

A PUBLICATION OF  The Miraculous Medal Shrine

THE MESSAGE

FALL 2022 | ISSUE 8 | MIRACULOUSMEDAL.ORG

GENERATIONS devoted to

Mary

PAGE 18



A Cultural Connection

MEET MARY BOYLE.

As president of the Philadelphia chapter of the Donegal Association, Mary made it her personal crusade to re-ignite the group's connection with The Miraculous Medal Shrine through a donation to St. Vincent's Rosary Walk, specifically Our Lady of Knock Shrine and Grotto.

"The Donegal Association has several focuses, one of them being the preservation of its Irish cultural heritage and another is charitable outreach," remarked Mary during a recent interview. "Convincing my fellow Irish members to donate [to the Shrine's Knock Shrine and Grotto] was enthusiastically received as a tangible reassurance of their Irish ethnicity and connection with the local community."



To read Mary's story, visit MiraculousMedal.org/MaryBoyle



SCAN ME TO
LEARN MORE



Photo by Alex Gross



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, a ministry of the Priests and Brothers of the Vincentians of the Eastern Province, Congregation of the Mission.

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READ MORE ONLINE
Follow the web references and QR codes 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 Vincentians of the Eastern Province ministries. Contact tshea@cammonline.org or follow us on social media.

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FACES | TAMMY SHERRILL

“Faces” highlights individuals whose devotion to Mary is truly inspiring.

Within 24 hours, Tammy Sherrill’s life imploded. Totally unprepared for what happened, she needed a miracle.

Tammy’s story began like any other day. She got up, readied her children for school, and then proceeded to work as a security guard at The Miraculous Medal Shrine. On this particular day, the Shrine was busy, so when her personal cell phone rang, she immediately sent it to voice mail. Not expecting anything urgent, she waited for a break to listen to the message. What happened next took her totally off guard.

“[My son] was upset because he came home to find our house door locked,” recalls Tammy. Her landlord had abruptly and dishonestly changed the house door’s lock over a rental dispute. Tammy had been making efforts to avoid conflict and resolve the situation, but unfortunately, the landlord took matters into his own hands.

Everything they owned, except the clothes on their backs, was in the house. With neither possessions nor a place to go, Tammy and her family were desperate. Fortunately, family members gave them temporary accommodations, but she knew she needed a more permanent solution—and fast.

“Finding a place to rent is not something that happens quickly,” attests Tammy. Background checks, availability, and cost all factor into the time-consuming process.

Tammy is a spunky, intelligent, and friendly woman, who faces challenges head on. But the combination of uncertainty and anxiety started to weigh heavily upon her. Her family depended on her, and she could not disappoint them.

Looking back, Tammy realizes working at the Shrine was the answer to her prayers. A colleague, whose devotion to Mary’s intercession through the Miraculous Medal helped her through difficult situations, told her about the wonders of prayer and the power of the Miraculous Medal. Hearing her friend’s testament of hope, Tammy developed a profound connection with the Miraculous Medal and remembers thinking, “Oh wow, that sounds like the answer to my problems.”

She began praying at the Shrine and twenty days after the incident, Tammy and her family found a home and security.

“The Miraculous Medal, the Blessed Mother, St. Catherine, and Jesus were there for us,” Tammy professes, “...it was really miraculous.”

Tammy shares her story with Shrine visitors, who may need encouragement and comfort to help them through their difficulties.

“I tell my story when I see someone struggling, needing encouragement dealing with their own troubles,” explains Tammy. “I think about when I experienced a hard time, and how quickly my life turned around for the better through prayer and the power of the Miraculous Medal.”



Photo by Trish Shea



COMIC RELIEF

I wanted to let you know the residents [of Maria Regina Residence] love [Fr. Al Pehrsson's] comics and some even colored them. We had an idea to have the residents color in Father Al's drawings (see this issue's comic on page 15) and make an art show for all to enjoy. This includes Father Al's expressed permission naturally, and an invite for him to join us for the show and sleep over the night before via the hospitality of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

*Amy Morris
Maria Regina Residence
Brentwood, NY*

BACKPACK BLESSING

It was wonderful to read about the "Backpack Blessing" in the Spring issue. I had the unique opportunity of connecting with [your office] concerning this program over the winter months. We were successful in bringing the program to our Catholic School Board in May of this year. Thank goodness for Zoom!!!

The staff and students of Holy Name of Jesus Catholic School in Kingston Mills were so honoured and thrilled about the program. I witnessed the great reverence amongst the JK/SK students that morning when the program was live.

[The Beyond Sunday™ staff was] wonderful, and the school community [and] the school board are so thankful to the Shrine for helping to bring the Medal and Mary to our students.

I truly enjoy reading *The Message*. It brings back many memories of past years when my mother used to receive the magazine as a Promoter for the Medal. It has been a long time since I sat down and read such an inspiring magazine.

I look forward to hearing from you or your staff in the near future.

*Brian Evoy, Trustee
Kingston and the Frontenac Islands
Ontario, Canada*

Features



ORDINATION

On June 4, Fr. Walner Diaz, CM, was ordained a Vincentian Priest of the Eastern Province.



GENERATIONS

For many families, Marian devotion through the Miraculous Medal is a generational tradition.



A PHOTO ESSAY

It takes a village to continuously host the Monday Perpetual Novena at the Shrine.



A VOICE FOR MARY

A tragedy led Dr. Monica Montenero to a spiritual awakening.

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LET'S GET SOCIAL | #MARIANGARDEN





Members of our Miraculous Medal community created and shared photos of their Marian Gardens, which serve as the inspiration for our Marian Garden, part of St. Vincent's Rosary Walk. Learn more at www.MiraculousMedal.org/RosaryWalk



#MarianGarden



#MARIANGARDEN | LET'S GET SOCIAL

Post your photo on our social media platforms using the hashtag #MarianGarden

 @MiraculousMedalShrinePA
 @MiraculousMedal

 MarysMiraculousMedal
 @MiracMedlShrine



SCAN QR
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VISIT
WEBSITE



Rosary Walk Update

Construction and installation of St. Vincent's Rosary Walk is well underway. The path (which surrounds the inner prayer space, the Celtic Cross and brick work) has been laid, and Our Lady of Knock Shrine and Grotto will soon be placed. Megan Brogan, Vice President of Institutional Advancement, states, "The reality of everything coming together is exciting. We are anxious to see the final product and are so grateful for our wonderful supporters, who make the walk possible."



Sponsorship opportunities are still available. Contact Megan Brogan at mbrogan@cammonline.org



LA SALLE PRESIDENT'S INVESTITURE MASS HELD AT THE SHRINE

With The Miraculous Medal Shrine as a backdrop, La Salle University held its Inauguration Mass for its 30th president, Daniel J. Allen, PhD (pictured).

The Mass was celebrated on Thursday, October 27. Hundreds of invited guests, dignitaries, alumni, and current students, faculty, and staff packed the Shrine for the Mass.

Congratulations, Dr. Allen.



“Dr. Allen’s Investiture Mass at the Shrine is another example of how we are purposefully engaging with our surrounding community.”

FR. TIMOTHY LYONS, CM
DIRECTOR, THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL SHRINE

Photo courtesy of La Salle University

EWTN Program Focuses on Shrine's Art Museum

With more than 400 works of art, the Art Museum at The Miraculous Medal Shrine has one of the largest collections of Marian art in the country. Mary Jo Timlin-Hoag, CAMM CEO, sat down with reporter Colm Flynn of EWTN News In Depth to give a closer look into this stunning and diverse art collection devoted to Mary.



To watch the video, visit MiraculousMedal.org/ewtn-marianmuseum/

May Procession Features 1st Holy Communicants

Dozens of pilgrims gathered at the Shrine on May 9 to participate in the Shrine's annual May Procession and Novena honoring Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Fr. Timothy Lyons, CM, led devotees in singing *Immaculate Mary, Thy Praises We Sing*, praying five decades of the Rosary, and visiting religious statues throughout the Shrine grounds.

Among the faithful were seven- and eight-year-old First Holy Communicants from Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Philadelphia's Andorra section.

After reciting the Rosary, the First Holy Communicants processed into the Shrine with flowers and submitted intentions, placing them at the foot of Mary's Altar.

May is traditionally dedicated to honoring and seeking the intercession of Mary as the Mother of God and Mother of the Church. The Shrine has continuously hosted this popular devotional practice to honor the Queen of Heaven; to meditate on her love for Christ and His church; and to pray for her continual intercession.



To view a video of the highlights of the procession and see additional photos, visit MiraculousMedal.org/may-procession/





These stickers are only available for free onsite in our Gift Shop. Limit 2 per customer.



Summer Novena: Titles of Mary



The theme of this year's annual Summer Novena of Hope was "Mary in Radiant, Summer Splendor." For nine Mondays from June 6 to August 1, the Summer Novena Masses elevated the various titles of Mary through the celebration of Mass. Mary, Our Blessed Mother, is

known by myriad titles, which deepen our understanding of the how she empowers us to become a community of disciples fashioned in the image of Jesus.

Each week, a different Marian title was the focus of the homily and incorporated such

aspects of Mary as the mother and teacher of the spirit and Queen of Peace. Pictured above is Fr. Frank Sacks, CM (assisted by Deacon James Mahoney), an associate director of the Shrine, who spoke about "Mary as Our Mother of Unity."



Our Lady of Good Health Vailankanni

On Saturday, September 10, hundreds of devotees gathered at The Miraculous Medal Shrine to pay homage and pray to Our Lady of Good Health Vailankanni. The ceremony was done in collaboration with the Indian Catholic community and St. Thomas Syro Malabar Catholic Forane Church, Philadelphia. Adults and children of all ages processed, prayed, and sang as they paraded through the Shrine chapel donning colorful and elaborate cultural attire.

The actual Feast of Our Lady of Good Health is celebrated on September 8. Devotion to Our Lady of Good Health Vailankanni originated in the mid-16th century when three separate miracles occurred. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the celebration of Vailankanni at the Shrine.



eleven

Number of trees being planted on the Rosary Walk grounds

13

Number of images in the Knock Grotto mosaic consisting of
7 peasants
2 saints
2 angels
1 Mary
1 Lamb of God



450+

 Number of bricks lining the path

225,000

number of tiles used in Grotto mosaic



1,350 lbs.

Weight of Our Lady of Knock marble, carved statue, the centerpiece of the Rosary Walk

600 lbs.

Weight of Knock statue base

Meet Lynda D'Angelo



This fall, Lynda D'Angelo joined the Beyond Sunday™ team as the new Director of Program Development and Events. Lynda has had a longtime relationship with The Miraculous Medal Shrine, a passion she shares with her four children.

With 16 years experience in Catholic education and professional development, Lynda previously served as a volunteer outreach ambassador for the Shrine's pilgrimage program, an important aspect of her devotion.

Her energy, background, and enthusiasm are obvious and contagious. "[My experience] has led me to my dream job [with the Beyond Sunday™ program] for developing, teaching, catechizing, and sharing my devotion to the Blessed Mother and the Miraculous Medal," says Lynda.

In her new role, Lynda coordinates and facilitates the Backpack Blessing initiative, school spiritual programs, sacramental retreats, and educator/teacher workshops.

"I'm excited for the upcoming workshops, retreats, and spiritual programs, which combine my devotion to Mary, my passion for teaching, developing educational resources, and my desire to best support the vision of the Beyond Sunday™ program," states Lynda.



To contact Lynda about our Beyond Sunday™ program, email ldangelo@cammonline.org

Program Expands into the Great White North

This article is courtesy of the Algonquin & Lakeshore C.D.S.B. Communications Office

In May 2022, the Shrine's Beyond Sunday™ program brought Mary's message of the Miraculous Medal to the staff and students at Holy Name Catholic School in Kingston Mills, Ontario. This event was in conjunction with several activities being recognized in the month of May, dedicated to Mary. Reaching this community in the north was made possible by hosting the event virtually via Zoom.

Fr. Wes Chochrek, parish priest at Holy Name of Jesus, Kingston Mills, bestowed a blessing and the investiture of the medals to the school community. A Beyond Sunday™ representative also gave a greeting and introduction to the event. During the Zoom call, each staff member and student in the

Kindergarten-to-Grade 8 school received a blessing and a Miraculous Medal. Miraculous Medals, such as the one shown, were also distributed to the staff and faculty.

"Everything was perfect!" says Katie Williamson, principal of Holy Name Catholic School. "We were so happy with the experience, as it was engaging and very kid-friendly for a Kindergarten to Grade 8 audience."

The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board serves approximately 12,000 students, employs more than 1,400 full-time equivalent staff, and covers a geographical area of more than 16,000-square kilometers in eastern Ontario.



St. Benedict Pilgrimage

The summer months provide a great opportunity for families, friends, and tour groups to venture to spiritual destinations, such as religious shrines. Just ask the fifty-two parishioners from the Church of St. Benedict, Bronx, New York (pictured), who enjoyed a day trip to the Philadelphia landmark this past June. During their visit, the group attended a perpetual Novena and Mass; listened to the pilgrimage director recount Miraculous Medal and Shrine stories; and visited the faith-based Gift Shop stocked with devotional items.



Contact Paulette Mican (pmican@cammonline.org) to book a tour or pilgrimage.





Check out all programs at miraculousmedal.org/BeyondSunday

Backpack Blessings and School Retreats

Every third Thursday of the month, Beyond Sunday™ team members are available to visit or host Catholic schools to distribute Miraculous Medals, tell the story of the Miraculous Medal, and provide blessings for students, staff, and faculty.

Upper-class students from the Cardinal Foley Regional School (pictured top right) in Havertown, Pennsylvania, participated in a student retreat the end of the last school year. The day included a tailored program filled with fun and interactive activities to engage and deepen their relationship with the Church and teachings of Christ. They also had the opportunity to tour the Shrine and visit the Shrine's Art Museum.



Photo by Helm Creative Studio

More than 300 students at St. Patrick's School in Malvern, Pennsylvania (pictured bottom right), welcomed Beyond Sunday™ program director Lynda D'Angelo, Fr. Michael Shea, CM (pictured), and Deacon James Mahoney for a presentation on the Miraculous Medal.

The presenters used posters to illustrate the apparitions experienced by St. Catherine Labouré when the Blessed Mother appeared to her and charged her with spreading devotion and intercession through the Miraculous Medal. Each student received blessed Miraculous Medal keychains for their backpacks, prayer cards, and the Miraculous Medal symbolism paper to share with their parents. Fr. Shea and Deacon Mahoney spoke to the students about Mary's love and the power of the Miraculous Medal.



BEYOND SUNDAY

ORDINATION | VOCATIONS

Fr. Walner Diaz, CM

On Saturday, June 4, a procession of Vincentian Priests and Brothers entered The Miraculous Medal Shrine for the priestly ordination of transitional deacon Walner Diaz, CM. The Most Reverend Alfonso Cabezas, CM, Bishop Emeritus of Villavicencio, Colombia, presided over the ceremony. Fr. Diaz presented himself for ordination before a church full of confreres, family members, friends, and laity from Philadelphia, Long Island, and North Carolina.

There were several poignant moments throughout the ceremony. Fr. Diaz's sister wiped away tears of love from her eyes as her younger brother lay prostrate before the Lord during the Litany of Saints. Everyone's heart filled with joy as Fr. Diaz said the words of consecration and prayed the Eucharistic Prayer for the first time.

For Fr. Diaz, it was the culmination of a ten-year journey of discernment, faith, hard work, and trust in God. His first assignment is to serve at Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, Charlotte, North Carolina.



LEARN MORE:
vocations@stjohns.edu



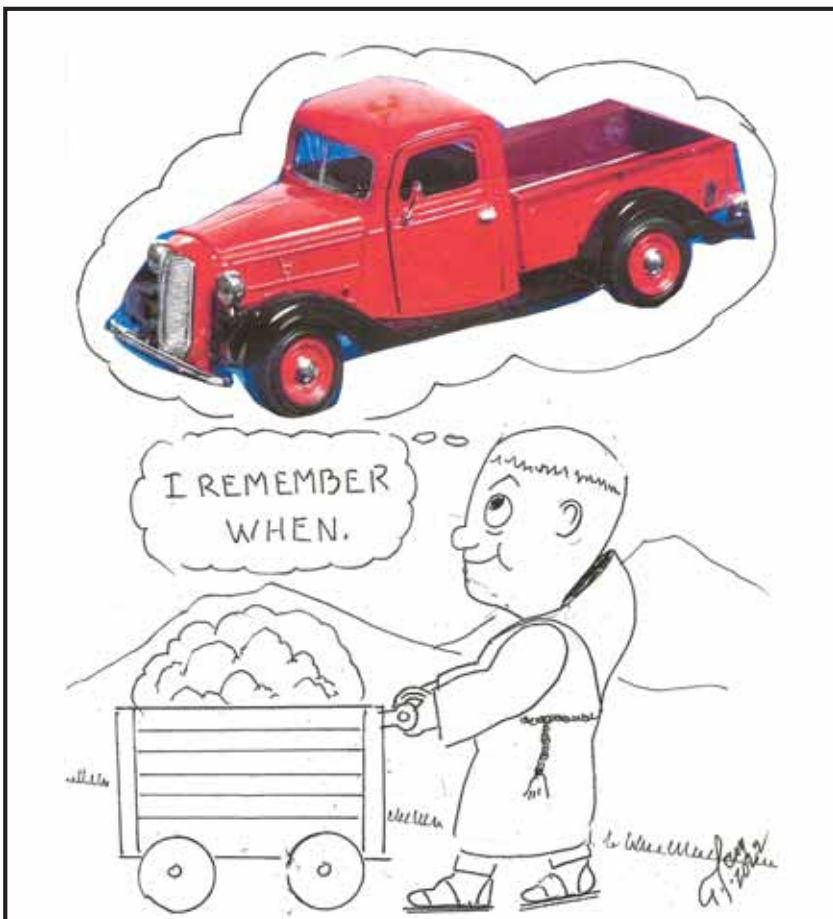
Photo courtesy of Fr. Luis Romero, CM

INVOLVING LAITY IN VOCATION PROMOTION

Fr. Luis Romero, CM, vocation director for the Vincentians of the Eastern Province (pictured center), is exploring new and creative ways to promote the order's vocations by inviting the laity to be part of *Pastoral Vocacional Vicentina*. The group meets monthly for formation, prayer, experiences sharing within the ministry, and activities planning for vocation awareness. Currently, the volunteers are in Montauk, Bridgehampton, East Hampton, Southampton, Hampton Bays, and Riverhead.

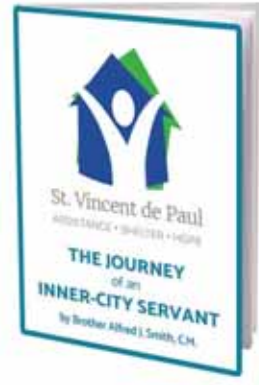
HOLY HUMOR

by Fr. Al Pehrsson, CM, a resident of St. Catherine's Infirmary, Phila., PA



NEW BOOK HIGHLIGHTS VINCENTIAN BROTHER

While attending Mass as a young man on the feast day of the Immaculate Conception, Br. Alfred J. Smith, CM, had an epiphany that changed his life forever. In his memoir, *The Journey of an Inner-City Servant*, he shares what is the beginning of his 65-year journey as a faith-filled Vincentian Brother working with communities in the inner-city. He hopes this book will be used to encourage vocations to becoming a Vincentian brother.



FR. ROONEY ENGAGES LAITY IN NEW ROLE

As the new Executive Vice President for Mission at St. John's University, Fr. Aidan R. Rooney, CM, returns to his alma mater to work with students, faculty, staff, and administrators in becoming more engaged with the Vincentian mission. Fr. Rooney has been a Vincentian Priest for more than 40 years, serving the community's Eastern Province in a variety of global roles.

VINCENTIAN ANNIVERSARIES

- Fr. Daniel Kramer, CM, 65 years
- Br. Martin Schneider, CM, 60 years
- Fr. Frank Sacks, CM, 55 years
- Fr. Bill O'Brien, CM, 55 years
- Fr. Joe Levesque, CM, 55 years
- Fr. Tom Sendlein, CM, 50 years
- Fr. Dave O'Connell, CM, 40 years
- Fr. John Carney, CM, 40 years
- Fr. John Prager, CM, 40 years
- Fr. Bruce Krause, CM, 40 years
- Fr. Steve Cantwell, CM, 40 years
- Fr. Orlando Cardona, CM, 25 years

IN MEMORIAM

Fr. Juan Chavarria, CM
 August 31

EDUCATION

Niagara University Launches Campaign



Niagara University proudly announces the public launch of the largest and most impactful philanthropic campaign in its 166-year history. “Powering Transformation: The Campaign for Niagara University,” seeks to raise \$125 million by December 2023.

The campaign is focused on providing critical academic, capital, and programmatic resources Niagara students need, while elevating the university’s commitment to advancing social change through higher education.

The campaign has six priority areas:

- Elevating academic excellence and

reputation through student-centered, collaborative, experiential, and integrative approaches to learning in preparation for 21st century careers

- Cultivating a culture that fosters excellence in all our experiences, including development of the campus, support services, and technologies
- Advancing impactful collaborations that focus on mission and civic engagement to benefit the Greater Niagara region and Niagara University
- Enhancing a diverse, inclusive, values-based learning environment designed to graduate global citizens and promote civil discourse
- Expanding Niagara University as the premier bi-national university within the Province of Ontario, Canada, through mission-based academic programs, improved branding, and the establishment of an Ontario campus
- Diversifying revenue generation and improving fiscal sustainability

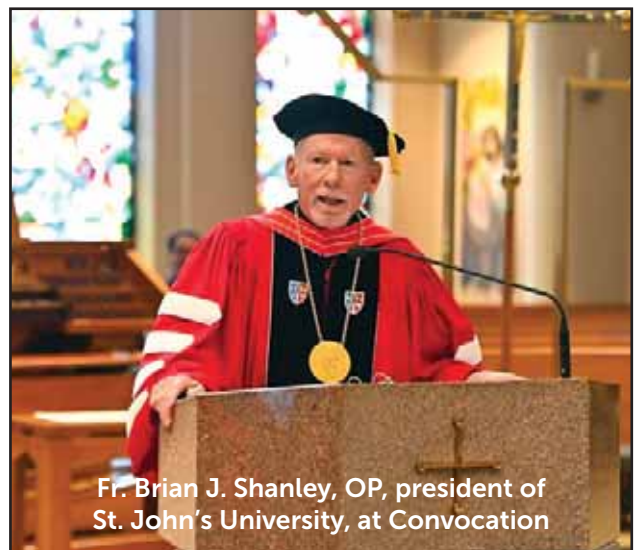
Graphic courtesy of Niagara University

Annual Vincentian Convocation Celebrates Lives and Legacies of Healers

This year’s annual Vincentian Convocation at St. John’s University, “Be Vincentian: Be a Healer,” paid special tribute to the late Paul Farmer, MD, PhD, who spent a lifetime improving conditions on a global level for the most impoverished populations. Dr. Farmer founded Partners In Health (PIH), an organization devoted to bringing the benefits of modern medical science to those most in need.

When acknowledging the life and legacy of Dr. Farmer, presenters noted how both he and St. Vincent were pragmatic innovators, who saw problems and addressed them directly, creating new models in ministry and the delivery of health care in settings of dire poverty. They both made sure that the care they delivered was more humane and more effective than what came before.

Held on September 22, the convocation is a special time at St. John’s as the university community honors the life and legacy of St. Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Congregation of the Mission, culminating in his feast day on September 27.



Fr. Brian J. Shanley, OP, president of St. John’s University, at Convocation

Photo courtesy of St. John’s University

PARISH MINISTRIES

Taking it to the Streets



Photos by Liz Hathaway

The congregations of St. Vincent de Paul Parish and Faith Chapel Church in Philadelphia took their faith to the streets for the “Faith Communities of Germantown Against Violence” Prayer Walk. Fr. Sylvester Peterka, CM, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, said this prayer walk is more important now more than ever, after a devastating surge in violence on the city’s streets.

Participants in the prayer walk carried signs denouncing violence as they peacefully walked, sang, and gave testimony at predetermined locations in the Germantown section where violence occurs.

“We need help,” says Fr. Sy. “In our city last year, more than 565 lives were taken by violence. Violence is never the answer. We must let people know God has the answer and it is love.”

Vincentian Ministry Since 1910

On Divine Mercy Sunday (April 24, 2022), the Vincentian Priests in East Central Alabama celebrated their final Sunday Mass with parishioners of St. Mary of the Mission Parish (pictured). The pastor, Fr. Vince Finnerty, CM, was the main celebrant of the bilingual liturgy, which is indicative of how the parish has changed over recent decades.

At the conclusion of the liturgy, the Spanish-speaking prayer group presented Fr. Finnerty with a plaque expressing their gratitude for his leadership and spirituality.

The event was a bittersweet moment for the parish. The history of Vincentian leadership dates back to 1910 when the Vincentians arrived in the area. The book, *Centennial Celebration of the Vincentian Mission of East Central Alabama, 1910-2010*, written by Fr. Vince O’Malley, CM, tells the story of the arrival of the priests.

As noted in the book: “Since 1910, 113 confreres have served in the Alabama missions.”



Photo courtesy of St. Mary of the Mission Parish

*All
Generations
will come to me
Blessed.*





GENERATIONS DEVOTED TO *Mary*

GENERATIONAL DEVOTION, SUCH AS THAT SHARED BY FAMILY MEMBERS DEVOTED TO MARY, acts like a chain that links together a community throughout time. It gives families a sense of who they are and how to approach life.

Assunta Cerrato Romero was a girl of just 6 or 7 when she donned a ceremonial white gown and led her schoolmates in a procession through the streets of their Philadelphia neighborhood. The vibrant flowers of early spring lined their route as they processed praying the Holy Rosary.

Assunta had been chosen as the May Queen for The Miraculous Medal Shrine's annual May Procession. Today, that celebration of the Blessed Mother is among her earliest childhood memories of the Shrine. But, it is only one among many.

For Assunta, the Shrine has always been a second home. It is where her grandparents brought her parents, where her parents brought her, and where she brings her own school-age son to experience first-hand the beauty, grace, and solemnity of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

"From those early days, I've always had a strong devotion to Our Lady," explains Assunta. "I knew [the Shrine] was a sacred place, a safe place, a place to come to pray and be close to Our Lady and get closer to her son, Jesus."

Like Assunta, Marylou Tammaro inherited a devotion to The Miraculous Medal Shrine from her parents. Although she was raised in a different part of the city, Marylou remembers how her mother, Mary Quinn, loved to share stories about growing up in Immaculate Conception Parish and attending the parish school on the Shrine grounds. Mary often told of the special bond she developed with one of the Vincentian priests at the Shrine, Fr. Bogart. As a teenager, Marylou began to accompany her mom on frequent pilgrimages to the foot of Mary's altar.

▶ Pictured are two generations of the Cerrato family, loyal Shrine visitors and Marian devotees.

For many devotees, the perpetuation of family bonds...



...has always been paramount to their engagement with the Shrine.

Pictured are photos of Mary Quinn at various times in her life.

“That’s when I became aware of the Shrine, when I started going to the novenas with my mother,” recalls Marylou. “It was absolutely beautiful, very moving. As a teenager, you’re not necessarily into all of that, but having grown up with my mom, who had a great devotion to the Blessed Mother, she passed that on to me.”

It’s a devotion that Marylou then passed down to her own adult daughter, Christine McCauley, who—as fate would have it—has become a near-constant presence at the Shrine as an employee in the administrative office of the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal.

Throughout the 95-year history of The Miraculous Medal Shrine in Philadelphia’s Germantown section, and the 147-year history of the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception that houses the Shrine, there are countless examples of the type of multi-generational devotion exemplified by the Cerrato-Romero and Quinn-Tammario families.

Envisioned and constructed by members of the Congregation of the Mission, more commonly known as the Vincentians of the Eastern Province, the Shrine is visited by tens of thousands of pilgrims from across the United States and around the world every year. They come to experience the beautiful Romanesque architecture and the inspiring Marian works of art. They come to breathe the glorified air and to heed Our Lady’s message to St. Catherine Labouré in 1830, to come to the foot of her altar and ask for her graces.

For many of the faithful, their visits to the Shrine also fulfill and perpetuate family legacies. It is their way of thanking their ancestors for an invaluable and timeless gift.

“Actually, my grandparents were married here and my parents, of course, came here to the Shrine and brought us here,” says Assunta, who currently lives in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, “and my parents continue to come here for services, as well.”

“(Our family) had a great devotion to Our Lady because of what she has done, all the miracles she has worked,” adds Assunta’s father, Samuel Cerrato Jr., 92. “That’s really what draws (us) here. I’ve been coming since I was a teenager, and I just believe the Blessed Mother is going to take care of us. ... We were taught we had to go to church every Sunday and to be good Catholics, the best you could be. In those days, times were tough. We started coming here as kids and believed that coming here was going to help us.”

Assunta’s faith in the Blessed Mother sustains her perpetually and has uplifted her during the darkest moments of her life. Three times, her sister has been diagnosed with cancer, but has recovered each time.

“The first time she was diagnosed, we came here as a family and prayed and asked Our Lady for her intercession,” recalls Assunta. “And my sister was healed. Subsequent times when she was re-diagnosed, we continued to come here and pray. ... And, as Our Lady promised, ‘I give you my graces,’ my sister is strong now and recovering and healthy.”



“
I knew this was a sacred
place, a safe place, a place to
come to pray and be close to
Our Lady and get closer to her
son, Jesus.”

”
ASSUNTA CERRATO
ROMERO

Photo by Alex Gross

Assunta Cerrato Romero and her son faithfully visit the Shrine for prayer, services and quiet time.

Similarly, Assunta sought Mary’s help with her own health scare several years ago when she suffered what was initially diagnosed as a stroke. As she was being rushed to the hospital, her first reaction was denial. Eventually, she accepted her dilemma and began to pray to the Blessed Mother.

“Once I got to the hospital, I was perfectly fine,” she says. “The physicians there didn’t believe that I had a stroke, but the medical team confirmed it. (They said,) ‘Oh yes, she had a stroke.’ I attribute that miraculous healing to Our Lady.”

Marylou believes that Our Lady sometimes bestows her blessings not through miracles that seem to produce instantaneous tangible outcomes, but rather through gentle—yet profound—revelations for those who seek her graces. In 2009, when the Bensalem, Pennsylvania, resident was diagnosed with breast cancer, she prayed to the Blessed Mother not for healing, but merely for a sign that she would be ok.


Soon after, she was sorting through some of her deceased mother’s possessions and found an empty box with something rattling around inside of it. Rather than dispose of the nondescript box, she opened it and found a tiny Miraculous Medal. A couple weeks later, she retrieved her mail to find a parcel from a friend, who had visited The Miraculous Medal Shrine and gifted her a second medal.

The very next day, Marylou and her husband attended Mass at their home parish, where they usually sit in the same section of the church every week. But on this Sunday, they inexplicably found their way to a different pew. As Marylou knelt to pray, she found an object in the missal rack in front of her.

“Surprisingly, there was a Miraculous Medal attached to a little booklet of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary,” she recalls. “To me, that was three times in a row that the Blessed Mother was reaching out to me. . . . The Blessed Mother was trying to tell me, ‘Hey, I got you. This is going to be ok.’”

Indeed, the promise of the Blessed Mother’s intercession with the Lord, even the anticipation of miracles, has inspired adoration of her Miraculous Medal for centuries and visits to The Miraculous Medal Shrine for generations. Yet for many devotees, the perpetuation of family bonds has always been paramount to their engagement with the Shrine.

“Receiving the sacraments in this place—because it’s been such an important part of my life since childhood—is really a privilege and an honor,” Assunta says. “My faith has grown because I have had the opportunity to come to this very special place.

“What I try to impart upon my young son is to explain to him that Our Lady and Our Lord, no matter what trials we have in life, will always be there for him. I bring him to the Shrine so, like myself, he can have a relationship with Our Lady and with Our Lord.” 

Monday Perpetual Novena & Mass

A PHOTO ESSAY

For more than 90 years, The Miraculous Medal Shrine has upheld a tradition of perpetually praying the Novena and celebrating Mass several times during Monday services. Through good times and bad, pandemics, severe weather, and other unexpected circumstances, the Shrine has maintained the tradition of praying the Novena uninterrupted every Monday.

Follow us through this photo essay to get an inside glimpse into the events of the day, and what it takes to remain unbroken and faithful to Mary's Miraculous Medal Novena.

7:45 a.m.



SETTING UP

Sr. Michelle Nyugen, DC, the Shrine sacristan, prepares the altar for the Masses.



8:30 a.m.

COME TOGETHER

People begin coming into the Shrine to reflect, go to confession, or quietly meditate before the Novena and Mass begin.



8:15 a.m.

TEAM EFFORT

Fr. Timothy V. Lyons, CM, Director of the Shrine (right), reviews the readings and announcements for Fr. Abel Osario, CM (left). Paulette Mican, Shrine staff member, assists with preparations, while Cantor Paul Robinson gets ready to lead the congregation in song.



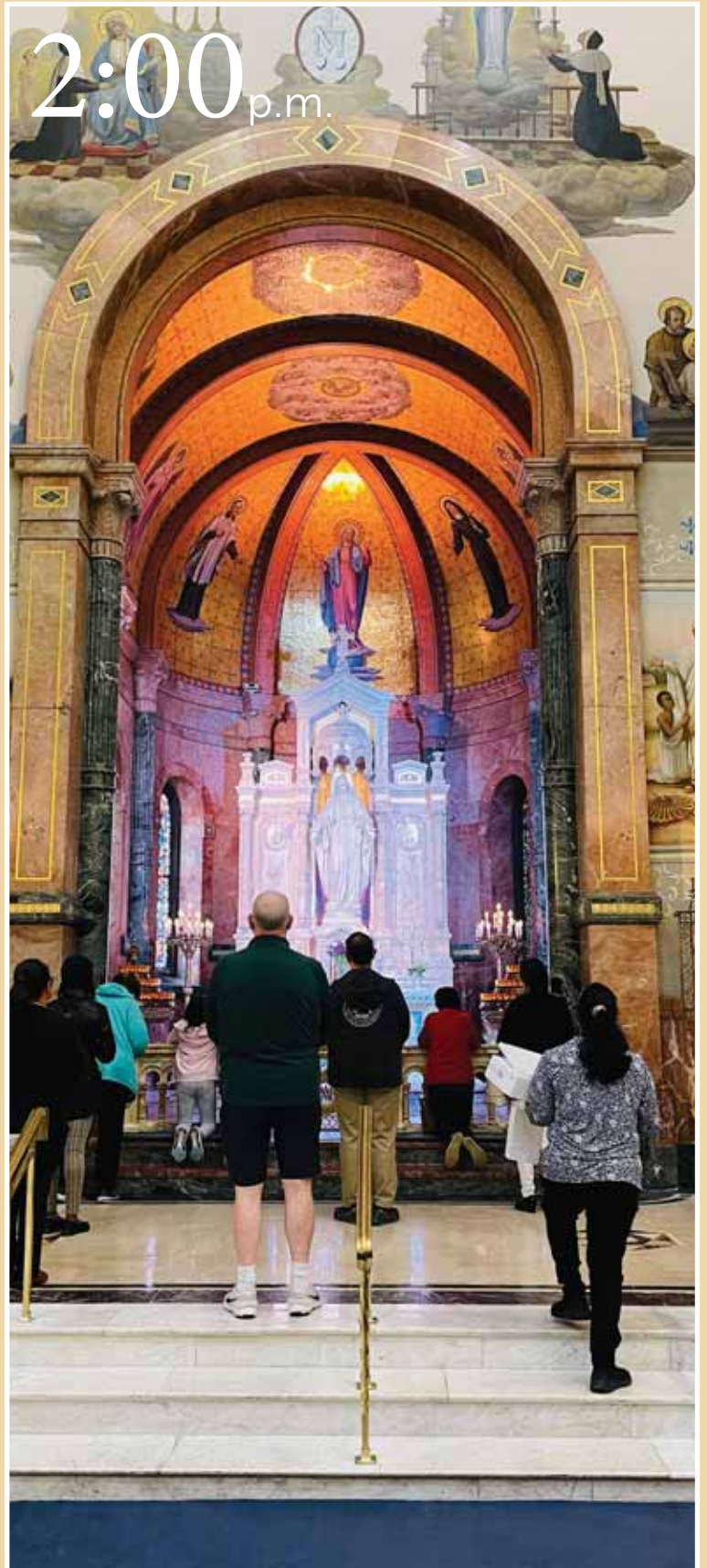
12:30 p.m.

LIGHTING A CANDLE

Throughout the Shrine, sacred locations are open for quiet reflection, prayer, and lighting a candle.



2:15 p.m.



2:00 p.m.

PRAYER & REFLECTION

Devotees flock to Mary's Altar (main Shrine above) and Our Lady of Vailankanni (left).



1:00 p.m.

GIFT SHOP

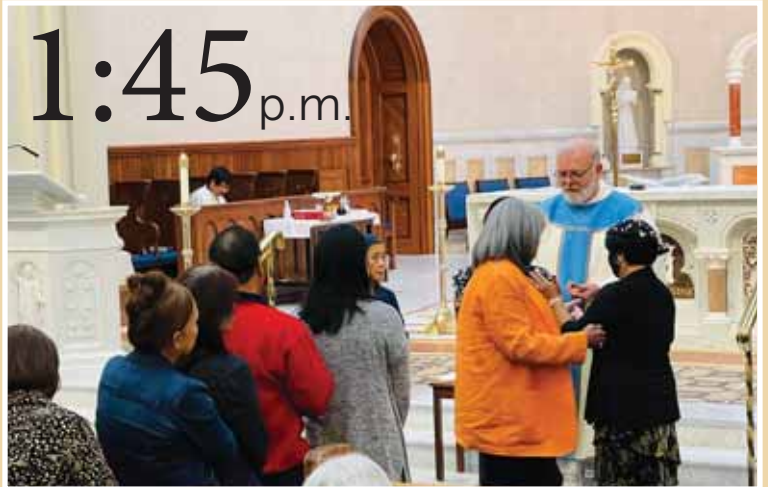
Debbie Pestella (left) and Amanda Clarke eagerly assist visitors with religious items for purchase in the Shrine's Gift Shop.

12:45 p.m.



LIVESTREAM

Ashlee Hollis of Helm Creative Studio orchestrates the livestream broadcast.



1:45 p.m.

HEALING BLESSING

Healing blessings are administered throughout the day the last Monday of every month.

NOVENA & MASS

Three sets of services take place every Monday.

9:00 a.m. **12:05** p.m. **6:30** p.m.



A Voice for Mary



Photos courtesy of Dr. Monica Montenero



THE DEPTH OF A TRAGEDY, THE STRENGTH OF HER COURAGE, AND THE POWER OF SURVIVAL led Dr. Monica Montenero to a transformative, spiritual awakening to the message of the Miraculous Medal.

Healing the sick has always been a mission and avocation for Dr. Monica Montenero.

Born and raised in Rome, the daughter and granddaughter of physicians, Dr. Montenero served much of her career as an anatomical pathologist traversing the globe to recover body tissue from deceased donors to save the lives of cancer patients, burn victims, and others in critical need.

Similarly, commitment to the Catholic faith has been a longstanding tradition in her family, so much so that she initially aspired to become a nun as she completed her secondary education in a religious boarding school.

But it wasn't until she was forced to endure a harrowing home invasion many years later that Dr. Montenero fully embraced her personal relationship with the Lord through the intercession of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. Today, in continuation of her life's work, she dedicates herself to the spiritual healing of others through the Blessed Mother's uplifting message to St. Catherine Labouré.

Dr. Montenero enthusiastically traces the genesis of her spiritual epiphany to a terrifying night in Rome in 2010. Although she was living in the United States at the time, she had traveled to her native city on a medical assignment.

"I was sleeping in my mother's home, and I always sleep with a window open," recalls

Dr. Montenero, "and in the middle of the night somebody came and tried to kill me. I was the victim of this terrible crime. ...I was physically attacked and full of blood."

Dr. Montenero suffered injuries throughout her body, including severe neck trauma, and the complete loss of her ability to speak. A series of surgeries and intense therapy helped her to eventually return to work. But after two years, she chose to retire and move to Madrid to be near her newly married son, Raffaele, and his wife, Macarena.

It was there that she attended daily services at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish Church, and where her devotion to Our Lady began to flourish.

“

...I want to use my voice as much as I can to just spread the word, to tell all the people that [Mary] is the person to dedicate your life [to].

”

DR. MONICA MONTENERO

Yet, tragedy struck again in 2018. While visiting a resort in the Italian Alps with her son and daughter-in-law to celebrate her 65th birthday, a wayward snowboarder struck Dr. Montenero resulting in severe injuries. Months of recovery followed, during which a volunteer from her home parish brought a miniature Miraculous Medal shrine to her bedside for continual prayer and devotion to Our Lady.


"I told [Mary], 'I'm going to stay like I am, and I don't mind,'" recalls Dr. Montenero. She adds, "I just implored Mary to please

help my son and daughter-in-law to have a baby, because they were having difficulty conceiving."

Within a year, Dr. Montenero experienced Mary's love and miraculously regained her ability to speak.

"I really love to sing when I'm in church, even though I don't have a great voice," she says. "Now it's great because I can sing in church. Like St. Augustine said, 'When you sing in church, you pray twice.'" Not long after that, Macarena delivered a baby girl they named Costanza. Eventually, the young couple had another child, a son, Filippo.

When her son and daughter-in-law relocated to the United States, Dr. Montenero joined them and discovered The Miraculous Medal Shrine in Philadelphia. Witnessing the Shrine firsthand has inspired her to start a visitation program in her new home parish in New York City, where volunteers bring a miniature Shrine to the home-bound faithful.

"It is really beautiful to be able to speak. It is really beautiful," admits Dr. Montenero. "Now I want to use my voice as much as I can to just spread the word, to tell all the people that [Mary] is the person to dedicate your life to, because she is listening to you and brings all your needs to God." 

◀ Dr. Monica Montenero (far right) is pictured with her son, Raffaele, his wife, Macarena, and their children, Costanza and Filippo.

OUR LADY OF STONO RIVER: THE LEGACY OF THE KONGOLESE FREEDOM FIGHTERS LIVES ON TODAY

The Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated by Catholics on September 8. While not as well-known and celebrated, this next day marks one of the earliest anti-slavery movements orchestrated by Black Catholics.

Thirty-six years before Patrick Henry's famous 1775 call to rebellion—"Give me liberty, or give me death!"—a group of Black Catholics proclaimed the same message, chanting "Liberty!" on a journey to their death.

The Stono River Rebellion began on September 9, 1739, and is relatively unknown despite it being the largest uprising of enslaved people in the British colony of South Carolina. Some historians call it the most important revolt in North

American history. What exactly triggered the Stono River Rebellion is unclear.

As legend goes, many enslaved Blacks heard that small bands of runaways had made their way to Florida, where they had been given freedom and land.

The rebellion began close to the Stono River near Charleston, South Carolina. The date of the rebellion was significant to the people, who were Catholics from the Kingdom of Kongo (now Congo) and devoted to Mary. It's conventional wisdom that Blacks from Africa, who were enslaved and then shipped to America, eventually converted to Catholicism upon their arrival. However, there was a significant number who were Catholic before coming to America.

In their native country, September 8 was a day of devotion and fasting in honor of Mary for the Kongolese in Kongo and the British colonies. Known as their "national protector," Mary was especially invoked

during times of tragedy and conflict. In 1739, the Kongolese in South Carolina celebrated September 8 as a day of prayer and fasting, as they did in their homeland. Twenty-four hours later, the Stono River Rebellion took place in which the group invoked the Blessed Virgin Mary as their protector for liberty in the Americas.

The Kongolese Freedom Fighters, as they were known, raided a firearms shop and took ammunition. They headed south flying flags of the Marian color, blue. The group was hoping to reach St. Augustine, Florida—about 150 miles away—where fugitives were offered freedom in exchange for converting to Catholicism and serving in the colonial militia. Unfortunately, colonists killed about 30 of the Freedom Fighters, who were en route to Florida. Some escaped, but most were captured and immediately executed or sold to other markets in the West Indies. After the rebellion, harsher laws were enacted for fear of future rebellions. The slaves were no longer allowed to grow their own food, assemble in groups, earn money, or learn to read.

American Catholics today honor the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the anniversary of the Stono River Rebellion not to glorify the violence of the era but to harness the power of a faith and devotion to *Mamanzambi*, "Mother of God," which spans continents.

Pictured is "Our Lady of Stono River," a mural created for St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Philadelphia. It depicts the Black Madonna and Child, surrounded by Black Saints, who played a prominent role in Black Catholic history.



Photo courtesy of St. Vincent de Paul Parish

DID YOU KNOW ?

As a young girl, St. Louise de Marillac applied unsuccessfully to become a religious and ended up marrying at 21 only to be widowed at 34. She ended up co-founding the Daughters of Charity with St. Vincent de Paul.



Photo courtesy of Ducournau Archives

BENVENUTO!

In 1875, the Vincentians founded the parish of the Immaculate Conception (now The Miraculous Medal Shrine), which served predominantly Irish immigrants. Later, Italian immigrants arrived in Germantown seeking work, homes, and a place to worship for their families. The Vincentians of the

Eastern Province came to their aid, renovating the basement of the Immaculate Conception Chapel and offering it to the community for their use. They served the Italian community for more than a decade and eventually helped them establish their own parish, Holy Rosary.

SACRED HAT

This year, the Vincentian gathering of the General Assembly in Rome showcased a unique collection for those assembled. The artifacts, displayed in the assembly’s adoration chapel, included a rarely seen relic of St. Vincent de Paul—his hat (pictured). Legend tells of how St. Vincent’s followers (or confreres as they are commonly known) carefully gathered and preserved his clothing and other items. Among one of the more interesting artifacts is St. Vincent’s hat, which he wore in his later years. As Fr. Stephen Grozio, CM, Provincial of the Vincentians of the Eastern Province, who attended the event, explains, “For me, it was a symbol of his missionary spirit, going out to the poor.”



Send your Miraculous Medal story by email (communications@cammonline.org), via a comment on Facebook (facebook.com/miraculousmedalshrinepa), or mail to CAMM, 475 East Cheltenham Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19144.

RECOVERY FROM COMA

Ed was in a coma for three weeks. After he woke up from the coma, the doctors at the hospital removed a large growth from his larynx. They later performed a tracheotomy and inserted the latest trach, which they miraculously had on hand. The doctors were amazed how quickly Ed recovered, and he even survived an infection, since most people did not. What surprised the doctors even more was that Ed could talk.

Ed's mother and I drove up to Pennsylvania to see him. When we got there, the doctors had already released him from the hospital, and he was home.

Bea, his mother, and I stayed with Ed in his home for more than a month. During our third week, one of his many doctors removed the trach. His throat had healed and wonder of wonders, he was able to speak.

We are pleased with all this and know our prayers were answered. We prayed very hard to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee," maybe a thousand times. Prayers are answered. Thanks for all your prayers.

PROTECTED DURING ROBBERY

I began to wear the Miraculous Medal and am grateful for it. I was attending a movie with my mom in Durham, North Carolina, when we were robbed at gunpoint by five gunmen involved in gang activity. I know Mary helped to save our lives. They stole my purse with prayer books, but my wallet was turned in by a Good Samaritan. I know that the Miraculous Medal is a sign of God's protection and Mary's care. I know the medal represents their love, and that is why I wear the Medal as a reminder of their protection. I praise God for Mary's grace for helping us in this situation. I survived that horrendous ordeal without a scratch, and Our Lady saved my mom, who is precious to me. Praise God and Hail Mary full of grace.

MARY HEARS OUR PRAYERS

Last summer, a member of my extended family suffered an acute stroke. She was rushed to the ER, and her family was told she would not live more than a few hours due to massive bleeding in her brain. She is a young woman with four children and a devoted Catholic, not to mention a wonderful, warm, and generous person. I was so distraught that this could happen to someone like her, that I prayed to the Blessed Mother to allow her to live and that if God needed someone from my family he could take me instead, since I was older with no children. Of course, I prayed just as hard that BOTH of us could be spared. As the days went on, this woman lingered on the brink of death. After a week or so, the doctors were amazed that she continued to survive. The weeks continued and eventually the doctors started seeing small signs of improvement, as I continued to pray to the Blessed Mother for her recovery. She has since been home for short visits and is in rehab re-learning how to talk, eat, drink, walk, etc....all of which she is now able to do, albeit in a limited way. A second, serious health issue also arose during this time. She has gotten through that and continues to recover from both. This is a profound miracle! It is undeniable proof that Mary continues to love and protect us and will hear our prayers if we are "standing" close enough to her.

NEVER HAPPIER

I wanted to say thank you to the Blessed Mother for answering my prayers. My son has not been a part of my family for three years. We were having a problem with his wife, so he decided he'd rather avoid us. I kept praying that he would find it in his heart to come back to his family before his father or I would die. I kept sending him a birthday card and never got a response. This year, I decided to send them both a card and invited them to Christmas dinner but still didn't get a response. I still kept on praying and hoping that I would hear from one of them. On February 2, I got a call from my daughter-in-law thanking me for their birthday cards.

We talked for a long time, and I also got to speak to my son as did my husband. I couldn't be happier; this is the best thing any mother or father could want. My heart was so broken. There wasn't a day that went by that I didn't think of my son and pray for his return. Thank you, Blessed Mother, from the bottom of my heart!

THANK YOU, MARY

Several years ago, I had an unfortunate meeting with a deer on a dark highway. I saw the deer, but it was too late to avoid a collision. In a split second, it was flying onto the windshield on that dark stretch of road. I ended up hitting the deer's rear quarters as he turned too late. He bounced off the side of my car and ran away from the road. I was shook up, but fortunately the car was still functioning as if nothing had happened. I was able to get back to town and under the streetlights I jumped out to check for damage. I was shocked to see no visible damage to the front of the car. I was dumbfounded! I began to pray out loud the instant I saw that I was going to hit the deer. I then thanked the Lord for my safety. When I went back to get in the car, I was astonished to see that my Miraculous Medal was lying in the front seat shining brightly. It must have somehow come out of my purse. I thanked Mary all the way home. When I told my mom what happened she didn't seem surprised. "I always have mine with me," she said.

OUR PRAYERS WERE ANSWERED

Two years ago, my grandson and his wife were blessed with a beautiful little daughter. They named her Isabella. Unfortunately, Isabella was born with a health problem. She had to have six hours of surgery to correct a bladder problem. During a follow-up scan on her bladder, she was diagnosed with stage four neuroblastoma cancer. In eight months, she had multiple surgeries and had undergone chemotherapy. Through it all she kept a smile on her face. Staff and patients at the children's hospital

PRAYERS | PROMOTERS

Please pray for our recently deceased promoters (April 2022 to August 2022).

would often stop by her room to catch a glimpse of her smile. She had endured more than most people would experience in a lifetime. Our family and friends put her on their prayer list and prayed to the Blessed Mother every day. She was also placed on a prayer list around the world. She was two years old in February and can do everything a child her age can do. One winter's day when she was at her grandmother's house, she looked out a window and saw a statue. She pointed to it and her grandmother explained to her that it was Mary, the Blessed Mother, and that we prayed to her for Isabella to get well. A few months later when the weather was warm her grandmother took her outside to play. As soon as Isabella saw the statue of Mary, she ran up to her, patted her on the head, and said, "Hi Mary" and gave her a kiss. We thank you, Mary, for answering our prayers. We hope you heard Isabella and felt the kiss she gave you.

SUBSTITUTE PARENTS

Back in the 1930s, my three sisters were placed in the care of the Daughters of Charity, while my brother and I were under the care of the Sisters of St. Joseph due to our mother's death. I have always been grateful for the care we were given by both the Daughters and the Sisters and for the foundation in faith they, as substitute parents, passed on to us, including their devotion to the Blessed Mother. Later, one of my sisters lived across the street on Cheltenham Avenue, and it was through her that I was introduced to the Monday Novena. Last month, my middle sister, Dolly, was anointed at the hospital the day before she died. All my siblings and I'm sure all of those gracious nuns are gone now but their novena petitions for the grace of a happy death were surely granted through the intercession of Mary.

Mrs. Rita Adamcik, Norristown, PA
Mrs. Catherine Aloji, Ambridge, PA
Ms. Andreina Arayata, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Mrs. Margaret M. Asbrock, Cincinnati, OH
Mrs. Marie T. Ashton, Phoenixville, PA
Ms. Yvonne Ayuen, Ancaster, Ontario, Canada
Mrs. L. Bender, Riverdale, NJ
Ms. Barbara Borkowski, Flushing, NY
Ms. Agnes E. Burns, Cape May, NJ
Mr. Jude F. Carey, Rydal, PA
Ms. Susanne Carroll, Langhorne, PA
Mr. Lawrence Cascioli, Lakeview, OH
Ms. Jane A. Converse, Massillon, OH
Mrs. Betty Crawford, Charlotte, NC
Mrs. Geraldine Cunningham, Ebensburg, PA
Mrs. George Eberhart, Canton, OH
Mr. George Edel, Wayne, PA
Mrs. Wanda Graminski, Dunkirk, NY
Mrs. Melrose Guthrie, Cold Spring, KY
Mrs. Alex Howe, Rome, NY
Mr. Louis M. Jupinacci, OFS, Philadelphia, PA
Mrs. Leroy Kasper, Albertville, MN
Mrs. Loretta S. Kleinmann, Kewaskum, WI
Mrs. Kenneth Kline, New Cambria, PA
Mrs. Joann Knott, Owensboro, KY
Mrs. Julia Kopacz, Berwyn, IL
Mr. Ralph V. Kremer, Melbourne, KY
Ms. Anna Laks, St. Louis, MO
Mrs. John S. Luiz, Niceville, FL
Ms. Doreen Lynch, Miramichi, New Brunswick, Canada
Ms. Rose McGee, Philadelphia, PA
Mrs. Therese McLaughlin, Brewer, ME
Mrs. Frances Mitchell, Lincoln Park, MI
Mrs. Katherine Nagel, Sunset, TX
Mr. John O'Leary, Teaneck, NJ
Mrs. Bertha Ortiz, Manassa, CO
Ms. Catherine Peronace, Bel Air, MD
Mrs. Nicholas Perry, Strykersville, NY
Mrs. Donald E. Peterman, Lititz, PA
Mrs. Dorothy J. Peterson, Dayton, OH
Mrs. Dorothy A. Quill, Cape May Court House, NJ
Deacon Raymond Riccio, Johnstown, RI
Ms. Loretta S. Savoie, Minto, New Brunswick, Canada
Mrs. Bernard Schneider, Rochester, NY
Ms. Corrine Sforzini, Auburn, AL
Mrs. Donald C. Smith, Kankakee, IL
Mrs. Carmela Souza, Pompton Lakes, NJ
Mrs. Wilma N. Stack, Wyoming, PA
Mrs. Loraine W. Steinbicker, Dayton, OH
Mrs. Yvonne V. Taylor, Plattsburgh, NY
Ms. Irene Tekaucic, Willowick, OH
Mrs. Adam Thibodeaux, Lake Charles, LA
Ms. Mary Elizabeth, Tuminello, Bossier City, LA
Mrs. Margaret Vajda, West Hazleton, PA
Ms. Priscilla Valcarcel, Bronx, NY
Mrs. Mary Vincelli, Hatboro, PA
Ms. Doris M. Vogelsang, North Chicago, IL
Mr. Anthony Walshe Sr., Torbay, Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada
Ms. Dorothy Mae Willems, Boulder Junction, WI



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