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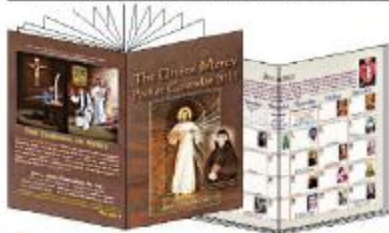
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WHAT'S BEST FOR US?

By Wayne Weible (January 2008)

It's a new year and a time to renew or revive those things in life that matter to us most. We do it by way of making resolutions. We make them and then within a matter of a few days, a month or so, they fade or fall away.

That's the way it is with most of us. We have good intentions, but...

At the first Holy Mass of the year on New Year's Day, our priest mentioned during his homily that the evening before, he was listening to the television national news somewhat abstractedly when he heard some government official commenting on a re-cent political event. What caught his attention was the official's final comment: "We must do what is best for us."

From that comment, our priest was able

to build a very insightful homily, one that struck me as right on the mark.

In essence, our Priest pointed out that in today's contemporary world, we generally focus on what is best for us regardless of the circumstances. Rather, he commented, we should be concerned for what is best for all of us. Thus, my New Year's resolution, rather than worrying about personal things, is to concentrate on what is generally best for all concerned.

What is best for our world?

What is best for our country?

What is best for our community?

What is best for our neighbourhood?

What is best for our families and for the individuals who compose it?

What is certainly best for all of the above mentioned is peace, a peace that

passes all understanding. It is the peace of the Lord, Jesus Christ. It is the heart and soul of the message of the Queen of Peace who comes to Medjugorje daily and continues through thousands of encounters with the visionaries to urge us to do exactly what my very astute pastor pointed out in his New Year's Day homily.

Peace can only be achieved by individual effort. With all individuals thinking in terms of what is best for all, it happens. True peace lies in love of God above all else, and love of neighbour as self. Any compromise or departure from this path does not serve God, mankind or self.

Let this be the year that this particular resolution lasts beyond the norm.

Developed countries suffer from poverty of understanding, poverty of will, of loneliness, of lack of love and spirit. There is no greater disease in the world today than this.

Mother Teresa

Devotion of the 25 "Glory Be"

by Val Cordon.

Monsignor Tom Taylor tells the wonderful story of the "devotion to the twenty-five Glory Be's" also known as "Devotion to the Blessed Trinity". When asked he said, it came to him first, from an American priest, then he tells us the whole story.

During my six years at St. Sulpice, in Paris. I became friendly with a Sulpician postulant from the seminary in Baltimore, Fr. Paul Lang. Later, as a priest, Fr. Lang returned to his old college in America as a professor. I did not see him again for some years. One day on my way to a Congress held at Chicago, I called to see him and was shocked when I saw his appearance: he had just been discharged from hospital and was far from being well.

After spending a short time with him and feeling very sad, I took my leave of him. Some months later I had a letter from him. He said he had been compelled to return to the hospital and while there, one of the staff, a religious sister and a great devotee of the Little Flower, strongly urged him to say the "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, the Trinitarian prayer, twenty five times daily for life. This was a thanksgiving prayer to God said by St. Thérèse for the Graces conferred on her during her twenty-five years on earth. Fr. Lang faithfully promised to do so. In a very short time he found himself completely cured.

All this happened some time ago and since then he has joined his little friend St. Therese in heaven. I was delighted at the wonderful "roses" the Little Flower had let fall on him.

I forgot all about it until one day I was to have my interest again aroused when I was on retreat in Kinnoull Monastery, Perth. There I met an old friend, Canon Grant of Aberdeen, who told me a marvellous story. Recently, he said, I was called to the infirmary to visit a woman seriously injured in a motor accident.

A strange feature of the case was that I did not know who had made the call. She was unconscious and her face was bloodstained and the nurses believed she was dying. Not knowing if she was a Catholic, I was unable to give her the last sacraments.

I could only offer a prayer for her and take my leave. At the door I happened to put my hand in my breast pocket, I felt a favourite knotted cord which I kept with me with a medal of the Little Flower attached. This was one of the many cords made by a lady who also had devotion to the twenty-five Glory Be's, and had made beads with twenty-five knots on them in order to count

the twenty-five Glory Be's... I took it out, and went back to the seriously ill patient and put it underneath her pillow.

Next day, to the amazement of the entire staff, she showed signs of a full recovery and I was sent for again. Great was my astonishment when she told me she was a Catholic but had not been to the Sacraments for over thirteen years. I had no doubt whatsoever that it was the Little Flower herself who had visited this patient.

A few months later, the grateful and fortunate lady gave birth to a healthy child. I thought after hearing this I would be forever devoted to the twenty five Glory Be's and St. Thérèse.

This decision was strengthened by an incident that happened shortly afterwards in my own parish. A woman, who had a severe time at the births of all her eight children, was now about to have a ninth.

The doctor in attendance informed her that both she and the child would die unless she placed herself entirely in his hands. The mother, however, in her great faith informed him that she would not allow him to tamper with the safety of the child, telling him politely but firmly she no longer required his services. I was sent for and blessed her with the relic of St. Therese, and I also gave her one of the blessed cords and asked her to promise to say daily for life the twenty-five Glory Be's... This she solemnly promised to do. The result again was startling, the roses began to fall immediately. Next day she was going freely about the house. Three days later the child was delivered with much less pain than any of her other eight children.

The new infant actually weighted 13 lbs. In nine days the mother was once more on her feet doing her work as usual; a couple of years later I had the joy of baptising her tenth child.

Recently a Catholic lady doctor from Glasgow brought me a patient suffering from lung cancer. He was a young father of three little children. He had been x-rayed at two hospitals. The verdict in the first case was that a cure was out of the question because of the serious condition of his lungs. The second hospital concurred with the first, he could not survive and had only a short time left.

I blessed him with the relic of St. Thérèse and asked him to make a vow to say the twenty-five Glory Be's every day for life if he survived. A month later he returned completely cured to his wife and family who gave thanks to the Little Flower of Jesus, for his cure.

He was so greatly changed by the experience not only in character, but physically as well, that he was unrecognisable by anyone who knew him before the cancer took command of his body. I advised him to return to the hospital and show himself to the specialist who had diagnosed him. The cancer specialist did not even recognise him and could only say, "Amazing! Amazing!"

Not long ago a Missionary Nun from Africa approached me in Our Lady's Grotto in Carfin and asked for prayers on behalf of her father, dying of cancer in Belfast. His heart being so strong, the pain-relieving injection of morphine had to be held back because he might live for months. She begged prayers for God to deliver him from his pain. She then revealed that he had not practised the faith for over forty-five years and would not allow a priest even to enter the house.

She was really in despair. She felt his soul could not be saved. I suggested she should start saying the twenty-five Glory Be's which I had found so extraordinary. She would not promise, but that night though still unconvinced, she began her daily recital of the twenty-five Glory Be's.

The result was almost incredible. A couple of days later, she received an urgent message to hurry home as her father was dying. This she did and found to her great joy he had become reconciled to God and had received the Last Sacraments.

When I saw her again she said: "Upon my arrival home he made a beautiful communion and died a peaceful death in my arms." In all his pain he uttered only "Jesus, Mary and Joseph." Surely this was another wonderful triumph for the twenty-five Glory Be's and once again evidence of the many conversions wrought by this fervent prayer to the Blessed Trinity.

Now, my dear friend, I feel confident the account I have given you of devotion of the twenty-five Glory Be's will have convinced you of its marvellous power and efficacy. Therefore I repeat to you that the favours here described are only a small fraction of the countless graces our dear St. Therese has obtained for those who daily recite this short, sweet and simple prayer.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

(From Mælugorje Herald, Ireland)

Jesus Christ, after having given us all He could give, that is to say, the merit of his toils, his sufferings, and his bitter death; after having given us His Adorable Body and Blood to be the Food of our souls, willed also to give us the most precious thing he had left, which is His Holy Mother. St John Vianney

Fr Jose saw Heaven, Hell and Purgatory

Fr. Jose Maniyangat is currently the pastor of St. Mary's Mother of Mercy Catholic Church in Macclenny, Florida. Here is his personal testimony: I was born on July 16, 1949 in Kerala, India to my parents, Joseph and Theresa Maniyangat. I am the eldest of seven children: Jose, Mary, Theresa, Lissama, Zachariah, Valsa and Tom. At the age of fourteen, I entered St. Mary's Minor Seminary in Thiruvalla to begin my studies for the priesthood.

Four years later, I went to St. Joseph's Pontifical Major Seminary in Alwaye, Kerala to continue my priestly formation. After completing the seven years of philosophy and theology, I was ordained a priest on January 1, 1975 to serve as a missionary in the Diocese of Thiruvalla. On Sunday April 14, 1985, the Feast of the Divine Mercy, I was going to celebrate Mass at a mission church in the north part of Kerala, and I had a fatal accident. I was riding a motor-cycle when I was hit head-on by a jeep driven by a man who was intoxicated, after a Hindu festival. I was rushed to a hospital about 35 miles away. On the way, my soul came out from my body and I experienced death. Immediately, I met my Guardian Angel. I saw my body and the people who were carrying me to the hospital. I heard them crying and praying for me. At this time my angel told me: "I am going to take you to Heaven, the Lord wants to meet you and talk with you." He also said that, on the way, he wanted to show me hell and purgatory.

Hell First, the angel escorted me to hell. It was an awful sight! I saw Satan and the devils, an unquenchable fire of about 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, worms crawling, people screaming and fighting, others being tortured by demons. The angel told me that all these sufferings were due to un-repentant mortal sins. Then, I understood that there are seven degrees of suffering or levels according to the number and kinds of mortal sins committed in their earthly lives. The souls looked very ugly, cruel and horrific. It was a fearful experience. I saw people whom I knew, but I am not allowed to reveal their identities. The sins that convicted them were mainly abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, hatefulness, un-forgiveness and sacrilege. The angel told me that if they had repented, they would have avoided hell and gone instead to purgatory. I also understood that some people who repent from these sins might be purified on earth through their sufferings. This way they can avoid purgatory and go straight to heaven. I was surprised when I saw in hell even priests and Bishops, some of whom I never expected to see. Many of them were there because they had misled the people with false teaching and bad example.

Purgatory After the visit to hell, my Guardian Angel escorted me to purgatory. Her too, there are seven degrees of suffering and unquenchable fire. But it is far less intense than hell and there was neither quarrelling nor fighting. The main suffering of these souls is their separation from God. Some of those who are in purgatory committed numerous mortal sins, but they were reconciled with God before their death. Even though these souls are suffering, they enjoy peace and the know-ledge that one day they will see God face to face. I had a chance to communicate with the souls in purgatory. They asked me to pray for them and to tell the people to pray for them as well, so they can go to heaven quickly. When we pray for these souls, we will receive their gratitude through their prayers, and once they enter heaven, their prayers become even more meritorious. It is difficult for me to describe how beautiful my Guardian Angel is. He is radiant and bright. He is my constant companion and helps me in all my ministries, especially my healing ministry. I experience his presence everywhere I go and I am grateful for his protection in my daily life.

Heaven Next, my angel escorted me to heaven passing through a big dazzling white tunnel. I never experienced this much peace

and joy in my life. Then immediately heaven opened up and I heard the most delightful music, which I never heard before. The angels were singing and praising God. I saw all the saints, especially the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, and many dedicated holy Bishops and priests who were shining like stars. And when I appeared before the Lord, Jesus told me: "I want you to go back to the world. In your second life, you will be an instrument of peace and healing to my people. You will walk in a foreign land and you will speak in a foreign tongue. Everything is possible for you with my grace..." After these words, the Blessed Mother told me: "Do whatever He tells you. I will help you in your ministries." Words cannot express the beauty of heaven... There we find so much peace and happiness, which exceed a million times our imagination. Our Lord is far more beautiful than any image can convey. His face is radiant and luminous and more beautiful than a thousand rising suns. The pictures we see in the world are only a shadow of His magnificence.. The Blessed Mother was next to Jesus; she was so beautiful and radiant. None of the images we see in this world can compare with her real beauty. *Heaven is our real home*; we are all created to reach heaven and enjoy God forever.

Then, I came back to the world with my angel. While my body was at the hospital, the doctor completed all examinations and I was pronounced dead. The cause of death was bleeding. My family was notified, and since they were far away, the hospital staff decided to move my dead body to the morgue. Because the hospital did not have air conditioners, they were concerned that the body would decompose quickly. As they were moving my dead body to the morgue, my soul came back to the body. I felt an excruciating pain because of so many wounds and broken bones. I began to scream, and then the people became frightened and ran away screaming. One of them approached the doctor and said: "The dead body is screaming." The doctor came to examine the body and found that I was alive. So he said: "Father is alive, it is a miracle! Take him back to the hospital." Now, back at the hospital, they gave me blood transfusions and I was taken to surgery to repair the broken bones. They worked on my lower jaw, ribs, pelvic bone, wrists, and right leg. After two months, I was released from the hospital, but my orthopaedic doctor said that I would never walk again. I then said to him: "The Lord who gave me my life back and sent me back to the world will heal me." Once at home, we were all praying for a miracle.. Still after a month, and with the casts removed, I was not able to move.

But one day while praying I felt an extraordinary pain in my pelvic area. After a short while the pain disappeared completely and I heard a voice saying: "You are healed. Get up and walk." I felt the peace and healing power on my body. I immediately got up and walked. I praised and thanked God for the miracle. I reached my doctor with the news of my healing, and he was amazed. He said: "Your God is the true God. I must follow your God." The doctor was Hindu, and he asked me to teach him about our Church. After studying the Faith, I baptised him and he became Catholic. Following the message from my Guardian Angel, I came to the United States on November 10, 1986 as a missionary priest.... Since June 1999, I have been pastor of St. Mary's Mother of Mercy Catholic Church in Macclenny, Florida.

Fr Jose Maniyangat. St Marymacclenny.com

In the Field...

“..different from a wanderer whose steps have no established final destination, a pilgrim always has a destination, even if at times he is not explicitly aware of it.”

These words were spoken by Pope Benedict XVI in a message he wrote for the Second World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Pilgrimages and Shrines, which was held in Santiago de Compostela from 27 to 30 September 2010.

This statement by the Holy Father perfectly sums up the journey of a pilgrim. This column will be a regular feature each issue bringing to you the experiences of New Zealand pilgrims. I tell all pilgrims jokingly who travel with me that “what goes on pilgrimage stays on pilgrimage – until I tell all my friends!” Having directed more than 11 pilgrimages to Medjugorje and countless numbers of pilgrims over the past eight years, I can tell you that their experiences matter. Talking about something you don't have any idea about, is like coming back from some place you've never been. These pilgrims 'in the field' have been, they have seen, and they have experienced what others cannot comprehend so they are well qualified to talk. Some experiences remain very personal and for them alone to talk about if they choose to, however you will get an insight into pilgrimage from the eyes of one called to lead others on this amazing journey and for those of you who cannot journey yourselves right now, or at all, it will hopefully be a way for you to feel the experience as if you were there.

How many people I meet who rubbish pilgrimage as a 'religious junket' or something they don't need to do because they have the church down the road and 'God is everywhere'. These comments are borne out of ignorance. If it was good enough for Mary and Joseph to deem it necessary to travel on pilgrimages more than once a year to holy places in what would have been extremely difficult conditions, who are we to say we do not need these places of grace anymore? If anything, we need them more than ever in the 21st century and the fact that Our Lady is coming back to earth so often and for so long in some remote, hard to reach places, inviting us to join her, should wake everyone up to the fact that God is calling us back to this vitally important aspect of our faith journey. Pilgrimage must become important again for Catholics in New Zealand. It absolutely must.

My latest group returned mid-September from a pilgrimage to the holy valley of Medjugorje. They experienced so much that it is only on their return that they can start to digest everything. The graces they receive there are in proportion to how open they are to God's offer. Take it from one who understands the concept and has been called to lead, that just because someone journeys on pilgrimage 10 times doesn't mean they receive more graces than someone who journeys on pilgrimage only once. I have met those who go on pilgrimage a lot, but go home unchanged, with grace enough to fill their pinkie finger and I have also met pilgrims who go only once in their lifetime and receive graces filled to overflowing and produce the fruit. How many times you go on a pilgrimage is irrelevant.

Why? It's all in the attitude and the preparation. If you spend your time finding fault with your fellow travellers – from the priest to the guide to the person you share a room with, you will lose the graces –

it's that simple. Our Lady has made it clear: “Dear Children, I invite you for your individual conversion”. It's not an invitation to worry about what others are up to. It is a time for each individual pilgrim to listen to what God wants from them or what they need to change within themselves. Every moment on pilgrimage is a moment of grace. There are so many moments on pilgrimage that are opportunities for grace and some pilgrims miss them.

The group I brought back three weeks ago had an amazing journey. Every group experiences something different and these pilgrims had some wonderful opportunities presented to them. They visited the lowest crypts under St Peter's Basilica in Rome to see for themselves the bones of St Peter and the tombs of the ancient Romans. It isn't easy to get a group into this. It has to be booked in advance with the Vatican and you can only go down in a group of 12 (however we were allowed a few more). They only show the excavations to 10 groups a day in order to preserve what is there, so we didn't take it for granted and it was extremely interesting.

We also had the privilege of going into the original home of Vicka, visionary of Medjugorje and into her apparition room in which she has had no less than 1000 apparitions with Our Lady. This room and house is locked up generally but we were 'in the right place at the right time' and were given the keys and allowed to spend time in the apparition room which was a comfortable little lounge/sitting room. Unless you are there, you cannot understand the feeling in an apparition room that has been graced by the presence of Our Lady so many times. The group were also invited by Ivan, visionary, to attend a private apparition with Our Lady the night before her birthday in Ivan's private chapel at the back of his house and in her message to us she said “help me” twice when referring to prayer for those far from God. It was very humbling for my group to have the Mother of God ask us for help – not once, but twice.

All the pilgrims ask me the same question: “What signs do you see?” They get lots of little signs; perfume of roses, spinning suns, gold rosary beads, various signs in the sky. These are all the usual little signs that come with a visit to Medjugorje and most of the pilgrims on this pilgrimage had these favours, so they presume, naturally, that I have had bucket loads of signs dumped in my lap because I have been there around 18 times therefore I should have a list of signs longer than the stairway to heaven. My answer to them is always the same: “Nothing. I have never had one single sign on a visit to Medjugorje – you pilgrims are my sign.” The group I take on the outbound journey is a completely different group from the one I bring back. This is sign enough.

If you would like to read more of our journeys as they happen then follow my pilgrim blog as we travel and you will be able to read about some more of our experiences.

The Pilgrim Whisperer. www.pilgrimwhisperer.com

Are you related to him?

Just before Christmas, there was a boy wandering through a shopping complex. He was admiring the colourful display of Christmas gifts. A lady closely watched him moving from one shop to another. Realising the poverty of the boy, she took him inside the shop and showed him the Christmas tree and explained to him the meaning of Christmas. “God loves us” she said, and so to save us from our sins, he was born in a manger as a little babe.” Then she bought him new clothes and shoes, along with some Christmas gifts, candy and refreshments. The little boy was thrilled. As she led him out of the shop, he looked at her and asked, “Are you God?” “No” she replied, “I am only one of his children.” “Ah!” said the boy, “I knew that you were related to him.

John Rose in 'John's Sunday Homilies'

Mary's Christmas Dream

"I had a dream, Joseph. I don't understand it, not really, but I think it was about a birthday celebration for our Son. I think that was what it was all about. The people had been preparing for it for about six weeks. They had decorated the house and bought new clothes. They'd gone shopping many times and bought elaborate gifts. It was peculiar, though, because the presents weren't for our Son...

They gave gifts to each other. Joseph, not to our Son. I don't think they even knew Him. They never mentioned His name. Doesn't it seem odd for people to go to all that trouble to celebrate someone's birthday if they don't know Him? I had the strangest feeling that if our Son had gone to this celebration He would have been intruding.....

I'm glad it was only a dream. How terrible, Joseph, if it had been real. (Author Unknown)

Our Lady's message from Medjugorje: (12/25/91) *"You say that Christmas is a family feast day, therefore, dear children, put God in the first place in your families, so that he may give you peace and protect you not only from war but also from every Satanic attack during times of peace. When God is with you, you have everything.*

As I ponder the words of your message dear Mother, I think back to the time in my life when I was struggling with the season of Christmas. I think of the hardships, struggles, health and family problems plus running the home and working, I was stressed and exhausted and prayed less. The thought of Christmas was starting to overwhelm me, and I honestly felt as if there was a war going on in my head and my life with all the things I was trying to balance.

All I could focus on at that time were the negative aspects of the Christmas season. Probably the same sort of things hundreds of other working mothers would be lying awake at night worrying about e.g. shopping, presents, and influx of other family members? I was tired, tired, tired, and I did not even want to have to think about it, let alone plan it and organise everything.

By this time of the year I was in need of a break and some time for quiet! In fact, to crawl into bed and pull the covers over my head for an indefinite period of time began to appear as a more and more appealing alternative to "the hassle of Christmas".

About that time, I was given a book of a compilation of Our Lady's messages from Medjugorje, by a friend who had been fortunate enough to travel to Medjugorje. I knew about Our Lady's appearances there and her messages to the seers, and had been very envious of my friend being able to go there. I read a bit of the book she had given me quite often, and one of the Christmas verses really spoke to me. I didn't know why, but for some reason the words would not leave me. They kept appearing and re-appearing in my mind. A little time later, another friend from out of town, sent me a Christmas card with a little book-mark in it that had a copy of "Mary's Dream" written on it. Those words, along with Mary's Medjugorje message would play over and over in my mind, and I began to realise how narrow my view of Christmas was and how negative my attitude. One night as I lay tossing and turning and worrying, I finally decided I needed to pray to Our Lady and ask her to help me see Christmas in a

new light, and to help me make the time more of a family feast day and to help me experience the love she spoke of. I was praying in this way for a couple of weeks, when a friend said to me, "Look, don't let your focus be on all the worldly aspects and organising. Just keep it simple! Just remember it is Jesus' birthday - keep it simple!"

For days afterwards those few words kept coming back to me, and every time I began to worry I would hear them again in my mind. "Keep it simple, it's Jesus' birthday, just wish Him happy birthday!" Looking back now, I'm sure that Our Lady spoke to me through her.

I decided to do just that from then on. Whenever I realised I was beginning to worry again, I would stop, picture Jesus lying in the manger in the stable, and in my heart I would take time to sing the Happy Birthday song to Him.

After a few days, I began to notice I was feeling happier and more at peace in myself. If I worried about the Christmas dinner, I would make myself stop, and I would imagine planning the birthday for Jesus, and I would ask Him what He would like, if He came to our place that day. I began to find I was looking forward to His "special day", and the feast we would have. I prayed about offering my Christmas Day Mass as my birthday present of love to Him, and then I found I began to plan my whole day around the Mass - putting God first, rather than as in other years, where if I was busy, and had people coming to share the day with us, I might not make it to Christmas Day Mass at all.

Every time I read the particular message of Our Lady which had started me on this path, I would realise what a war Satan had been waging against me and everyone else in the world. I saw how the enemy had managed to take the focus right away from our dearest Lord, and what His birth meant for us, and how special a day it was when our Saviour came into our world.

In my prayers, I pledged to put God first on that special day, and indeed every day in my life from then on. In one prayer time, I asked Jesus what He would like me to do for Him, as something special for His birthday. I then "saw" in the spirit an

image of a cake with candles, and in my heart I heard Him say "I would like a birthday cake!"

So out of that prayer time began our simple family tradition for Christmas, a special cake, decorated just for Jesus. Every Christmas Eve we turn off the lights, light the candles on the Jesus cake (now my grand-daughter's favourite task), all gathering round singing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus. It is then the youngest family member's privilege of cutting the cake and serving a piece to everyone present. Then its off to Midnight Mass, what a gesture of love to our Saviour. All the singing, the candles, the bringing of the baby to the manger - everything is so very beautiful; my heart is overflowing with love. For the first time in a very long time I really felt Jesus was amongst us, sharing His birthday. I know His peace and His love filled the hearts of my whole family.

Christmas Day was lovely - filled with love, and laughter. We lay the table for Christmas dinner, not with the usual decorations, but with the Nativity scene. The angels watched over the cattle, who gazed longingly at all the food, the shepherds sat around by everyone's plate and baby Jesus lay in the middle of the table, and enjoyed all the festivity. We had a noisy and wonderful meal, rounded off by another rendition of Happy Birthday to Jesus. He so filled our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day with His love that I look forward to this lovely tradition every year now.

Thank you, dear Mother Mary, for your words and for changing my heart and attitude to this precious time of Our Lord's birth.

Christmas is a blessed season, and I would like to encourage each and every one of you dear readers to try in some special way, to welcome Jesus, as your loving Saviour, into your hearts and your homes - wherever in the world you may be, and whatever your situation may be. He longs to find a place with each one of us.

What will you do to make this Christmas a special time for Jesus?

Velma Jones. velmaj@xtra.co.nz

We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature – trees, flowers, grass – grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence. We need silence to be able to touch our souls.

Quote from Mother Teresa

2011 GENUINE PILGRIMAGES OF FAITH



MEDJUGORJE PILGRIMAGE

With Fr. Robert Greenup OSA PP
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Preview of the Wellington 2011 Eucharistic Convention

Next year's Wellington Eucharistic Convention will be held at Saint Patrick's College, Silverstream, near Upper Hutt on Sunday 6th March.

The theme of the Convention will be "*Eucharist: The Source of all Life*".

We have two speakers from Australia for the Convention:

Fr. André Mary FI, of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate in Perth, Western Australia. Fr André accompanied Father Ermelindo di Capua OFM Cap and the relics of Saint Padre Pio to New Zealand in August 2010. He researches and narrates documentaries about Marian Shrines around the world as well as being involved in Retreats and Missions.

Fr. Dominic MURPHY OP of the Dominicans in Glebe, New South Wales, Australia. He is the Director of Vocations and the Catholic Chaplain to the Sydney University. He has been a speaker at recent Hearts Aflame Summer Camps in New Zealand. He is the Australian Dominicans' "teacher of Truth" and Lead Promoter of vocations.

The day begins with an hour of Adoration at 8am, followed by talks, prayers, a Holy Hour at 1pm when Reconciliation is available with at least ten priests, and concluding with Mass at about 5-30 pm.

There will be Sales Tables of Catholic merchandise available throughout the day, a crèche for children and a Sausage Sizzle during the lunch break.

The Wellington Eucharistic Convention is a day of retreat, reflection and instruction and unashamedly totally Catholic. Boost your soul's immune system and spend a day with Our Lord.

Anyone wanting further information can check our website at – www.divinenet.org.nz

or contact Ted Jordan at phone 04 5288679 or email – ted.j@xtra.co.nz

We are sad that Waikato Quickprint in Hamilton has been sold, though pleased that John and Josie McInnes should now enjoy more leisure time. Years ago they approached us, offering to print Medjugorje News at an amazingly low price. They also organised every three months the folding of hundreds of copies, and the packing and despatching by courier of hundreds more. We are all indebted to them. May Our Lord and Our Lady richly bless them!

A VISIT FROM HEAVEN

My brother Stephen died at the age of 15, when I was four and one-half years old. He had been sick with a kidney disease that he contracted when he was only two years old, but at the time, it was the usual pattern of death for boys with that type of disease.

When I was 2, 3 and 4 years old, I still remember being told to: "Be quiet, be still, Stephen is sick." What did that mean to a little guy? To me, it meant that I could not play with Stephen...and he did not want to, or was unable to, play with me.

I Felt Unloved. Being sick might mean that I should not touch him or hug him, as I could readily do with my parents and my sister, because I might get his sickness. It meant that I should avoid him, and perhaps he wanted to avoid me. It meant that maybe he did not love me, and I should not love him.

I remember that I used to run away from him, and that I did not go near to him very much, not that I did not want to do so, for he was very sweet, but I was reluctant because of an inner fear of disturbing him. Perhaps I had some kind of negative feeling about his illness. I don't know.

Mostly, however, I could not understand why he was sick, why he would not play with me, and why he did not love me. I was sad about it, and perhaps I felt rejected and lonely.

Then, when Stephen died, I felt even more rejected and unloved. He left me... he left me, and I did not understand where he went and why he went away. Over and over again, I kept asking my mother and sister, "Why didn't Stephen love me?"

They tried to comfort and reassure me that he did love me, but it was to no avail. My sadness continued. My brother was gone.

When I was given his room, games, and toys that made me even sadder than before! I continued to ask, "Why didn't Stephen love me?"

I Suddenly Changed. Then, one day a few months after Stephen's death, I became happy, and my demeanour changed. I stopped asking that question. I became like a different little boy, and the change was remarkably evident. My family asked me why I was suddenly so happy.

I said, "I know that Stephen loves me, that there is a Heaven, and I want to become a priest to help people to get to such a wonderful place." They were dumbfounded!

They asked how this little child, just past the age of four, going into his fifth year, could think of such a thing when he never spoke of it before! Then I told them of the beautiful thing that happened to me.

One night while I was sleeping in my brother's room, I awoke and began to stare into the utter darkness, when suddenly a small blue light appeared in the left hand corner near the window. This blue light grew and grew until my brother Stephen was standing at the foot of my bed.

The first thing that he said was: "David, I love you." The words were spoken with such affection, tenderness, and joy that my little heart pounded with happiness.

Then Stephen told me that he was no longer sick or in pain, that he was in the most beautiful place that one could ever imagine, and that it was a place filled with brilliant light, majestic trees, lovely flowers and gardens, crystal clear streams, and so much more!

He said that he was in Heaven, and that no words could describe the beauty and joy of it. He let me understand that he was

filled with intense happiness in a place where there is no sickness and everyone feels so loving and loved!

Then he told me not to worry, and that he was happy for me to have his room, his bed, his games, etc. He gave me a beautiful smile, and he left as he came, enfolded in blue light which grew smaller and smaller until it disappeared into the darkness of the room.

After listening to my response, my Mother then asked me how Stephen was dressed. I responded by describing the exact clothes he was wearing in his casket, which I did not remember... but I remembered vividly his coming from that beautiful blue light, how he looked, what he wore then, and the happiness that seemed to come from everywhere in and around him. I shall never forget it.

Heaven Is Real. After the experience, I felt not only comforted, but also inspired! I thought to myself, how wonderful it would be to help people get to Heaven, because my brother had told me what a magnificent place it is.

At a tender age of less than five, I knew there truly is a Heaven! I made up my mind that one day, God willing, I would become a priest. I wanted to go there, and I wanted to help others to go Heaven, as well. I entered the seminary in November of 1980, and I have never been happier.

I thank God for that great gift of the visit of Steen which inspired my vocation... which I now know is an even greater gift from God.

Fr. David J. Pekola Our Lady's Assumption Church, Hackettstown, NJ

AMAZING GRACE

John Newton was the son of an English sea captain. When John was ten his mother died and he went to sea with his father. The boy learnt the sea backward and forward.

At 17 he rebelled against his father, left the ship, and began living a wild life. Eventually John took a job on a cargo ship that carried slaves from Africa to America. He was promoted rapidly and soon became captain of the ship.

Newton never worried whether slave trade was right or wrong. He just did it. It was a way to make money. Then something happened that changed all that. One night a violent storm blew up at sea. The waves grew to the size of mountains. They picked up Newton's ship and threw it around like a toy. Everyone on board was filled with panic.

Then Newton did something he hadn't done since his leaving from his father's ship. He prayed. Shouting at the top of his voice, he said, "God, if only you will save us, I promise to be your slave forever." God heard his prayer and the ship survived.

When Newton reached land he kept his promise and quit the slave trade. Later he studied for ministry and was ordained pastor of a small church in Olney, England. There he won fame as a preacher and as a composer of hymns.

One of the most moving hymns that Newton wrote is the one that praises God for his conversion, Amazing Grace. The words read: Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found - Was blind, but now I see....

BREAKFAST AT MCDONALD'S

This is a good story and is true, please read it all the way through until the end! (After the story, there are some very interesting facts!):

I am a mother of three (ages 14, 12, 3) and have recently completed my college degree.

The last class I had to take was Sociology. The teacher was absolutely inspiring with the qualities that I wish every human being had been graced with. Her last project of the term was called 'Smile.' The class was asked to go out and smile at three people and document their reactions. I am a very friendly person and always smile at everyone and say hello anyway. So, I thought this would be a piece of cake, literally.

Soon after we were assigned the project, my husband, my youngest son and I went out to McDonald's one crisp March morning. It was just our way of sharing special playtime with our son. We were standing in line, waiting to be served, when all of a sudden, everyone around us began to back away, and then even my husband did.

I did not move an inch, an overwhelming feeling of panic welled up inside of me as I turned to see why they had moved. As I turned around I smelled a horrible 'dirty body' smell, and there standing behind me were two poor homeless men. As I looked down at the short gentleman, close to me, he was 'smiling'. His

beautiful sky blue eyes were full of God's Light as he searched for acceptance. He said, 'Good day' as he counted the few coins he had been clutching. The second man fumbled with his hands as he stood behind his friend. I realised the second man was mentally challenged and the blue-eyed gentleman was his salvation. I held my tears as I stood there with them.

The young lady at the counter asked him what they wanted. He said, 'Coffee is all Miss' because that was all they could afford. (If they wanted to sit in the restaurant and warm up, they had to buy something. He just wanted to be warm).

Then I really felt it - the compulsion was so great I almost reached out and embraced the little man with the blue eyes. That is when I noticed all eyes in the restaurant were set on me, judging my every action. I smiled and asked the young lady behind the counter to give me two more breakfast meals on a separate tray. I then walked around the corner to the table that the men had chosen as a resting spot. I put the tray on the table and laid my hand on the blue-eyed gentleman's cold hand.

He looked up at me, with tears in his eyes, and said, 'Thank you.'

I leaned over, began to pat his hand and said, 'I did not do this for you. God is here working through me to give you hope.'

I started to cry as I walked away to join my husband and son. When I sat down my husband smiled at me and said, 'That is why God gave you to me, Honey, to give me hope.' We held hands for a moment and at that time, we knew that only because of the Grace that we had been given were we able to give. That day showed me the pure Light of God's sweet love.

I returned to college, on the last evening of class, with this story in hand. I turned in 'my project' and the instructor read it. Then she looked up at me and said, 'Can I share this?' I slowly nodded as she got the attention of the class. She began to read and that is when I knew that we as human beings and being part of God share this need to heal people and to be healed.

In my own way I had touched the people at McDonald's, my son, the instructor, and every soul that shared the classroom on the last night I spent as a college student. I graduated with one of the biggest lessons I would ever learn: unconditional acceptance; learn how to love people and use things - not love things and use people.

Medjugorje Sentinel, Australia

IF ONLY I KNEW IT WAS YOU

Nelson Mandela was still a young man when he became leader of the banned African National Congress. At a certain stage of the struggle he was forced to go underground. He used many disguises and in general remained as unkempt as possible, so that he would not be easily recognised. Once he was to attend a meeting in a distant part of Johannesburg. A priest had arranged with friends of his to put him up for the night. However, when Mandela arrived at the house, the elderly woman who answered the doorbell took one look at him and exclaimed "We don't want your kind here!" and she shut the door in his face. Later when she found out who it was she had turned away she was horrified and said to him "If only I knew it was you, I'd have given you the best room in the house". Mandela did not let incidents like this deter him.



Questionnaire

WE REMIND READERS THAT, IN ORDER TO REMAIN ON OUR MAILING LIST, THEY SHOULD CONTACT US AT LEAST EVERY TWO YEARS.

We would appreciate it if all readers WHO HAVE NOT DONE SO would fill in the questionnaire below. Any comments, requests or criticisms will be welcome.

AS OUR MAGAZINE IS FREE, THIS IS NOT A REQUEST FOR DONATIONS, but to ensure that it is actually read. (If those who reply wish to give a financial contribution, we would be very grateful, but this is not essential.)

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Comments

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- John Paul II Apostolic letters "**Rosarium Virginis Mariae**" (10 pages) & "**Mane Nobiscum Domine**" (7 pages)
- The **four triptych pages**, one for each series of mysteries, with a comment for each Hail Mary (*I have found these to be useful aids to meditation when praying the Rosary*).
- John Paul II's "**Letter to the Elderly**" (6 pages) & Encyclical "**Ecclesia De Eucharistia**" (12 pages)
- **The Testimony of Catalina Rivas on the Holy Mass** (5 pages)
- "**Medjugorje: Encounter with the Queen of Peace**", a comprehensive document on the happenings at Medjugorje (11 pages)
- Benedict XVI's Encyclical letters: "**Deus Caritas Est**" (11 pages), "**Spes Salvi**" (13 pages) & "**Caritas in Veritate**" (16 pages)
- **The Secret of the Rosary** (13 pages) by *St. Louis Grignon de Montfort*
A koha to help with cost of photocopying would be appreciated.

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- **NAMES & ADDRESSES MUST BE IN CAPITAL LETTERS, BLOCK LETTERS**

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- **MEDJUGORJE NEWS** has its own website: www.medjugorjenews-nz.org

**Have you enjoyed reading this issue?
Is it helping you in your spiritual life?
Do you think others would benefit from reading it?**

What about passing it on to someone or leave it in any church porch/foyer or anywhere else, so others can read it too.

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