

## My First Visit To Akita, Japan

by Fr. Joseph-Marie Jacq  
from *I Saw My Mother Weeping*

(This book is printed only in French. It was translated for the 101 Times by Deacon Philippe F. Fleury and Mr. Richard W. Lessard.)

One day, a family, still pagan but already leaning towards Catholicism, spoke to me excitedly about the events taking place in Akita. As everything about the Blessed Virgin Mary deeply interests me, as I shared my enthusiasm in listening to the events, I blurted out: "If I ever get the chance, I would be happy to join a pilgrimage to the miraculous statue of Akita to pray to the Virgin Who weeps."

### Impossible!

I concluded saying that such a blessing would be quite impossible, because of my present parochial and missionary duties, and also because of the far distance away...nearly 600 miles. I quickly forgot all about it.

Then, one day, Madam Okumura Fumiko, the doctor's wife to whom I confided my desire, unexpectedly said to me, "Father, I have purchased three round-trip airplane tickets to Akita. Would you like to come?"

After my initial surprise, I quickly realized that this was surely a pressing invitation of Divine Providence. I thought to myself...a round trip by plane would not take long...my parishioners could still have their 6 a.m. Mass...so I accepted!

### What Were My First Impressions?

Thus, the three of us, Madam Okumura Fumiko, our dedicated catechist Gemma Masuda Chie, and myself took the super-rapid train to Tokyo (120 miles away), and then the plane to Akita. By noon, we were at the miracle site.

My first impressions were that the ways of God have not changed as to how He reveals Himself and His Blessed Mother. He still chooses the most humble of places, similar to those of Bethlehem or Nazareth.

Akita is in the region of Tohoku in the Northwest, called the "back-country." The Japanese refer to the area as "Nippon no ura," a diminutive term, indicating the insignificance of the territory. In winter, it is a cold, frozen, and snowy part of Japan, with often 4 or 5 months under snow, and is perhaps the poorest place in all of Japan.

Mary, Our Mother of the Poor, chose the poverty, the solitude, the simplicity, the insignificance, and the ordinary to reveal Herself. What a striking contrast with modern Japan, rich, technological, leading most world economies on many counts.

### The Miraculous Statue

The statue of the Virgin Who cries in Akita is the replica of the image of "Our Lady of All Nations" in Amsterdam, Holland. The little Sisters simply gave a small picture to the sculptor and asked him to make a statue, and that is what he did by using this image as his model.

This statue measures about one meter (3.28 feet), from the base of the pedestal up to the top of the cross, which passes a little above the head. The Holy Virgin alone measures about 60 cm. (23.6 inches). Our Lady is standing on a globe, hands forward, exactly as pictured on the Miraculous Medal when She appeared to St. Catherine Labouré in 1830 at Rue du Bac in Paris.

### She is Attached to the Cross

Behind the Blessed Mother, the cross is solidly planted in the globe, and She is attached to the cross at the bottom, recalling the unique and primary place of Our Lady in the Divine Work of Redemption. The entire statue and cross is made from one block of wood.

The only characteristic trait, the sculptor, Mister Wakasa Saburo, was to

fashion, was a "Japanese" face. He now realizes that the statue he fashioned has become transformed by the events, and that the visible parts of the body, like the face (which turned a darker color), the hands, and the feet, have acquired a special human quality, "seemingly alive."

### Kept Out of the Chapel

At the time of our arrival, the statue of the Virgin Mother was kept in a small room, the area of 6 tatamis (a tatami is a straw matting used as a floor covering in a Japanese home, about 39 inches long). It was separated from the chapel by a simple curtain. (Because of the weeping, and to avoid sensationalism, the Archbishop requested that this be done.)

### A Candle Where the Statue Would Be

During their prayers of the Office, I was heartbroken to see these sisters piously light a small candle in the place of the absent statue, and at the same time, my heart was warmed to see that they were submissive and so obedient, despite their great sorrow. I kept thinking that their daily virtue would, one day, be amply rewarded.

### The Messenger

The nun to whom the Blessed Mother revealed Her messages is Sister Agnes Sasagawa Katsuko, born on May 28, 1931. Operated for appendicitis in her youth, the anesthesia left her infirmed and paralyzed. Unable to use her bodily members, she was relegated to a life of continued suffering. Her Catholic faith and the Eucharist were her support and consolation. One day, at the age of 25, upon drinking some Lourdes water with confidence, she was miraculously healed,

She then worked for 8 years as a catechist in a Catholic parish in Myoko, near the town of Josetsu, in the diocese of Niigata, where Most Reverend John Shojiro Ito was bishop. He had founded "The Handmaids of the Eucharist," and he invited her to join the order, which she did. The extraordinary events in Akita were about to begin! +++

# Her Name Is Grace

A true story by Howard E. Crouch  
from *Damien Dutton Call*, Winter, 2000

The year is 1942...the place, Jamaica, West Indies...my heroine is named Grace.

When Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to lease land for much needed war supplies, one place chosen was Jamaica, West Indies. The site was selected some 50 miles from the capitol of Kingston in an area known as Sandy Gully. No task was impossible for the Army Corps of Engineers, and they set to work clearing the area of trees and tropical undergrowth. It was designated to be an Army Base and Air Field for both Army and Navy planes. Its main objective was to patrol the Caribbean and the Panama Canal where German U-boats were on the prowl causing havoc to shipping with much needed war supplies.

## A Living Wage

In order to complete their task, they had to hire thousands of Jamaican workers, most of whom were unskilled. Word spread fast throughout the Island, that the Engineers were paying as much as ten times more than the average Jamaican worker was earning. They quit their jobs as house boys, gardeners, and cooks and grabbed a hammer or saw and set out on foot, by mule, and railroad boxcar to Sandy Gully. The local government was dismayed and negotiated with the Engineers to lower the pay, but the Engineers insisted on paying a living wage.

No housing was provided for the workers, and they had to leave the Base at the end of each day. The Base was now named Fort Simons. Across the dirt road from the entrance to the Fort, they set up a shantytown, composed of hundreds of huts and shacks of every size and description...some of bamboo with palm leaves for a roof...others of corrugated tin.

Conditions were deplorable, but many Jamaicans were used to living

in this manner. The major source of work for the Jamaican laborer was on the banana, coconut, and sugar cane plantations, a throw-back to the days of slavery.

With intermingling of the races over the centuries from thousands of foreigners from nearly every country in the world, seeking their piece of the golden pineapple, skin color of their progeny ranged from dark ebony to white. An unspoken cast system made it possible for the lighter skinned to obtain more profitable positions, while the dark skinned stayed at the bottom of the ladder, with rare exceptions.

Soon the shantytown was teeming with members of the workers' families. Dogs, chickens, goats, and pigs roamed everywhere. They hoped that an army jeep or truck would kill one of their animals, for they would be recompensed far higher than the animal was worth, by the Army.

Shantytowns like this were common on the outskirts of many towns and villages where affordable housing was not available to the natives. Fortunately, Jamaica has many small mountain ranges with abundant rainfall forming mountain streams which cascade in waterfalls down the mountainside to form a river leading inevitably to the sea. The shantytown sprung up on the bank of a river, affording the inhabitants water for washing and bathing.

The shantytown was off-limits to the Base personnel. But it was impossible to enter or to leave the Base without passing by.

The road in front of the Base led in one direction to the left, which would be used to bike three miles through lanes of bamboo, ending at a little fishing village on the coast, where we would bathe in the sparkling blue and green waters of the Caribbean.

If we took the road to the right, it was about a three or four mile bike ride to the small town of Maypen, where our Base Chaplain, Fr. Philip Kiely, a Jesuit, was pastor of a small church.

The road in either direction, whenever we left the Base, was filled with screaming little children begging for pennies.

I arrived in Jamaica, as a Sergeant in the Medical Corps a year before, in August of 1941. My job was to set up the hospital that had just been completed by the Engineers. The Base was almost finished. The last group of Engineers were about ready to leave and the first group of Army bombers and Navy fliers had arrived.

Female nurses were scheduled to arrive in several months, and in the meantime the Corpsmen would take care of the patients. We had two medical doctors assigned to the Base. Just after my arrival in 1941, Fr. Kiely took me to visit the Spanish Town Leprosarium, which was staffed by the Marist Missionary Sisters of New England. On that day, my life was changed forever.

## 200 Lepers

Two hundred victims of leprosy were housed behind high stone walls. They ranged in age from 4 to 84, in every different stage of the disease imaginable. Some had been there for more than 50 years. With the Sisters arrival, the government-run leprosarium took on a new shine, and the Sisters brought a new sense of discipline.

They revitalized the run-down facilities by erecting new dormitories, recreational, and shop areas where the patients could be taught to learn a trade, as well as a thriving farm where they could grow their food and earn a few pennies by selling it to the authorities, who used it to feed the patients.

## Grace Crossed My Path

As a result of that visit, I had organized a group of servicemen and women to visit as often as they could, bringing entertainment, refreshments, games, and activities...and much needed supplies. At the time of the opening of this story, I was planning an annual Christmas visit which would take place in three weeks, when Grace crossed my path.

One day, as I left the Base on bike, I headed to visit Fr. Kiely in Maypen, I saw her. She was a slim little girl, no more than 6 or 7 years of age. She wore a clean but well-worn dress with many

patches. Her head was covered with a colorful bandanna. She was squatting near a tree. In front of her was a large basket filled with fruit...bananas, mangoes, oranges, pineapples, papayas. She had no customers, and I stopped my bike and approached her.

She looked up at me. Her face was beautiful, large round eyes, a pert nose, and thin lips. I could tell by the color of her skin, typical of so many Jamaican children, a product of mixed breeding. She held up the basket. I shook my head and offered her several shillings. She said in a sweet voice, "No, Sir John," (their pronunciation for Sergeant).

I smiled. She knew the signs of Army rank, the more stripes, the more money. "My Granny," she continued "told me not to beg for money; you must buy something." That was unusual, for the road was lined with children begging. I noticed a glistening medal around her neck, bearing the image of Our Lady of Lourdes... the Miraculous Medal.

I said, "What is your name, honey?" "It is Grace, but everyone calls me Gracie." "Where is your Mommy?" I asked. She looked at me for a moment, tears glistening in the corner of her eyes, "She has gone away, and she has left me with my Granny," "And you won't accept these coins?" I said. "No, Sir John."

As I turned to leave, she said, "My Granny can clean your uniforms." "Where is your Granny?" I asked. "She lives across the road." I said, "All right, Gracie. Tomorrow you meet me here and I will bring a uniform for your Granny to clean." I thought, what the heck, the officers do it. Why can't I? I went off to see Fr. Kiely and told him of my encounter. He laughed and said, "I hope you get it back."

The next morning I left the gate with the dirty uniform in a bag. The sentries were required to check every parcel coming in and out, but with so much activity, it was easy to slip by. There she was beneath the tree waiting for me. I gave her the bag with the uniform, one I could spare, and asked when I would have it back. She said, "Tomorrow, Sir John...right here I will be waiting," and she was.

The uniform was beautifully cleaned and pressed. I wondered how

her Granny managed to do that. "How much do you want, Gracie?" "Granny said whatever you give, I must take." I gave her the equivalent of a dollar. "You meet me here next Monday morning, Gracie, and I will have more uniforms for your Granny to wash."

For the next two weeks, she was there as we exchanged the dirty uniforms for clean ones. In the bag, I included some candy bars and a box of laundry detergent from the Post Exchange. "Tell your Granny that the box contains snowflakes." "Snowflakes, Sir John...what are they?" "They come from the sky and they make the clothes so clean. Your Granny will understand."

### She Was Not Alone

The next week, Gracie was not alone. Standing by her side was a tall erect elderly woman. Most Jamaican women walked erect, as they spent a lifetime carrying heavy loads on top of their head. She had on a long white cotton dress. It was sparkling clean. On her head was a bandanna similar to Gracie's, with wisps of white hair peeking beneath. She was darker in color than Gracie, and her face was wrinkled, but her eyes were bright. A white clay pipe hung from her mouth, with wisps of tobacco smoke curling from the bowl. She, too, had a medallion of Our Blessed Mother around her neck.

When I approached, Gracie ran to me and, taking my hand, led me to her Granny, and said, "This is Sir John." Granny took the pipe from her mouth and nodded her head, but did not offer to shake my hand. She took my bundle of uniforms, handing me the clean ones, and gave the bundle to Gracie. She said, "You run along now child. I will be back soon."

Gracie looked questioningly, but did what she was told, and scampered off. Granny looked around in front of me to see if anyone was nearby. Then she said in almost a whisper, "I know of you, Sir John. When Gracie told me what you looked like, I knew who you were. Some women have told me not to handle your uniforms, for you go to the lepers' home in Spanish Town."

I was amazed, but not surprised. Nothing escapes the Jamaican, and

gossip is a favorite pastime. I wondered why she had not heeded the warning and continued to clean my uniforms, and the answer soon came. "Sir John," she said, "when next you go to the leper home, would you take a message for me?" "Sure," I said. "Who is it for?" "My daughter, Mary, Gracie's mother."

I lowered my voice. "Gracie's Mommy is a patient there?" "Yes, Sir John, but if anyone finds out, they will banish us and maybe take Gracie away from me." "Gracie doesn't know?" I said. "No, Sir John. She is a little girl, and if she knew, she might say something. Then the authorities would come and get her. I cannot say anymore now, Sir John. Maybe you could meet me, and I will tell you the story. I know that you go to Maypen sometimes. Maybe you could meet me on the way there."

She certainly knows a lot about me, I thought. Then I realized that I was her possible contact with her daughter, and she would get as much information about me as she could. "Of course, Granny," I said. "I will be going Saturday morning. Look for me along the road." "Sir John, but please," and her eyes were begging, "don't say anything to anybody." "You have my word, Granny. I will tell no one." She then grabbed my hand and kissed it and strode away.

### Was Our Lady Involved?

I went back to my barracks and sat on my bunk. Something strange is happening, I thought. This cannot be a coincidence. Was Our Lady involved somehow? I did not doubt it, for I feel Her presence often.

On Saturday morning, I cycled to Maypen and kept looking for any sign of Granny, and I saw her standing under a coconut tree. I slowed my bike, dismounted, and went over to her. She was dressed this time in a plain cotton dress, bandanna on her head. I later found out that the white dress was used only on Sundays to go to Mass. She had spread out a straw mat on which we sat, and from her straw handbag, she took out two ripe mangoes and a knife, and deftly pared the mangoes and handed one to me. They are a delicious fruit, especially

when ripe, and refresh your thirst. I thanked her and listened to her story.

Her mother and father worked on a sugar plantation, and as soon as she was able to work, she joined them. It was hard labor, with little pay. Her parents had converted to the Catholic Faith, which was unusual, since Jamaica was under British rule, and the majority of the population were Anglicans.

When missionaries arrived, many joined Pentecostal Movements and the Seventh Day Adventists. Many practiced a form of Voodooism, called Obeah, in secret.

The foreman on the plantation was a handsome Englishman who took a liking to the young girl, and used her whenever he wished. When she told him that she was pregnant with his child, he dismissed her and her parents from the plantation. They were destitute, and her parents had to abandon her and her baby.

### Cast System Was Prevalent

She took work as a domestic, and raised her child, Mary, by herself. Her girl was light-skinned, and had beautiful delicate features. Granny knew that she had a good chance of gaining higher positions, for the cast system was prevalent, and the lighter the skin, the more opportunities for higher paying jobs were available.

The child had a beautiful voice and often took the lead in the school plays in the Church choir. She grew to be a beautiful young woman, and was able to support her mother, and they lived in a small bungalow on the fringes of Kingston.

An American businessman from Chicago opened several businesses in Jamaica. One of them, a dry cleaning business, and a night club called the "Glass Bucket" in the center of town. It became the focal point for the businessmen and their families. It was rumored that they fled from Chicago to escape the Mob. He brought with him an American musician, who formed a first-class jazz band, and produced colorful floor shows with Jamaican singers and dancers.

Mary auditioned, and soon was the star attraction. She became involved with a Canadian Air Force pilot

stationed temporarily in Jamaica, training native Jamaicans as pilots. He went back to Canada before she realized that she was pregnant with his child. She had to leave the night club to raise her child, whom she named Grace.

One day, she noticed red spots on her face and arms. She went to a doctor she did not know, and he told her that it looked like she might have contracted leprosy. He would have to send her for further tests. Panic-stricken, she rushed home to tell her mother, who took Gracie and fled to the outskirts of Maypen. Further tests confirmed that diagnosis, and when they asked where her family was, she said she lived alone and did not know where they were, and she was sent to Spanish Town to be confined to the Leprosarium.

### Years Of Suffering

At the end of the story, Granny's cheeks were streaked with tears, and I was deeply moved. I knew how much pain she was suffering thinking of her daughter, and also trying to hide from the authorities and to raise her daughter's child. I told her to let me work things out, and to go back to her home and wait for a message from me. She thanked me profusely, and I rode off to Father Kiely's in Maypen.

When I arrived there, he knew that I was troubled, for I did not want to get him involved with the local authorities. I asked him if he ever saw an older tall erect woman with a little girl of lighter skin attending Mass. He thought for awhile, and said, "Well, there is someone who fits that description. She usually slips into a pew after Mass begins with a little girl, and leaves before it ends, so I never had a chance to talk to her, and no one that I questioned knew where she came from. Why?" he asked.

"Give me a couple of days to straighten things out, Father, and then I will tell you." "Why carry the burden alone?" he said. "I am here to help you."

I decided to discuss the matter with Sister Mary Augustine. I came to find out that her mind was like a laser beam with the ability to cut right through red tape to the core of the

problem. I had already scheduled a trip to discuss the forthcoming Christmas party with her, and after our preliminary discussion with other members of the Community involved with the party, I asked if I could see her alone. We went into the convent parlor and brought in a pitcher of ice-cold lemonade, which we shared together.

"Sister," I said, "may I have your confidence and ask that you not share what I am about to tell you with anyone else, until such a time as I can work things out?" "I cannot refuse that kind of a promise, Sergeant."

"Do you have a, once-attractive, young woman patient here by the name of Mary?" "Yes, we do," she said. "She is a beautiful young woman with a lovely singing voice, but very withdrawn and not very communicative." "Is her face a mass of nodules, or does she have the neural type?" I asked. "She has been spared the lepromotous type," Sister said. "Her main affliction is with her nerves."

"Thank God." I said. "That makes things a little bit easier." "Easier for what, Sergeant?" "Well, Sister, did you know that she has a little girl?"

Sister was taken aback. "A little girl!" she said, and then realized her voice had risen, and she lowered it once again. "We had no idea. That solves the mystery of her silence on nights when I am on duty and making my rounds. I often heard her sobbing, but she would never tell me the reason why. Where is the little girl?"

"She lives with her Granny in the shantytown across from the Army Base. Her Granny takes care of my uniforms, and approached me to ask if I would take a message to her daughter, Mary, here at the Leprosarium."

"Does the little girl know that her mother is here?" "No, Sister; her Granny has never revealed that. She just told her that her Mommy had gone away for awhile. She is fearful for anyone finding out, for the authorities might come and take Gracie away from her."

"Gracie?" Sister asked. "Yes. That is the little girl's name. she is a beautiful child, so I can imagine what the mother looks like."

"Well," Sister said, "That poses a real problem. I should report this to the authorities, but out of the confidence that I promised to you, I will not do anything about it unless you tell me to do so. What do you have in mind?"

"I thought you could help me to arrange for a meeting between them, as the little girl is grieving so much from the loss of her Mommy."

"There is no way that we could allow the little girl to come here to visit her Mommy," Sister said. "We don't know yet how leprosy is actually contracted. But we do know that little children are susceptible, and you know we have more than 40 children here. When their mothers come to visit, they are not allowed to touch or hold them. It is the most heartbreaking part of my job."

### Can They See Each Other?

I told Sister that when we come for the Christmas party, I could arrange for the little girl and her Granny to stand outside the gate, and we could bring Mary down there when everyone is in the auditorium during the entertainment. That way Mary could see her child, and Gracie could see her Mommy, and now that I know her face has not been touched by the disease, Gracie would not be frightened."

Sister thought for awhile. "I can't see any harm in that," she said, "and I will keep your secret for the moment. But eventually it will come out. Emotions run too high for such things to be bottled up." So, the arrangements were made.

How to get Granny to go along with the plan? I would leave that to Fr. Kiely. He would arrange to drive Granny and Gracie to the gates of the compound on the pretext that he was taking them for a visit to Kingston. "Supposing Granny balks when you get to the compound, and will not go through with the plan?" I asked Father. "Leave that to me," he said, and I did.

On the day of the Christmas party, we loaded two trucks and two jeeps with the band instruments, tins of cookies, cases of soda, and tubs of ice cream packed in dry ice, with the band members and the servicemen and women. There were 40 of us. One truck was packed with 200 gifts...one

for each patient, which the nuns had purchased, with the individual desires of each patient in mind. We spent days wrapping the gifts.

It was a beautiful clear morning as we headed for Spanish Town. We entered the gates of the compound and were greeted by whoops of cheers. The band unloaded their instruments and set up the stage for the show that we had prepared. When everyone was gathered in the auditorium, Sister beckoned to me, and we went to the schoolroom where Mary awaited us.

### A Surprise For Mary

Sister did not tell her what we were planning. She was scheduled to sing during the patient's part of the Christmas program, and was beautifully dressed with a red hibiscus tucked behind her ear.

As we neared the gate, my heart sank. Father, Granny, and Gracie were nowhere in sight. The plan had failed. Granny balked.

Suddenly, from behind the trunk of a great Banyan tree, came Father, Granny, and Gracie. When Mary saw her mother and child, her knees buckled and Sister grabbed her. Granny could not restrain Gracie, who tore from her arms and ran to the closed gate, screaming, "Mommy, Mommy!"

Mary stood there, hands clenched, not daring to reach through the gate and touch her baby girl. Tears were streaming down her face. We were all moved and shaken.

I thought of Mary standing at the foot of Her Crucified Son, unable to hold Him during His last gasp on earth.

Soon Mary took control and said to her daughter, "Do not cry baby. Mommy is here. Mommy loves you." Gracie clung to the bars. Her face pressed close against the gate. I had purchased a beautiful rag doll in Kingston, made by a well-known doll maker. I handed it to Mary, who thrust it through the gate to little Gracie, who was totally spent and quietly sobbing.

"Here Gracie," Mary said, "take this and hold it close, and when you hug it, pretend that it is Mommy hugging you."

Granny, who had remained in the background during this emotional

scene, could not control herself, and came to the gate. In a broken voice, she said, "Mary, my beloved daughter, how I miss you, and I am sorry for not having visited you before, but I was afraid that the authorities would find out and take Gracie from me."

"I know Mother," Mary said. "How can I ever thank you for what you are doing for Gracie? Knowing that she is with you, makes life here, as hard as it is, a little easier. The Sisters tell me not to give up hope...that they are working hard to find a cure, and then I can once again be with you and Gracie." Sister stepped in, and said, "It is time to go. They will miss you."

Mary stood there, looking as Granny led the little girl away from the gate. Gracie was clinging to her rag doll. She was not screaming now. She was too exhausted. As they got into Father's car and drove out of sight, Mary turned to me, and said, "I know, Sergeant, that you arranged this. I will never forget you."

We walked back to the auditorium. I sat in the chair in the front row, as the patients presented their part of the entertainment.

There were speeches, skits, and songs...all arranged by the Sisters, in which the patients expressed their thanks for being remembered. They all shouted, "God bless dem Americans!" and I saw Mary come to the front of the stage.

She spoke a few words to the orchestra leader, who nodded and turned to the audience. "I want to dedicate this song to all of you Americans for the joy, the love, and the hope you bring to us."

The orchestra sounded the first notes of *America The Beautiful*. Mary's clear, beautiful voice rang out with, "Oh beautiful, for spacious skies..." ending with, "...and crown thy good, with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea."

All eyes turned to me as there were shouts of applause and stamping of feet, and the words, "God bless Sir John."

It is now almost sixty years later, and I wonder if Mary was ever reunited with her child...and did they live happily ever after? I believe they did, for you see...I believe in miracles! +++

## ***SHE KNOWS ME!***

from *Stories Of Love*, p. 99  
from Jesus to Alan Ames

**"B**ut, surely, it is their own fault that they are poor!" exclaimed the wealthy man, as he looked out of the window from the train he was on, which was traveling at high speed through a very poor area.

"No, Dear; it is not," replied his wife. "These people have not had the opportunity that we have had. That is the main reason for their poverty."

"Most of them are lazy!" snapped the husband. "Even when they are given jobs, they are either incapable of doing them, or just cannot be bothered to do the work properly."

"Well, if they are incapable, that is because they have not had the opportunity to be educated in the skills they need to do the work. Surely, time should be given to help them achieve those abilities," suggested the wife.

"Huh!" snorted the husband. "Anyway, most of them do not want to work; they are happier lazing around all day."

"But, Dear, I see many of them who do get jobs, working very hard and long hours," stated the wife. "And they seem so happy that there is work for them to earn a wage."

"Yes, but what do they do with the money? These slums never change. No matter how many of these people work, the slums will stay, because this is how the people who live here like it!" retorted the husband.

"I think it probably has more to do with the low wages that are paid. Maybe by the time food and clothing have been bought, there is no money left for anything else," said the wife.

"Well, we can't pay them any more. That's how we keep our prices down and make the profits, so you and I can live as we do," smiled the husband, condescendingly.

The wife looked at her husband, then looked out of the window into the slum-city. As the train sped along, she could see, time and again, poor people who looked so cold, so hungry, and so in need of help.

"So, we should ignore them, then?" she asked.

"Everyone else does," replied the husband, as he picked up a paper and began to read it.

"Well, I can't," said the wife, firmly.

The husband lowered the paper and looked at his wife. "What do you think you can do?" he almost laughed, as he said the words.

"First, I want you to increase the wages of our workers so they can live better," replied the wife.

"What! You have got to be joking ...that would cut our profits," said the husband in disbelief.

"Well, we would still make profits, wouldn't we?" asked the wife.

"Yes, but a lot less than now," answered the husband.

"But we have lots of money in the bank, enough to live a good life until we die, and much, much more," stated the wife.

"Yes, that's true, but that doesn't mean we should give away our profits from our investment and hard work," said the husband, with disbelief in his voice.

"Why not?" asked the wife, as she continued. "Surely, if we have more than enough, it is only greed that makes us seek more. If others are living in poverty working for us, and we make profits from their work, surely then that is wrong; surely it is a sin!" The husband said nothing as his wife carried on.

"If they work hard and barely survive, yet we profit from that, it must be wrong. It is our duty as Christians not to profit from the suffering of others. We must pay them more. Don't you see that, darling?" asked the wife, smiling at her husband.

The man sat there thinking of the lower profits his company would make, and how he did not like to lose his profit margin when it was unnecessary to do so.

"And think, my husband, one day in the not too distant future, this life will be over and money will mean nothing then. When you face God and He asks why you had so much and did so little to help the poor, what will you say? I wonder also what reward God will give to you...Heaven or Hell. It is how you live in this life that has bearing upon that. I think we should take the opportunity now to change our lives and start helping the needy,

as God would expect us to do," suggested the wife.

As the husband listened to her words, he knew what she said was true, but he tried to push it aside. Just then a nun came into the compartment and sat down looking out of the window.

"How sad," she whispered, quietly. The man looked at the nun and saw a beauty in her face that seemed to shine from it, but also a deep sadness.

"We were just talking about the slums," said the wife to the nun.

"That's where I work," smiled the nun.

"It must be hard for you," inquired the wife.

"Yes, it is," said the nun. "Always the sick, the hungry, and the poor, and never enough food, medicine, or money. I pray that more wealthy Christians would live as Jesus asked them to and give to the poor, instead of being blind to them, and often even accusing the poor of bringing everything upon themselves."

The husband felt these words touch his heart and his face reddened, as he knew deep inside this nun was speaking about him...but how did she know what they had been discussing?

The nun looked at the man and, smiling said, "Are you all right? You look a little flushed."

"I...I...I'm all right...thank you," stuttered the man.

"Maybe we can help your mission in some way," asked the wife.

"That's kind of you," said the nun.

"What can we do?" asked the wife again of the nun.

"Well, money for food and medicine would help, or even if it were possible, money to build a clean surgery for our voluntary doctors," replied the nun.

"Doesn't the government supply the doctors and a surgery?" cut in the husband.

"No, just like everyone else, the poor are expected to pay. You know, even when people from among the poor find work, their wages are so low that they are not much better off, and so even the workers cannot afford medicine and doctors. What a shame it is that many employers take advantage of the poor and perpetuate their poverty by paying them low wages," said the nun, as she stared directly at the man.

The wife looked at her husband who was still red in the face. "Yes, it is a shame, a shame of mankind," she said, gently.

The man's heart was racing as he thought, "She knows me; how is that possible?"

The nun continued, "You know, it is never too late to make amends in one's life for ignoring, mistreating, or taking advantage of the poor, and I pray many of the well-to-do remember that. Jesus said, 'You will always have the poor with you,' so that means people always have the opportunity to help the poor, and in doing so, help themselves grow in the grace and the love of God. I pray the wealthy stop seeing the poor as a burden, and start to see them as a grace-filled way of coming closer to God and the eternal reward of Heaven."

As the nun said the last word, it echoed in the wealthy man's heart, and he knew at that moment, if he did nothing to help the poor, that he was risking losing Heaven.

Sweat ran down his face, as he said, very quickly, to the nun, "We were just talking about that, and I was going to do something to help those poor people."

Reaching into his pocket he pulled out his checkbook and began to write. At first he was only going to give a token offering, when inside he thought he heard a voice say, "If you are not generous, can you expect God to be generous to you?"

At that moment the nun spoke, saying, "God is generous to the generous of heart."

The man began to shake a little and then, in his mind, he saw many of the beggars who had asked for money from him, but from whom he had turned away. He saw many of the sick and suffering that he had walked past, ignoring them, and then he saw Jesus suffering on the Cross, and he was turning and walking away from Jesus.

He wanted to cry, as now it dawned on him how he had been rejecting God's call to him in his life: the call to love and help others. Now the man felt terrible within, and he found it hard to control his shaking and to not cry. The man looked at his checkbook in his hand, ripped out the check he

had half written and tore it up. Then, remembering what wealth he had, the man wrote a substantial amount on the check and handed it to the nun.

"Why, thank you," said the nun with a smile. "You are so generous. This will build a clean surgery and buy a lot of medicine. Thank you, and God bless you."

The wife smiled gently at her husband, as if to say, "Well done!"

"And I am going to increase the wages of my workers from today," said the man. "I didn't really think about them before, but today, you, Sister, and my wife, have made me think."

"Thank you, Dear," said the wife, happily.

"Sadly, many of the wealthy do not think of the poor today. I thank God that in some way I have helped you to do so," stated the nun, with a truly thankful look on her face.

"Dear wife, you said firstly you would like to see wages increased. What was the second thing?" asked the husband of the wife.

"That you give to the poor, and you have done that," said the wife, smiling contentedly. "I was also praying for one other thing," she said.

"What was it, Dear?" asked the husband, who was now feeling a peace in his heart he had never known before.

"That through the poor, you would come to find Jesus and His peace," replied the hopeful sounding wife.

"Well, your prayer has been answered, for I surely have," stated the man, as he looked lovingly at this wife.

"Thank God," cried the wife, as she knew from the look on his face that her husband spoke the truth.

"Yes, thank God," added the nun. "For I was praying that today God would bring what was needed for my work with the poor. I also prayed that in doing so, a soul would be touched by God's love and mercy to know God's expectations and God's generosity. How good is God!"

Together the three of them sat there discussing what had just happened among them, and planning what they could do together in the future to help the poor. Religious and laity working together in God's love, the way God planned it, the way it was meant to be. +++

Free copies of *The 101 Times* for your conference, church or group are available upon request. Indicate #. (All information and articles in *The 101 Times* may be reproduced without prior permission. Do evangelize.)

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INFORMATION — About apparitions taking place throughout the world.

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- 7) \_\_\_ 40 prayer cards of our choice
- 8) \_\_\_ *Moving Statues of Ireland* audio tape
- 9) \_\_\_ Audio tape of 101's choice

Contribution for postage required.

## Millions See Our Lady

Once again, Our Lady is appearing in Egypt. This time it is above the dome of a the historic Church of St. Marcus in Assuit, about 180 km. from Cairo. At least twice before, for long periods, the Blessed Mother has been seen hovering on the tops of St. Mary's Church in Zeitun, and of St. Theresa's Church in Shubra, both of which are suburbs of Cairo.

Those apparitions, which lasted many months, were seen by millions of people. The Coptic Church has declared them to be authentic. In those cases, Our Lady did not speak, but moved, held up an olive branch, which is a sign of peace, and assumed various attitudes of prayer, such as bowing, kneeling, and standing with folded hands.

The Coptic Church explained that She said nothing, so that She could speak to everyone. People of many nations, languages, and religious persuasions came, saw, and understood what Our Lady was saying by Her silence.

And now, She comes again! Are we getting the message? +++



In Akita, Japan, on September 28, 1981, Sister Agnes suddenly felt the presence of the Angel at her side during the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. She did not see the Angel in person, but a Bible appeared open before her eyes and she was invited to read a passage (Genesis 3:15)...the voice of the Angel was heard explaining in sort of a preamble that the passage had relationship with the tears of Mary, then continued:

"There is a meaning to the figure one hundred and one. This signifies that sin came into the world by a woman and it is also by a woman that salvation came to the world. The zero between the two signifies the Eternal God Who is from all eternity until eternity. The first one represents Eve, the last the Virgin Mary." +++

# Pilgrimage Program:

## SEND FOR COMPLETE ITINERARIES

**Fatima** — Thur., April 19, to Thur., April 26, 2001, 8 days, \$998. We will spend our time in Fatima with visits to the local shrines and holy places in the area. This will be a restful and highly spiritual experience, making the Hungarian Stations of the Cross, visiting the Postulation Center, the village and homes of the three children of Fatima in Aljustral, the birthplace of St. Anthony in Lisbon, the Miraculous Host in Santarem, Sister Lucy's convent in Coimbra, the castle museum in Ourem, and the Shrine of Our Lady of Nazareth.

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**Poland Shrine Tour** — Tues., June 26 to Sat., July 7, 2001 (12 days), \$1899. Includes Warsaw, Zoliborz, Krakow, Niapokalonow, Zakopane, Debno, Gdansk, Zelazowa Wola, Wagnivniki (Divine Mercy Center), Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Wadowice (birthplace of John Paul II), and the beautiful Shrine at Lechen. Young Fr./Dr. Cheslaw Krysa, Polish expert, will be our Chaplain.

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**Fatima and Lourdes** — Fri., July 21 to Sat., Aug. 5, 2001. Pilgrimage is 16 days, \$2189. This is probably our most popular pilgrimage.

Feast Day visit to **Santiago Compostella** (Shrine of St. James) **Pontevedra, Zaragosa, Santarem, Braga, Fatima, Lourdes, Avila, Alba de Tormes** to see the incorrupt arm and heart of St. Teresa of Avila, and a two-day stay in **Garabandal**.

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**Ireland** — Mon., Aug. 13, to Fri., Aug. 24, 2001 (12 days) \$1798. Visits to Knock, Melleray Grotto, Ballinspittle, Inchigeela, Achill, & more. Meetings with visionaries. This pilgrimage varies and is usually an intense spiritual experience.

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**Holy Oil Pilgrimage** — Thur. Nov. 8 to Tues., Nov. 20, 2001, price is \$1999 (12 days). Includes **Lebanon, Egypt, & Syria**; Meet Myrna Nazour of Damascus, and visit the shrines of St. Charbel, Zeitun, Shubra, Bl. Rafka, Bl. Fr. Hardini, Our Lady of Lebanon, and others. A repeat

of 1999's pilgrimage, with new and interesting revisions. Visit Assuit, near Cairo, where Our Lady is presently appearing, and Karatina, Lebanon, where a statue of Our Lady is presently oozing oil.

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**Holy Land** — either as an extension to the Holy Oil Pilgrimage (Nov. 20, to Nov. 26 —\$999) or the *Holy Land alone* (Nov. 19, to Nov. 26, 2001—\$1549.) Eight days of tremendous religious experiences, that the Holy Land always provides.

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**Guadalupe, Mexico** — for Feast Day celebrations. Dec. 7 thru 13, 2001, (7 days), only \$999 with flight from Newark, NJ. (Land only, \$699) We will attend celebration on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Juan Diego's Feast, and both the Eve and Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Visits to Ocotlan, Puebla, St. Michael's Well, and more.

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**Betania, Venezuela, Anniversary** — March 22 to March 27, 2002. Six days. \$1289, from either Miami or Newark.

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*All pilgrimages include: priest on each bus, daily Mass, three Rosaries, breakfast and dinner, and a blue 101 jacket. Non-refundable deposit is \$150 per person.*

Spend a few quiet days near the Blue Army Shrine in Washington, NJ. Call 101 Foundation for details.

Write for information regarding the **Garabandal** Miracle Flight.

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