had made the choice to have her kidney removed for cancer that doctors had found. (Part of mother's life had been spent as a registered nurse.)

The surgery went well and after the initial recuperation, she did not need any pain medication they expected her to need. A most amazing thing! Thanks be to God.

Later on, she needed another separate surgery and, surprisingly, the doctors had to resuscitate her, because her heart had failed during that surgery. They told us they did not know if she would regain her mind when she awoke. But she did. And they were speedily able to remove her from the ventilator she had needed temporarily. Again, a most amazing thing! Thanks be to God.

In order to be cleared back for the surgery that was stopped, she would need a heart test that would harm her remaining kidney so she would then always need dialysis. She could not be cleared for surgery without the heart test, so she (and the family) approved it.

The doctors were also trying to figure out why her heart was stronger after she had been resuscitated. Sometime before my mother had her first kidney surgery, she had been told she should have a defibrillator put in, but she had chosen not to have that surgery earlier because she hadn't thought that she could survive it. So here she was, after heart stopping and resuscitation, with a heart that for some mysterious reason showed numbers that would no longer need a defibrillator at all. Again, an amazing thing! Thanks be to God.

They split the required heart test into two parts because of her condition. The first test went well but after the next test she began to bleed, which is something that can't happen with that type of procedure. Then she decided to go into hospice, a choice the family made sure was her true choice. She was able to return to skilled care at her senior community for hospice.

Hospice progressed but her hands, perhaps because of the kidney damage, both blackened a great deal. One of her legs was swollen, no surgery had been done, and her heels were propped on pillows and being specially treated.

One day, one of my nieces visited, and I thought I should hide my mother's blackened hands under the covers. But then I thought better of it. It would seem to be "hiding," which would be inappropriate. My niece held one of my mother's hands the whole time and we gave them some time alone.

The next day I noticed one of my mother's hands was perfectly normal. I did not tell my sister because I thought she would not believe me, but that later she could see for herself. When she came, she found that both of my mother's hands were no longer blackened, but completely normal and her leg no longer swollen, and it was perfectly symmetrical! In her last 2½ days, her body had reverted and perfected.

She was completely lucid all the time, but one time my sister indicated my mother had discussed the timing of something with someone who only she saw. Apparently, this is somewhat common. We later realized that the brief discussion had turned out to be precisely about the time of her passing. After my mother's peaceful passing, I began to review on the computer what "incorrupt" saints were exactly.

Immediately my computer search came up with pictures of the exact incorrupt saints of the prayer cards I had prayed with: Catherine Labouré and Bernadette Soubirous. One day, as I told my sister about this and I also mentioned the Immaculate Heart prayer card, I realized that the word "Immaculate" can also mean incorrupt.

I realized that three of the cards that I had chosen were cards relating to the Immaculate, and I had seen a great sign of the Immaculate Conception.

Thank you.~L.T.

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