

The Perfect Gift

by Diana M. Hatton

It was only a few days before Christmas, and the store was full of last minute shoppers. An obviously poor young girl was looking for a warm but affordable coat to give to her mother as a Christmas present. She had been looking in other stores for a long time, but she simply was unable to find a coat that she could both afford, and one that she was sure her mother would like.

Then suddenly, there it was! Not only was it the size, style, and color that were her mother's favorites, but it was marked down as a sale item! Bonanza! It seemed too good to be true. Finally she found the perfect gift. She was full of happiness thinking of this blessed season.

She pictured her mother opening the box, with an unbelieving joy to receive such a wonderful gift. The coat looked expensive, but it was marked down to *less than half* of its original price! And what is more, it was the *only one of its kind* on the rack. Oh, what incredible good fortune!

She fondled the coat as she walked to the line to pay for it. She realized that she probably could not make a better purchase or find a more appropriate gift for her loving Mom. Surely, God had helped her to find it, *and she thanked Him!*

She knew that it would make her mother very happy, in spite of all the other problems that they were having at the moment.

A Personal Check

The line was very long. At the counter, she realized that she was not carrying the right purse.

Thus, she inadvertently did not have enough cash with her to pay for the coat, but she noticed that her check book was in this purse, so she thought that all was well.

As she opened the check book to pay for the coat, the cashier said, "Sorry Miss, but this store does not accept personal checks!"

The girl stammered, not knowing what to do, and she said, "It was to be my mother's Christmas present... just what she needs and would like. It was the only one of its kind on the rack. Please, is there any other way that I can purchase it?"

The clerk said, "Credit card?" The girl nodded, "No."

Then the clerk brusquely took the coat out of the girl's arms, and said, "I am sorry, Miss, but we are very busy right now," and began to tend to a man who was the next customer in the long line. The man quickly said, "I will also take that coat. I know someone for whom it would be a perfect fit!"

Stunned by what had just taken place, tears came to the girl's eyes, and she silently walked away in disbelieving sadness.

The seemingly rushed man paid for his items and ran off with his packages. Seeing the heavy-hearted girl leaving the store, he hurriedly ran up to her and handed her the bag with the coat in it, saying, "Have a *Mary Christmas!*"

Now she was even more stunned, and suddenly both of them were very happy. This time, it was *tears of joy* which came to *both their eyes!*

The warmth and joy in *his heart* seemed to overwhelm him. He realized that it is truly more blessed to give than to receive, as *the joyful spirit of giving* engulfed him and warmed his heart. It would be difficult to say which of the two was the happier person!

The girl smiled and cried out, "God is *sooo good!!* Praise God!"

Yes, let us all praise God all the time, for *EVERYTHING!* +++

Someone Had My Number

by Beth Ann Batt, Put-in-Bay, Ohio

We live on an island in Lake Erie, and during the Summer tourist season, work is booming. However, Winter is a lean time for my husband and me. One November several years ago, I worried about how were we going to make our car insurance payment.

I'm not one to pray specifically for things, so it surprised me when I got the idea that all I had to do was *ask* God for help. I sat down at the kitchen table and cleared my mind. Then I let my thoughts flow freely.

Focus On Prayer

"Lord, please send me work," I prayed. "I will put my heart into anything that is given to me. And, if You will, make it something I can do with my children tagging along." I focused all of my being on my request for a little while. Then, *feeling peaceful*, I let it go.

Not even *half an hour later* the phone rang. "Do you know anyone interested in delivering phone books on our island?" a woman asked.

"Me!" I almost yelled. She gave me more details. A few days later I met with the district manager, and he hired me on the spot. Curious, I asked how his company had come to call me for the job.

"Call you?" he said. "We only advertised this position in the mainland paper."

That afternoon I set out, four-year-old Jacob and nine-month-old John in tow. Together we delivered 600 phone books door-to-door.

Within two weeks my paycheck arrived — exactly enough to cover our car insurance. I was not at all surprised. I knew Someone had my number. +++

The Mine Collapsed!

by Rob Zaremski

The news blared from my car radio that muggy day in July, 2002. "Nine miners are still trapped in the flooded Quecreek coal mine in Somerset, Pennsylvania, at this hour." I was 150 miles away from Somerset, driving east on I-80 to make a sales call.

With emerald-green trees rushing past on either side of the highway and the hazy outline of mountains in the distance, it was tough for me to imagine the gritty darkness those miners were stuck in, so far from help and home.

Almost reflexively, I said a prayer for their safety. I had been praying a lot lately. My own problems paled in comparison to those of the miners', though my problems had kept me up more than a few nights lately.

I had taken a new job as a sales rep with Targeting Customer Safety, selling industrial safety and rescue equipment. Though I had been in this industry for years, now was as bad a market as I could ever remember. I was under a lot of pressure, and sometimes I felt as if I were all on my own.

Though I knew God was watching out for us, I could not really expect Him to make sure I hit my numbers, could I? That was up to me. My car already had more than 200,000 miles on it and each day added more, as I followed up on even the slimmest of prospects.

My wife, Colleen, was always telling me not to worry, but, with her and our three kids, Caylin, Isaac, and Megan to support, I could not afford to fail.

To The Rescue Site

I turned down the radio when my cell phone rang. It was Denny Swigert, the co-owner of my company. "Rob, drop what you are doing," he said. His voice was tense.

"I just got a call. The guys trying to rescue those trapped miners need a communications probe and nine hundred feet of wire ASAP."

I was stunned. Only a moment before the miner rescue was a news story on the radio. Now it was personal. The probe was a fairly new device, used in search-and-rescue efforts after last year's terrorist attacks. It sort of looks like a stainless steel hot dog with little holes in it. Lowered on a communications cable, it can pick up and transmit sounds without a lot of background noise.

"Meet me in Warren," Denny continued. "The fire department there has got what we need."

I cancelled my sales call and met Denny to pick up the equipment, then sped to Somerset. State troopers got word of my mission and waved me on. My leg grew stiff as I pressed steadily on the accelerator, hoping my old car would hold out. "C'mon, you can do it!" I muttered. Those guys needed all the help they could get — and fast.

Once I got there. I was not sure what I could do. I was not a rescue worker. I knew all the equipment backward and forward, but my involvement usually ended with praying that each piece I sold would protect and aid the customer.

The Quecreek mine area was a mass of drilling machinery, air compressors and somber-faced rescue workers. I learned that the trapped miners had broken through a wall of the forgotten Saxman mine while forging into what they thought was a thick seam of coal. They barely had a chance to radio nine other miners nearby to get out before sixty million gallons of water crashed over them.

Are They Still Alive

Now a giant drill was boring a 32-inch-wide rescue shaft. Close by was a six-inch pilot hole through which hot air was being pumped to keep the miners alive, and to build pressure to stop the floodwaters from rising higher. Tapping sounds had come from the hole earlier... but not any more. Were the men still alive? Had the water risen too high?

Now there was nothing to do but wait until there was a suitable spot to try out the probe. I got a motel room for the night and called my wife to tell her about my change in plans.

"I have been watching the news coverage all day," said Colleen. "I am so glad you are there, trying to help. Everyone is praying for those men."

Lying in bed that night, I thought of those guys deep underground. They were probably wondering if they would ever again get to kiss their wives good-bye in the morning or tuck their children in at night. So many people, so many prayers... but how would we reach the men?

All the equipment we had, all the technology...and still we were in doubt. I tossed and turned till four o'clock in the morning, then headed back.

Cows grazed sleepily just outside the glare of the floodlights illuminating the rescue site. One of the rescue supervisors, Jeff Kravitz, took me to another six-inch hole, which led down into the old Saxman mine, about 400 yards from where they thought the miners were. Jeff said there was a cushion of a few feet between the water and the ceiling through which sound might travel to the men.

"The drill bit just broke about one hundred feet down," Jeff said. "They are starting another shaft while they try to get the broken bit out of the first hole, but it is going to take time. I hate to think of them down there hearing that drill stop. It is a long shot, but if there is any chance to get through to them to keep them going, we have got to try."

The hole was actually in the backyard of the Stanczyks, a kindly middle-aged couple who had told the rescue workers to do whatever it took to help the miners, even if it meant bulldozing their house!

They offered me coffee and food, and then I got down to business. I put on my headset and lowered the probe into the hole. A small crowd surrounded me expectantly.

I spoke the standard message officials had told me to say. "Stay where you are, tap ten times and

the rescue team will pick up your signal.”

No response. I repeated the message. Nothing. One by one people around me wandered back to the drill site, but I had to keep trying. I strayed from the standard script and talked to the miners as friends. I knew all their names by now.

“I will buy you a steak myself if you bang on the ceiling down there,” I said. “Hold on, they are drilling down to you right now. Everyone in the country is praying for you. Millions of prayers!”

I sat down on my equipment case, talking into the probe until I thought my voice would give out. The sun cast fire-tinged shadows on the cows, and the crickets began to chirp.

God Was Present

“We are not going to give up on you. You are not alone down there. We are coming to help you,” I croaked. Still no answer. Yet it did not matter. Sitting there alone, talking down into that darkness, I felt something had broken through inside of me... *an absolute sense that God was always present.*

Even if the miners could not hear me, *God could.* And, the more I talked the more hopeful I felt. “You are not alone.” I said again. “*God is there with you.*”

At around eight o’clock that night, Jeff called me from the drill site to tell me the first rescue drill had been fixed. My back aching, my voice almost gone, I said into my headset, “Hang on, we are getting closer.”

It was almost ten o’clock when I drove to the nearby Wal-Mart to park and grab a few hours of sleep in my car. But, once more, sleep would not come.

I returned early Saturday morning and started talking into the probe a gain, sipping a warm cup of the Stanczyks’ coffee. I felt better just talking. The words became part of one long prayer, even the standard protocol words. I was off by myself, far from the grating noise of the drill, from the hubbub of rescue workers and reporters, yet I felt completely connected. I kept at it

until around 9:00 p.m., when Jeff called me over to the drill site. Shortly after 10:00 p.m. the drill finally broke through to the mine chamber, 240 feet below the surface.

The air compressor was removed from the pilot hole, but it would still be awhile before the rescue capsule was ready. I suggested using my probe in the pilot hole to try to make contact. At last, I got the okay.

What If There Is No Answer?

The machinery was shut off and an eerie quiet fell over the exhausted crowd. I had been trying to contact the miners for two days, yet now the thought of it struck me cold. What if there is still no answer at all? God, help us.

I put on the headset and knelt over the hole as we began lowering the probe... 50 feet, 100 feet. I started talking again. “Stay where you are. Can you hear me?”

There was silence. “Can you hear me?” I asked again, almost begging for a response. Lord, please let them hear me.

“Yes... *we can hear you.*”

Had I imagined it?

“Can you hear me?” I asked once more, still lowering the probe.

The voice came again, louder and stronger. “We definitely can hear you.”

I wanted to shout in jubilation. But first I had to convince myself.

“Are you the trapped miners?” It was more of a statement than a question.

“Yes.” Awe swept over me. It was almost as if God Himself had spoken to me. I turned to the workers clustered around me and gave them a thumbs-up. A low murmur of excitement rippled through the crowd.

“How many of you are there?” I asked. “We are all nine here.”

I held up nine fingers. There was an almost simultaneous sigh of relief, though everyone restrained themselves since the miners’ families still had to be notified. Then the miner I was speaking to asked about several people by name.

I later learned they were the miners who had nearly also been

trapped. I was touched that after over three days underground, their first concern was for their fellow workers. Soon the rescue team swung into action. One by one each weary, coal covered miner was lifted up in the escape capsule.

It was 3:30 a.m. on Sunday when I finally put my equipment back in my trunk and said good-bye to the Stanczyks. I got into my car and headed home to my family. I had no idea when my cell phone rang three days before that I would play some small part in a rescue that captivated the entire nation.

Later, when I was asked about how I felt upon hearing the trapped Quecreek miners’ voices for the first time, I could only respond that it was like saying a prayer and having God talk back to you. And, watching the miners being brought up was like watching my own children being born.

The miners were safe because God had answered millions of prayers that day. My own problems had been getting the best of me, but now I am certain that when we call on Him, we are always answered. The miners were not the only ones who were rescued that day! Thanks be to God. +++

Peace of God

by Fr. Edwin J Duffy
from *Fr. Duffy’s Reflections*, p. 41

A missionary priest in China was placed in solitary confinement because he refused to teach Communism in his school. Afraid of going mad, he kept praying to St. Joseph to help keep his sanity. Later, a thought struck him, “God sees me here, so I know He is watching over me.”

From then on, he possessed a peace of mind and heart that never left him, even when they tried to brainwash him. He was never afraid again. Prayer can be like that. It can calm the most troubled spirit. It is our bridge to God where fears are shattered, and peace and tranquillity are restored. +++

Our Lady of Fatima and the Muslims

by Fr. James Gilhooley

I was standing in the express line of Shop Rite with my groceries. A pleasant cashier soon helped me. As I handed my payment to her, I noticed from her tag that her name was Fatima. As we chatted, I learned that she was a Muslim.

A Prophetic Book

Therein is a story. The Extraordinary Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen wrote a book in 1952 that he called *The World's First Love*. In that book, he discussed the relationship of Mary of Nazareth and the Muslims. More than half a century later, the archbishop's book stands as prophetic.

First some background. The Koran, the Muslims' bible, has references to Mary's Immaculate Conception as well as the Virgin Birth. Her genealogy is traced back to Abraham, Noah, and Adam. There is reference made to Mary's mother.

In the Muslim tradition, when questions are asked about the possibility of a virgin birth, Mary takes on the questioner. The tradition has Her asking, "Do you not know that God, when He created wheat, had no need of seed?" Mary pushes further... "God by His power made the trees without the help of rain."

Koran Speaks Of Mary

The Koran speaks of the Annunciation, Visitation, and Nativity. The 19th chapter of the Koran has 41 verses on Jesus and Mary. The 41st chapter appears to have been borrowed from the Gospel of Luke.

The only possible rival to Mary among the Muslims is Fatima. She was the daughter of the seventh-century Mohammed. But,

after Fatima's death at around age 26, the sorrowful Mohammed penned a message to his child, "Thou shalt be the most blessed of women in Paradise after Mary."

Fatima Of Portugal

And, this brings us to the famed Fatima of Portugal. Mary appeared to shepherd children in Fatima in 1917. Before the vision, this hamlet was a cipher to both Portugal and Europe at large. The question before 1917, when asked at all, was, "Can any good come out of Fatima?" Today we know the answer.

Ironically, the Marian phenomenon that happened to this unknown hamlet *may prove the salvation of both Portugal and her sister countries in post-Christian Europe, if not the world!*

Muslims Attacked Europe

On two different occasions, the then Christian Europe almost fell to the Muslims. On the first occasion, in the eighth century, the Muslims, before being defeated, reached Tours in west central France.

The second time, in the 16th century, the Muslims rudely struck on the gates of Austria's Vienna. They were defeated at the naval battle of Lepanto off Greece in 1571; Mary's role was significant. That victory occurred in October, the month traditionally given to honor Her.

Sheen believed that Mary deliberately chose to be known as Our Lady of Fatima in the early 20th century. She wished to better appeal to the Muslims. He believes that one day through Her, Muslims will also accept Her Son as their Savior.

Muslims Occupied Portugal

The archbishop reminds us that Portugal was occupied by the Muslims from the eighth century through the 13th. This hamlet of Fatima has, of course, a strong name recognition to Muslims everywhere in the world.

Sheen contended that the Muslims will one day become Christians. But,

he asserts *this will not be accomplished by the Christian catechism, but by Mary!*

For a start, Muslims already venerate Her. Mary is for them the authentic Sayyida (Lady). Tradition says that young Fatima herself, said, "I surpass all the women except Mary."

Once again, it will be *ad Jesus per Marian* (to Jesus through Mary).

Our Lady Of Fatima

Then the choice of Fatima for Mary's apparitions was no accident at all. Neither is Her almost century-old title, *Our Lady of Fatima*. Mary is telling Muslims everywhere that She is user-friendly. She comes to them with batteries already provided.

The Muslims have not failed to salute Her. Her pilgrim statue of Fatima has been joyously saluted in the countries of Africa and Asia where it has visited. During these festivities, Muslims came to our churches to fete Our Lady of Fatima. Processions were allowed to proceed in front of mosques, where we know that prayers were recited.

Sheen wrote in 1952, "In Mozambique, the unconverted Muslims began to be Christian when the statue of Our Lady of Fatima was erected."

We must convince the Muslims that Our Lady Mary could not be the most blessed among women without being responsible for some stupendous event. That event, of course, was the birth of the God-Man. We must show them that without His birth, Mary, in the archbishop's words, "would be nothing."

Those of us, who have misplaced our Rosaries, must relocate them. We must use those beads for the conversion of Muslims.

We prayed that same prayer successfully for the downfall of communism following the Russian Revolution in 1917. That was the year that Mary visited Fatima. Was She telling us something?

Mary will not fail us. But, neither must we fail Her. *Pray!! +++*

Was Padre Pio Harsh?

from *The Life of Padre Pio*, pp 151-3
by Gennaro Prezioso

One day one of the friars expressed his disagreement with the way Padre Pio treated some of the penitents in the confessional. His answer was: "If you only knew how I suffer in having to refuse absolution... but remember that it is better to be criticized by man in this life, than by God in the next life."

All those who experienced the bitterness of being sent away without absolution, eventually, through the prayers of Padre Pio, were moved to true remorse.

They were not at peace! They lived in a state of constant, unbearable agitation which ended only when, after a radical change of life and a total conversion, they turned to the heavenly Father with sincere repentance.

Then, their laments of sorrow turned into shouts of joy. When that happened, Padre Pio became infinitely sweet and kind, and he finally pronounced the longed-for words: "Ego te absolvo."

He was "jealous" of his spiritual sons and daughters. One day he said: "I can punish my spiritual children, but woe to anyone else who touches them! By force of blows, I want to carry them upward."

The method of Padre Pio cannot be imitated, and he himself admitted as much when he said to a priest who had dismissed a penitent without absolution: "You cannot do what I do!"

Why Treat Them So?

On another occasion, he was harsh with a person who had come to him, and the friar who had accompanied the man told him: "But, Padre, you have destroyed that soul!"

"No," he replied; "I have pressed him to my heart."

I Must Act This Way To Save Souls

Someone once asked him why he treated his penitents that way. He explained: "I destroy the old and replace it with the new." Another time he said: "Spanking, and bread, make beautiful children."

Padre Tarcisio remembers that one day, while going up the steps of the friary with Padre Pio, they met a man who asked if he could go to confession. Padre Pio changed his expression, and said: "Don't you see how wicked you are? Go and put those things back. Change your life. Then come, and I will hear your confession."

Padre Tarcisio was puzzled by Padre Pio's words, and after a few steps, he said: "Padre, do not be upset!"

Padre Pio replied: "My son, it is only the external that has assumed a different form. The interior has not changed a bit. Before I cause any displeasure to a brother...oh, if you only knew how many arrows have pierced my heart! *But, if I do not act that way, many souls will not be converted.*"

He would remind the penitents of the sins they had committed in the past. He used to say: "I know you inside and out, as you know yourself in the mirror." If anyone asked him how he could know all that, he would answer: "It is not I, but He who is in me and above me."

Most Upsetting Sins

The sins that upset him the most were the sins against motherhood, the limitation of families, the sins against life, blasphemy and cursing, violation of the Sunday precept, lying, calumny, and the scandal of immodest dress.

Sins Of Ingratitude

"Padre," a penitent said to him, "I saw you weeping in the confessional. Why?"

He answered: "Because of the ingratitude of men towards the great divine Benefactor. What else could Jesus do, that poor Jesus,

that He has not done? ...And, we are so ungrateful!"

Padre Pio knew God with all His attributes, and he knew man with all his defects, his weaknesses, his fragility, his miseries, and his sins. He loved souls as he loved the Lord. "I am consumed with love of God and love of neighbor," he once wrote. He felt like a prisoner between these two loves.

Prayer and Suffering

Padre Pio offered himself as a victim for sinners. He would pray and suffer for anyone. He felt within himself a need, an expectation, a hope for God, and he was also aware of the needs of men. He always tried to reconcile these two tendencies, and he sacrificed himself for the weaker of the two.

"If you only knew what a soul costs!" he once said. And, then he added: "A soul is not given as a gift; it must be bought. You do not know what it cost Jesus (and His laborers). And, it is always with the same "money" that it has to be paid for... (prayer and suffering)."

Save Souls

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I love You, save souls. Let us, with Jesus, *thirst for souls*. Let us offer ourselves, as did Padre Pio, the saints, and Our Lady, to join Jesus and be redeemers of souls.

Out of gratitude to Him, can you try to do even a little more than you are doing now for our Good God and for souls, whom He loves so very much? If you do, *your own place in Heaven will be elevated.*

Like Padre Pio, but in your own small way, go for it! Go for a high place in Heaven. God wants us there to be happy with Him. It is the very reason for which He created us. It is our purpose for living. God is our greatest source of joy! Praise Him always.

Prayer, sacrifices, and penance are called for. Do we love enough to do this in order to save ourselves and others? Jesus invited Padre Pio, and now Jesus invites each one of us to love as He does. +++

Lay Women in Japan

from *The Rising Sun on a Day in August*,
p. 111-4
by John Bird

In 1949, the year the war ended, a Catholic lay woman, seeking prayer and meditation began to lead a contemplative life in a disused farmhouse in Yuzawadai, near Akita, a town in the province of Niigata, a rather remote mountainous area in northern Honshu, Japan. Hot and humid in summer with long cold winters, this region is renowned for its sake (rice wine).

For a long time she lived on her own, but later in the early sixties, she was joined by three others who also sought to live in community and prayer. They persevered to overcome many obstacles. They did not have a priest and lived on strict necessities, having abandoned everything to consecrate themselves to God alone.

Despite constant criticism, ridicule, and calumny for not appearing to do anything appreciably useful, they persevered. Their lives, if not understood by outsiders, were nevertheless very pleasing to God, Who was preparing this modest abode, through reparation and suffering, to be a place of divine predilection.

In 1962, they took a significant step towards their small community being officially recognized, with the appointment of the remarkable John Shojiru Ito as Bishop of the Diocese of Niigata, of which Akita is a part.

Sisters Chie Ikeda, Saki Kotake and Surnako Sugawara, asked the new bishop to approve their request to form a secular religious institute in the hope that it would develop into a consecrated order of religious nuns.

Propagate The Faith

Providentially, Bishop Ito at about that time, had received a letter from Gregorio Agagianan, the Cardinal

Prefect for the Propagation of the Faith, recommending that he establish a group of dedicated Japanese women to assist him with the evangelization in his diocese. Such a group might be helpful in the Niigata Diocese where there was a real shortage of priests.

Bishop Ito could envision the small community at Yuzawadai as possibly being a valuable part of this initiative, and waited patiently to see how its formation developed. Some women came and some left, but it continued to grow.

Cured With Lourdes Water

In 1964, the then superior, Sister Kotake, was seriously ill and it was thought she would die, but on taking a small amount of Lourdes water she made a miraculous recovery. In thanksgiving, the sisters decided to commission a statue of the Virgin Mary for their small chapel.

The Lady Of All Nations

One of them had a holy picture of the Lady of All Nations, taken from a painting done by a German artist, representing the appearance of Our Lady to Ida Peerdeman in Amsterdam (d. June 1996). Mary first appeared to Ida on March 25, 1945, exactly six hundred years after a famous Eucharistic miracle in that city.

The apparitions (both in Holland and in Germany) lasted from 1945 to 1959. On May 31, 1996, the now deceased Bishop of Haarlem in Holland, Mgr. Hendrik Bomers, officially approved veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of "The Lady of All Nations," and reaffirmed the imprimatur of a prayer given to Ida in which the title was first included.

His successor, Mgr. Joseph Maria Punt went a significant step further when in May 2002, he published the findings of an exhaustive commission of enquiry into the events in Amsterdam and Germany, and the claims made by Ida Peerdeman, which concluded that the apparitions of the Lady of All Nations were of heavenly origin, and that there

were no theological or psychological impediments to the declaration of supernatural authenticity.

Wood From Palestine

Sister Kotake then took the holy picture to Saburo Wakasa, (a Buddhist sculptor in Akita), asking him to use it as a model for his design. Wakasa was a member of Japan's Sculptors Association, and such was the esteem for his work, that it was displayed at prestigious annual exhibitions.

The statue of Mary was his first work linked to Christianity. Using a block of Katsura wood, which originated in Palestine, he set out to carve Her with the globe and the Cross, modeled on the Lady of All Nations. This wood is easy to carve, dry, and quite hard.

Looking at the holy picture, he said he was aware of the serenity and peace of Mary, and he wanted to incorporate this into the image in a meaningful way. It took him three months to finish the carving, which he completed in 1965.

Finally, on September 8, 1970, (the Nativity of the Virgin Mary), Bishop Ito approved the foundation of the convent community (numbering twelve sisters) and consecrated the building in a service attended by priests and the faithful of the Akita area.

Prayer And Work

The sisters took the name of the Secular Institute of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist (Seitai Hoshikai). They set themselves to pray, and to work as catechists, spreading the Gospel among unbelievers and strengthening the faith of lay Catholics, especially through a life of prayer.

They hoped to show that Christianity could be genuinely Japanese, and designed their convent with this in mind. To fully experience God's love, they pledged to embrace vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Although lay women, they all lived like nuns with prayer at the heart of their activity.

Their convent on the hill at Yuzawadai, a quiet old-world hamlet several miles from the town, was the ideal setting for peace and quiet.

Life there has altered little over the years, but all this was to change dramatically in the mid 1970's, when the small modest community became the centre of a series of remarkable events which were to bring pilgrims from all over Japan, as well as from many countries around the world.

Wooden Weeps 101 Times

In the Spring of 1975, the Japanese media carried reports that the statue had been weeping tears. The sisters were suddenly in the news with film and television crews descending on them from Tokyo to investigate the phenomenon. The lacrymations of Maria Sama, as the events were described, became a national TV interest story.

Japanese commercial television networks broadcast the actual movement and the flow of the tears from the eyes of the wooden statue, and millions of Japanese witnessed the events on television.

Behind the media fascination, there was an even more unusual story of revelation and human faith, because the weeping of the statue was in fact the climax to a series of hidden events which had been taking place in the convent previously, over a period of eighteen months.

The central person in this drama was Sr. Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa, a victim soul of love and suffering, called by God to be a messenger of a severe warning for the endangered soul of Japan, for the universal Church, and for the world. +++

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Mother of All Nations

from *Marian Peace Center of Lansing*,
Vol. 6, #4

On February 11, 1951, the Blessed Virgin Mother introduced Herself under the new title, "I am the Lady Mary, Mother of All Nations." Our Lady had been appearing to a visionary in Amsterdam by the name of Ida Peerdeman for six years previous to this important apparition and request.

On May 31, 1996, the late Bishop Bomer of Haarlem, Amsterdam, and Bishop Punt, his Auxiliary, issued an official statement permitting public veneration of Our Lady under the title "The Lady of All Nations," however emphasizing that the faithful are free to form their own opinion concerning the messages.

Final Marian Dogma

The reason these messages of Amsterdam are so unique to the history of Marian apparitions, is that Mary is coming in our modern times under this new title, and is requesting a final Marian dogma. The dogma will contain the threefold truth that: The Trinity wishes to send Mary, the Lady of All Nations, in these times, as *Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate*" (5/31/54). "When this dogma is proclaimed, The Lady of All Nations will grant peace... true peace... to the world" (5/31/54).

In an extraordinary way, Mary dictated a powerful prayer that will bring about the proclamation of the dogma, and with it, a new fullness of the Holy Spirit.

She promises. "This prayer is given in order to call down the True Spirit upon the world" (9/20/51). Mary stresses: "You cannot estimate the great value this will have. You do not know what the future has in store" (4/15/51). She even promises that: "Through this prayer, the Lady shall save the world. I repeat this promise once more (5/10/53). You

do not know how important this prayer is before God" (5/31/35).

To the Holy Father, Our Lady says that She is: "Sent by Her Lord and Creator so that, under this title and through this prayer, She may deliver the world of a great world catastrophe (5/10/53). See to it that this prayer is made known throughout the world among all peoples. They all have a right to it! I assure you that the world will change" (4/29/51).

Prayer For Our Modern World

Our Lady says, "Let the people pray this short, simple prayer every day. It is short and simple, so that everyone in this quick and modern world can pray it. This prayer calls forth the Holy Spirit upon the world" (9/20/51).

The picture that accompanies the prayer illustrates the threefold dogma. The Coredemptrix is standing on the globe before the luminous Cross of Her Son's Redemption. Gathered around Her is the flock of Christ, upon which are shining the three rays of Grace, Redemption, and Peace, emitted from the hands of the *Mediatrix of All Graces*.

Some 50 years ago, the visionary, Ida, had a vision of falling snow, symbolizing the wonderful effect of this action. "Just, as the snowflakes whirl over the world and fall upon the ground in a thick layer, so will the prayer and the image spread over the world and fall down into the hearts of all nations" (4/1/51).

Mary also makes a magnificent promise: "Go with great ardor and zeal about this work of redemption and peace, and you will behold the miracle" (of the spreading of this devotion — 4/1/51). *God wants all nations to come to know Mary as their Mother.* +++

The Prayer: *Lord, Jesus Christ. Son of the Father, send NOW Your Spirit over the earth. Let the Holy Spirit live in the hearts of ALL NATIONS that they may be preserved from degeneration, disaster, and war. May THE LADY OF ALL NATIONS, who once was Mary, be our Advocate. Amen.* +++

Jakov Discusses Prayer

On 6/21/06, Jakov was asked the question, "What are we supposed to do when we have a problem with prayer?" His answer was:

People ask this question very often. When you pray, and when your thoughts are going somewhere else, it is important to stop and ask for help from God. You can use your own words... such as, "I want to pray. I want to be united with You in prayer. Help me."

A very good fixed formula that is often used in prayer is, "Oh God, come to my assistance. Oh Lord, make haste to help me."

Remember that many times Our Lady has said, "Wherever good is, there is also another side which desires to destroy everything. If you do not stay persistent in your prayer, you will lose it, give up, and do other things. Relax, think of God, and make an effort to stay focused."

Also, it is very important to select a quiet time and place to pray. Prayer is extremely difficult amidst noise and busyness. +++



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

Medjugorje & Prague — Mon., March 5 to Wed., March 14, 2007 (10 days), \$1499. (One day in Prague.) +++

Betania, Venezuela — Wed., March 21, to Tues. March 27, 2007, (7 days) \$1689. We will be there for the March 25 anniversary celebration. +++

Fatima — Tues., April 17, to Tues., April 24, 2007 (8 days) \$1399. Visit **Aljustрал, Lisbon, Santarem, Coimbra, Fatima, Ourem**, and the Shrine of Our Lady of Nazareth at **Nazare**. +++

Shrines of **Italy** — Wed., June 13, to Fri., June 29, 2007 (17 days) \$2899. Visit **Milan, San Damiano, Montichiari, Fontanelle** (Rosa Mystica), **Vincenza, Padua, Venice, Florence, Siena, Assisi, Loreto, Osimo, San Giovanni Rotondo, St. Michael's Cave, Pietrelcina, Mugnano** (St. Philomena), **Pompeii, Rome, & Civitavecchia**. +++

Fatima — Marian Conference and Retreat. International guest speakers. Sat., July 7, to Saturday, July 14, 2007 (8 days), \$1999 (Land only, \$1399). **One youth (age 25 or under) FREE with each paying adult.** Special July 13 apparition anniversary celebration. +++

Fatima and Lourdes — Fri., July 20 to Sun., Aug. 5, 2007 (18 days) \$2799. Our most popular pilgrimage. Feast Day visit to **Santiago Compostella** (Shrine of St. James), **Pontevedra, Zaragoza, Avila, Braga, Santarem, Covadonga, Fatima, Ovieto, Lourdes, Garabandal, etc.** +++

Ireland — Sun., Aug. 12, to Fri., Aug. 24, 2007 (13 days) \$2399. **Knock, Inchigeela, Ballinspittle, Melleray Grotto, Attymass** (Fr. Patrick Peyton), **Achill House of Prayer, Dublin**, & time with visionary Tom Lennon. +++

WHITE MARTYRDOM PEACE FLIGHT, Oct. 5 to Oct. 23, 2007, (19 days) \$4499 (if deposit is paid by 12/31/06, after then, \$4999). We visit Fatima, Rome, Turkey, Lebanon, the Holy Land, Medjugorje, & Lourdes. +++

Medjugorje & Prague — Mon., Nov. 5 to Wed., Nov. 14, 2007 (10 days), \$1499. (One day in Prague.) +++

Guadalupe, Mexico — for Feast Day celebrations. Dec. 6 thru 13, 2007 (8 days) \$1499 (Land only, \$1099). Feasts of the Immac. Concep., Juan Diego, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and visits to **Ocotlan, Puebla, St. Michael's Well, & Our Lady of Good Remedies**. +++

Poland Shrine Tour — Sat., May 17, to Fri., May 30, 2008 (14 days), \$2749. Includes **Warsaw, Zoliborz, Krakow** (Corpus Christi Procession), **Niapokalonow, Zakopane, Zelazowa Wola, Wagnivniki** (Divine Mercy Center), **Wadowice** (birthplace of John Paul II), **Kalwari Zebrzydowska**, and the beautiful Shrine at **Lechen**. +++

Germany, Austria, & Switzerland— (Passion Play) **Ulm**, June 15 to June 26, 2008, \$3399, **Oberammergau**, June 15 to June 26, 2010, \$3699. +++

France — Wed., Sept 10, 2008, to Sat., Sept. 27 (17 days), \$2899. Visit **Paris, Chartres, Paray-le-Monial, La Salette, Ars, Chateaufort-de-Galaure St. Baume, Lisieux, Pellevoisin, Nevers, Lourdes, Normandie, Mont St. Michel, Pontmain, Carcasson & more**. +++

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

VISIT FATIMA HOUSE
and the St. Joseph Great Room.
Spend a few quiet days near the
Blue Army Shrine in Washington, NJ.
Call the 101 Foundation for details.

Write for information regarding the
Garabandal Miracle Flight.

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