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A FATHER'S FANTASY

by Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger

My earliest memories of Ossernenon, or “Turtle,” one of those villages along the river we call “Mohawk,” after the tribe of the same name that occupied it, among others with similarly captivating names – like Andagaron (Bear) and Tionnontoguen (Wolf) – are shrouded in mists. I cannot say for sure whether my first trip was a pilgrimage, as many would make today, drawn to the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs which crowns the site, or simply one of my dad’s camping fantasies. We often, as a family, took camping trips.

My father was a World War II veteran and kept many memorabilia of his infantry days in a trunk in our garage. Periodically, he would revisit those days, even donning his uniform which, throughout the years, he was still able to fit into, as I recall, even well into his eighties. In that trunk, or perhaps another, was a canvas tent that I was told how to pitch and respect, learning how to weather wind and rainstorm.

Native American culture had always fascinated dad, who in his youth had collected a variety of skins and stones and feathers, all of which had significance to various tribes he had learned of – lore that he passed on to my siblings and me. Our trips to Ossernenon, today called Auriesville, were always an adventure into another time, place and way of living. Perhaps that is what opened the door for me.

Children sometimes fantasize about a “secret garden” or a tree house they can escape to, a place apart from their everyday lives, that only they know and have the key to, the magic spell

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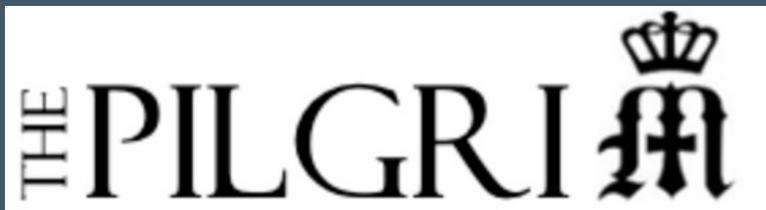
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that opens up to another world only they can enter. My dad had a way of making us feel that there was something special about this place that would somehow make our lives different just by being there.

Practically everyone I know who visits the Shrine today is touched by certain sense of the mystical and other-worldly which, at the same time, leaves them fully grounded, in touch with a deeper reality that is more real than what we see on the surface. Unlike many other shrines I have visited, the shrine at Auriesville has always paid great respect to the earthiness of its origins and, if I might say it this way, the primitiveness of its charm.

One will not find the commercialization or embellishment that seems to over adorn the simplicity of the story that captivates the imagination of all who come to see. My father wanted us to experience something of what he loved about the awe and reverence the first inhabitants had for the Great Spirit that gave them the fruits of the earth to cherish, cultivate and enjoy. Being a lifelong Catholic who, along with my mother, always instilled in his family the centrality of God's presence and purpose in our lives, there was little need to provide wordy narratives of what else happened on this holy ground.

I do not remember knowing much then about names and dates and historical facts which, in recent years, I have become much more versed in. I have discovered, and continue to be amazed by, the kernels of volumes that can and should be written on the happenings at this site, what the many crosses on the trees and throughout the grounds stand for.

I knew from my early visits that Ossernenon was something of a Calvary, that blood was shed on this hill. The names of the martyrs were something that entered my ears as, undoubtedly, my parents whispered them in our moments of prayer as we walked the grounds in the martyrs' footsteps. What remained in my mind and, to be more accurate, my heart and soul, was the deepest respect for something that had been given as a gift to all of us, something precious and costly, and what could only be called – a sacrifice.

As the years passed and the seeds of a vocation came to sprout to the point that I had to notice their desire and need to be watered, it is the connection between priesthood and reverential sacrifice that, more than any other of those seeds that I am convinced was planted here: to serve and not be served, as the Son of Man presents himself to us always (cf. Mt. 20:28).

What may have begun as a father's fantasy to introduce his family to another way, a better way of experiencing life – to enjoy and respect what is given to us in love and not what is earned or snatched away – is a lesson that reflects at once the deep gratitude-driven culture of the Native American and the heart of Christian revelation: a God who pours out his life for us on the Cross. Priesthood has no meaning if it is not rooted firmly in this mystery: that true life comes from sacrificial love, and love is not love unless it is given away. Is that not, after all, the fruit of our Father's fantasy, who gives us every day our Daily Bread, his Son's life poured out for us?

Most Rev. Edward Scharfenberger is Bishop of the Diocese of Albany and Chairman of the Board of Friends of Our Lady of Martyrs Shrine, Inc.



ST. KATERI, MAVERICK PRIEST, & SIOUX SISTER – THEIR PASSIONS FOR VOCATIONS

by Beth Lynch

This did not come easily to Tekakwitha – living her vocation as a consecrated virgin.

Before she was baptized “Catherine” or Kateri, she had never even heard the phrase. Yet she shunned marriage to any of the native men in the Mohawk Valley, literally running from them as from mortal danger. She was badgered by her tribe for this irrational obstinance. Without a husband, there was no one to hunt for her, to provide food and clothing, to protect her from invaders, and to father children.

She stood firm. She knew that her body as well as soul was saved for a higher union she had yet to discover. When she learned from Jesuit missionaries that Christian women were not required to marry, the path to her vocation began to clear.

The Holy Spirit, who had inspired and formed her in early life, rushed into her at baptism; her desire was to live as a spouse of Jesus Christ alone. This seemingly absurd lifestyle elicited mockery, assault, and mortal threats. She relocated to Kahnawake in Canada where native converts and catechumens lived under Jesuit instruction.

But even there, insistence persisted from other native converts. Finally, Father Pierre Cholenec saw the working of the Holy Spirit in her. He walked her through a discernment process that was punctuated with Kateri’s declaration: “Ah, my Father! I will not marry. I do not like men and have the aversion to marriage. The thing is not possible. I can have no other spouse but Jesus Christ.”

When Father Cholenec pledged to defend her in her newly realized vocation, he wrote: “I had removed the soul of Kateri from a strange purgatory and placed her in a sort of Paradise.”

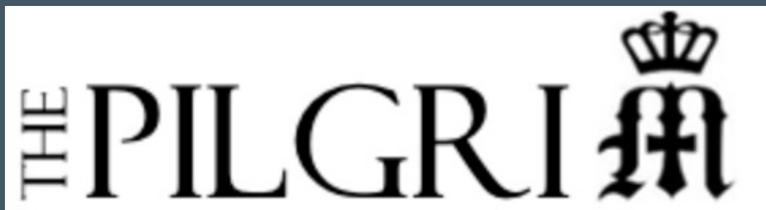
Kateri went on to take a vow of perpetual virginity and was further validated in her vocation when she encountered the Religious Hospitalers of Saint Joseph in Montreal. She wished to form such a community with her native companions where they would live together, pray, do penance, and perform acts of charity.

A religious order of native women was an idea centuries ahead of its time. Undaunted, and perhaps prophetic in the laity’s role in the Church today, Kateri maintained a little group of women who lived and prayed as if they were a vowed religious community.

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ST. KATERI TEKAKWITHA





Kateri Tekakwitha died a consecrated virgin in 1680. After her death, and because of Kateri's influence, one of these women pronounced the vows of a Sister at the Congregation of Notre-Dame in Montreal.

Fast forward 200 years to the Sioux reservations of the Dakota Territory. There, a maverick priest was conceiving a radical idea: an order of Native American nuns, trained as nurses, who would care for the bodily and spiritual well-being of their own people.

He was Father Francis Craft - a member of the Sons of the American Revolution who had rudimentary training as a physician and was a veteran of three wars before he was out of his teens.

His call to the priesthood from the battlefield was not easily realized. He spent six years as a Jesuit novice, received some formation with the Benedictines, and was finally ordained in 1883 as a diocesan priest specifically to minister to the Indians in the Dakota Territory. There he enthroned the Sacred Heart of Jesus as its True Chief, signing it in his own blood.

He quickly realized the corruption and competition among government agents, protestant missionaries, and Catholic hierarchy. He aggravated all of them by his outspokenness against their injustice to the Indians. He was intelligent, quick tempered and arrogant, notably paranoid, articulate in confrontations, sometimes assaultive.

And he was Mohawk by ancestry - his grandmother was a full blood. Thus, did Father Craft declare his mission: "I became an Indian to save the Indian."

Faithful to his vision of training Native sisters to care for their own, he organized the Congregation of American Sisters, officially founded by his adopted Sioux sister, Josephine (Sacred White Buffalo) Crowfeather. Father Craft trained them as nurses, arranged for Benedictine formation, and was their spiritual advisor. His efforts were met with controversy, prejudice, and insufficient funding. Yet he marveled throughout: "Indian faith is pretty solid. I wish I had more of it."

In March of 1890, sorely in need of funding, he traveled by train for a lecture tour on the east coast where he hoped to raise awareness and donations.

He made a stop, however, in Fultonville, NY. By horse and buggy, he arrived at the nascent Jesuit shrine called Our Lady of Martyrs founded just a few years before. As a former Jesuit, he continued to read the Messenger of the Sacred Heart (from which The Pilgrim originated) which carried updates about the Shrine.

On the holy ground where Kateri Tekakwitha was born, Father Craft prayed for the vocations of these Sioux novices. To each of them, he sent clippings of willows from the Shrine, encouraging them to pray to Kateri to strengthen their vocations.

He received a response from Josephine. She had taken her vows, and took the name Catherine, thus sharing with Tekakwitha the same patron saint, St. Catherine of Siena. She became the Prioress of the order.

Tensions on the reservation culminated with the Massacre of Wounded Knee later that year. True to his mission of "becoming an Indian to save the Indian," he intervened and was lanced through both lungs. Accepting this as a fatal wound, he requested that he be buried in the trench with the Indians. But a priest refused to officiate. "He seemed quite put out," Father Craft wrote, "that I preferred the Indians to the white dead."



Father Craft lived to officiate at the death of his beloved Mother Mary Catherine who died of tuberculosis in 1893.

Mining the archives of Our Lady of Martyrs Shrine revealed a letter from Father Craft published in *The Pilgrim* describing Mother's death at the altar of convent chapel in the Dakota Territory: "She thanked God for giving success to the congregation through trials similar to those which Catherine Tekakwitha suffered. She had her sisters sang a hymn in honor of Catherine Tekakwitha, and Mother waited at the altar to join her Mohawk sister in triumph."

Over the next several years, the warp and woof of the beleaguered "Indian problem" caused the order to dissolve. Father Craft lost his faculties as a Catholic priest. These were reinstated when he was assigned as pastor of a quiet parish in East Stroudsburg, PA. There he spent the last 18 years of his adventuresome life, much beloved by his parishioners.

A 2003 survey taken of Native American vocation by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops listed 34 religious sisters, 27 priests, and 74 deacons. They can to some degree trace this success to Catherine Tekakwitha and Josephine Sacred White Buffalo who laid the foundations for Native American vocations.

Perhaps the most august is that of Archbishop Charles Chaput (Prairie Band Potawatomi), the first Native American serving in that role. Some have made pilgrimages to the Shrine: Retired Deacon William Gaul (Mohawk) served both the Albany Diocese and the Knights of Columbus of Saratoga Springs for many years and participated in annual pilgrimages. Father Michael Jacobs, S.J., the first Mohawk Jesuit, frequented the Shrine with Mohawk pilgrims. Father Maurice Henry Sands (Ojibway, Ottawa, Potawatomi), Executive Director of the Black and Indian Missions Office, attended a Mohawk Mass in the Coliseum. Bishop Donald Pelotte (Abenaki), the first Native American Bishop, blessed a statue of then Blessed Kateri when the Kateri Center, now the Saints of Auriesville Museum, was expanded in 1986. Sister Kateri Mitchell (Mohawk) of the Tekakwitha Conference knows the Shrine well.

Even as they walked this holy ground at the Shrine where St. Kateri was born, causes for other Native American saints were progressing. Among them are the Apalachees among the Martyrs of La Florida, and Nicholas Black Elk, the Lakota Sioux who, incidentally, spoke well of Father Craft. Father Craft died in 1920, nearly 100 years before the 2012 canonization of St. Kateri Tekakwitha. No doubt she met him at his passing.

The intercession of St. Kateri knows no ethnic or racial boundaries. The prayers of many different tribes and tongues have been answered through her. Her intercession can be assured for those discerning a vocation, and for those who are encountering obstacles along the way.

Her aid can also be called upon for those who, like Father Francis Craft, champion the cause.

Quotes and biographical information of Father Craft taken from *Father Francis M. Craft – Missionary to the Sioux* by Thomas W. Foley. 2002: University of Nebraska Press.

Native American Catholics at the Millennium: <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/native-american/resources/upload/NA-Catholics-Millennium.pdf>

Beth Lynch is the Pilgrimage Coordinator and Museum Manager at Our Lady of Martyrs Shrine.

THE NORTH AMERICAN MARTYRS AND THE APOSTOLATE OF FRIENDSHIP

by William H. Baaki, Esq.

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13

On August 1, 1642, when their flotilla was ambushed by the Mohawks, Fr. Isaac Jogues was thrown from his canoe into the tall weeds. He could have stayed hidden, crawled into the woods, and escaped back to the French settlement at Three Rivers. But he refused to leave his friends: the Hurons who had recently embraced the Christian faith taught by Fr. Jogues and his fellow “blackrobes”; René Goupil and William Couture, the lay donnés who agreed to accompany him on this journey back to the mission in Huronia; Theresa, the thirteen-year-old Huron who had been educated by the Ursuline nuns at Quebec and was returning to her native people to share the Faith. Fr. Jogues knew he could not leave his friends in the hands of the Mohawk captors without the spiritual support only he could provide them as a priest of Jesus. He arose from the weeds and surrendered himself to the Mohawks to be able to accompany his friends. The Mohawks leaped upon the priest and beat him with clubs, sticks, and fists until he was unconscious. When he came to, the Mohawks were binding the prisoners. Fr. Jogues convinced the Mohawks that they did not need to tie him up, stating: “As long as these friends of mine are in your hands, nothing could make me flee.”

On September 27, 1646, nearly four years after his friend St. René Goupil had been martyred at Ossernenon, Fr. Isaac Jogues set off from Quebec on his third, and last, journey to that Mohawk village later known as Auriesville. This time, he was accompanied by a new friend, John LaLande, a young French donné no more than twenty years old who volunteered to help Fr. Jogues on this missionary journey. Fr. Jogues did not sugar coat the dangers that young LaLande would be exposed to, explaining that bringing the Faith to the Mohawks “may mean captivity, torture, or death, or all of them combined.” Even when their Huron guides abandoned them for fear of the Mohawks, John LaLande would not abandon his friend, Fr. Isaac Jogues. Sometime after midnight on October 19, 1646, when Fr. Jogues did not return to the lodge in which they were staying, John LaLande went out to find his friend and also met his martyrdom.

On March 16, 1649, in the Huron territory to the north, in the area of New France that is now Ontario, Canada, the young priest Fr. Gabriel Lalemant with his friend, the great veteran Fr. John de Brébeuf refused to flee the Huron village of St. Louis under attack by the Mohawks. Their friend and Jesuit superior, Fr. Paul Ragueneau, would later write, “the salvation of their flock was dearer to them than life itself.” While the battle ensued, Fr. Lalemant and Fr. de Brébeuf busily administered the sacraments of confession and baptism to all who desired to receive the graces of eternal life. When his fellow Huron warriors wanted to run away, Stephen Annaotaha, a Huron convert to the Faith, exclaimed, “could we forsake these two good fathers who have exposed their lives for us? Their love of our salvation will be the cause of their death. They cannot escape now over the snow, so let us die with them and we shall go to heaven with them.”

We may imagine the North American Martyrs as solitary individuals of superhuman strength undergoing ungodly tortures with Godlike strength. This is a vision equally awe inspiring and unapproachable, but this is not quite the entire story. Rather, the story of the North American Martyrs is a story of friendship *par excellence*. Indeed, the height of friendship which is the heroic virtue of charity: love for Our Lord and, like Our Lord, love for each other, for the salvation of each soul.

Is it possible to find such friendship now? Do our priests give of themselves in an apostolate of friendship with the lay faithful like St. Isaac Jogues who surrendered himself freely to capture and unspeakable tortures to be able to minister to the Hurons and the French donnés? Do our lay faithful give of themselves and support our priests without counting the cost like St. John LaLande who refused to abandon Fr. Jogues? Do our priests stand shoulder to shoulder in friendship with each other like St. Gabriel Lalemant and St. John de Brébeuf and steadfastly administer the sacraments together to those in spiritual need even while a battle rages around them, without regard for their comfort and safety, drawing strength from each other?

Yes, it is still possible. We are blessed to see such friendships in those that visit the Shrine each year – Bishops, priests, religious, and lay people – and in the Friends of the Shrine throughout the world who faithfully give of themselves to support the ongoing mission of the Martyrs. We pray that the Shrine and the story of North American Martyrs continue to inspire an outgrowth of an apostolate of friendship throughout the Church in this time when it is needed now as much as ever.

Bill Baaki is an attorney and a member of the board of directors of Friends of Our Lady of Martyrs Shrine, Inc.

THE STORY
OF THE
NORTH
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MARTYRS
IS A
STORY OF
FRIENDSHIP
PAR
EXCELLENCE.

Fr. Pat Iannotti and Fr. Brian Maxwell





VISITING THE SCHOOL OF COURAGE

by Fr. Roger J. Landry

After lectures as well as in dinner conversations I often get asked what I think is the biggest challenge – or need or crisis – facing the Church in the United States.

“Faith” is always an appropriate answer to that query: since God is always faithful, what we need is to trust in Him, bank on His promises, receive well the help He gives, and respond wholeheartedly. After Jesus gave a parable about persevering prayer or faith-in-action, He asked, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?” (Lk 18:8). It’s an open question. The Church in every age, like the first Apostles, must beg, “Lord, increase our faith!” (Lk 17:5), since every problem the Church faces requires faith to unleash Divine remedy.

Over the last several years, however, when prompted about what the Church in our country needs most, I have been responding, “Courage!” While there is no doubt a widespread crisis of faith, I think a more urgent issue is that, among those with faith, there’s a softness and timidity before the challenges and crosses we face.

When, for example, Jews face anti-Semitism and Muslims confront Islamophobia, they respond vigorously and marshal the public to get involved, whereas Catholics largely let bigots get away with it. Anti-Catholicism is the last acceptable prejudice because Catholics tolerate it. We permit it not because we’re “turning the other cheek” – by which Jesus instructed us not to play the victim but rather to defend our dignity without vengeance! – but because we often don’t have the resolve to stand united against the cultural bullies.

The lack of courage happens not just in terms religious freedom concerns, but also in terms of the call to defend the truth and share the faith. Many Catholics are cowed before the elites who are forcing their values revolution on everyone else. Rather than witnessing to Christ and the faith, many Catholics, to echo Cardinal O’Malley’s quip, seem to have entered a witness protection program.

Inside the Church we see a similar faint-heartedness with regard to confronting all types of conspicuous problems: clergy who violate their Sacred promises and live a double life, parishes and schools that no longer come close to paying their bills, Catholic politicians who betray God and their faith to win elections, faithful who require fraternal correction with regard to practices that everyone knows are immoral. So many faithful and clergy are conflict averse and excessively afraid to confront what must be tackled. As a result the problems worsen.

Cowardice is antithetical to Christian faith and life. The most common phrase in Sacred Scripture is “Be not afraid!” It appears 104 times in the Old Testament, 44 times in the New. Against our fears, God insistently tells us to take courage. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us not to be afraid of His call (Lk 5:10), of drowning at sea (Mt 8:26), of wars and and insurrections (Lk 21:9), of the death of loved

ones (Lk 8:50), of those who can only kill the body but can't harm the soul (Mt 10:28), or of what will happen to Him in His Passion (Jn 14:1). To believe in Him, to trust in His accompaniment, to have faith in His victory over suffering and death, He suggests, is to be filled with courage.

We see that fortitude, a gift of the Holy Spirit, in the Apostles after Pentecost, when they boldly announce the Gospel even when the same members of the Sanhedrin who had Jesus crucified were trying to intimidate them. They continued unafraid, trusting that since even savage execution couldn't keep Jesus in the tomb, they had nothing to fear.

The Church in every age is meant to be at a Spiritual level what a marine boot camp is meant to do militarily: to train people to persevere courageously. But where can Catholics go to grow in courage? Where can we learn how to remain faithful despite our fears? Who can be our soul's drill instructors?

I think there's no better place in the United States to be formed in courage than the Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs in Auriesville, N.Y., a short distance from Albany. It is the site of the martyrdom of Saints Isaac Jogues, René Goupil and Jean de Lalande and the birthplace of St. Kateri Tekakwitha.

If one can't help becoming more Marian visiting Guadalupe, Lourdes and Fatima or more Eucharistic at Lanciano or Orvieto, one also can't help growing in holy audacity in Auriesville.

I have recently been spending a lot of time there, praying, traversing the Sacred spots fertilized by their blood, leading pilgrimages of young adults from New York City to ponder the faith and love that made them dauntless until the end, and celebrating Masses in the unique 6,800-seat church on the grounds – called the "Colosseum" after the Flavian Amphitheater in Rome where so many early Christian martyrs proved that they had more valor than the greatest gladiators.

The Shrine is truly one of the great treasures in U.S. Catholicism, but also one of our country's most underutilized Spiritual resource. If we're going to have a rebirth of Catholic courage, I think the school of the North American Martyrs and the Lily of the Mohawks is going to play a major role. It's impossible to get to know Saints Isaac, René, Jean and Kateri and not be fortified by their fortitude.

St. Isaac Jogues' life is one of the greatest examples of courage and apostolic ardor in the Church's annals. During his first Missionary journey (1636-1644) to Quebec and Ontario as a Jesuit missionary, he, along with lay missionary (and eventually Jesuit brother) René Goupil, was captured by the Mohawks, dragged hundreds of miles to Auriesville, and brutally



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tortured. Goupil was soon tomahawked to death for blessing a Mohawk boy. Jogues, however, survived and after a couple of years was rescued through the help of the Dutch.

He returned to France, where, because his missionary letters had made him famous, he was treated as a hero. His thumbs and index fingers had been bitten off by captors to prevent him from using guns, but it also meant, by the rubrics of the time, he couldn't hold the Host in the celebration of the Mass, leading to his going 17 months without receiving the Eucharist and 20 months without celebrating Mass. Pope Urban VIII, however, gave him an exemption, saying that it would be inappropriate for a loving martyr for Christ not to drink Christ's blood.

Despite his mangled hands and other injuries, he courageously returned to the Missions, and even more courageously returned to Auriesville in 1646, with Jesuit lay brother Jean Lalande, aware that it might eventually mean their death. Out of love for God and those who had tortured him, they took the risk – and were tomahawked to death in October 1646. But their death was not in vain.

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians. Ten years after their martyrdom, St. Kateri Tekakwitha was born in the village. When she was 20, she asked the new wave of Jesuits who had come to her village, for instruction in prayer and Baptism. Normally candidates for Baptism needed to wait two years, to test their faith to ensure they would keep it despite the many hardships it might bring, including martyrdom. After one month, however, her faith was recognized as strong and mature enough to endure.

Her sufferings on account of her Baptism – from her uncle, from her fellow residents, even from the children – would become so acute that the Jesuits, to save her life, arranged for her escape to their mission south of Montreal, where she would spend the next and last three years of her life dedicated to prayer and to charity even in the most brutal wintry conditions. She is a simple, approachable, contagious example of the courage that loves God with all one's mind, heart, soul and strength, without counting the costs.

A pilgrimage to Auriesville – to the place of St. Kateri's humble birth and Saints Isaac's, René's and Jean's glorious birth into eternity – will help you breathe the air of audacity and fill you with the courage needed to remain faithful on the pilgrimage of life.

Fr. Roger J. Landry is a priest of the Diocese of Fall River who serves at the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Our Lady of Martyrs Shrine, Inc. This article originally appeared in the online version of the National Catholic Register on June 8, 2022.

2021 - A YEAR OF HEIGHTENED INTENTION IN PILGRIMAGE AND SACRAMENT

by Beth Lynch

The memorial bricks surrounding the new St. Kateri sculpture erected in 2021 on the grounds of Our Lady of Martyrs Shrine include inscriptions from pilgrims that “God’s work continue” and “The saints have made this holy ground. Pray for us.” The previous year of the pandemic brought these themes to the fore in 2021, evidenced by a heightened interest, reverence, and intention among pilgrims to the Shrine this past year.

Amidst the many crises and divisions in our country, the Church, and the world, the Shrine was blessed this past year to host many courageous and inspiring priests, sisters, and prelates who are shouldering significant responsibilities in defending and promulgating the Catholic faith. Visitors to the Shrine in 2021 included: Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, the Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations; Fr. Roger Landry, who works for the Holy See’s Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations, mentors the Catholic interns there, serves on the Shrine Board, and generously travels upstate to the Shrine to celebrate Mass and hear Confessions more often than his schedule permits; Fr. David Wilton, CMP, Superior General of the Fathers of Mercy; Fr. Robert Ferguson, FSSP, Vice Rector of Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary in Denton, NE. Fr. (Colonel) Matthew Pawlikowski, Senior Chaplain at West Point Military Academy; Fr. John Paul Ouellette, CFR, Servant General of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal; Fr. Brian Lehnert, the Shrine’s resident priest through the pandemic in 2020 and now pastor of Mater Christi Parish in Albany; Fr. Chris Alar, MIC, Director of the Association of Marian Helpers at the National Shrine of Divine Mercy Stockbridge, MA; Fr. Joseph Fessio, SJ, founder and editor of Ignatius Press; Sister Dierdre Byrne, OPSC, of the Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts who gave an inspiring talk to the Legatus Chapter of Albany on a pilgrimage day; countless members of the Sisters of Life and other religious orders whose frequent visits and prayers bless the Shrine and its pilgrims; Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, KS who also serves on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committees on Pro-Life and on Marriage and Family Life; and Bishop Edward Scharfenberger who shepherds the faithful in the Albany Diocese, celebrates Mass at the Shrine on multiple occasions each year, and gives countless hours of service to the Shrine in his capacity as Chairman of the Shrine Board.

They each shared their joy and gratitude for such a significant place to rest, pray, and recharge their spirits through the intercession and example of the Saints of Auriesville.

As always, the Shrine’s feast day novenas provided special, graced opportunities for pilgrims to receive Our Lord in the Eucharist and to hear the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit amidst the silent serenity of the Shrine.

The powerful splendor of the Eucharist was especially evident in the glorious monstrance during the 40 Hour Devotion from Friday evening until Sunday afternoon during the Solemnity of the Feast of the Sacred Heart and Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Priests arrived and departed throughout, offering Masses in Latin, Spanish, and English from the high altar in the Coliseum, and providing pilgrims with the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Holy Spirit descended upon Confirmandi from local parishes in the Sacrament of Confirmation with Vicar General, the Very Reverend David LeFort, presiding.



The fire of the Holy Spirit also inflamed the zeal of the Martyrs in over 2000 young people of the Neocatechuminal Way. The week of their pilgrimages from the western U.S. was imbued with joyful music, processions, and Masses on their way to a vocations discernment gathering in Gettysburg with Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S.

The Shrine continued to host many loyal annual events including the Knights of Columbus Pilgrimage; the Polish and Hibernian Pilgrimages; Confirmation and First Communion classes; the prayer apostolates of a local Magnificat chapter; the Fundación María Auxiliadora from New Jersey; and the Padre Pio prayer group from Cleveland.

Near and dear to the hearts of the Shrine's local supporters and staff, a fruitful vocation to the holy priesthood was celebrated with the 60th anniversary of the ordination of Fr. Pascal (Pat) Iannotti. More than 250 friends of Fr. Pat attended Mass in the Coliseum to express their love and appreciation to this humble retired priest who gives so much to the Shrine, and, at the age of 89, celebrates Mass at the Shrine nearly every Saturday.

Priests visiting the Shrine from near and far continue the legacy that began with the ministry and martyrdoms of the North American Martyrs and allow hungry souls to continue to be fed with the Eucharist and inspired with the Holy Spirit. The faithful priests who visited the Shrine on numerous occasions throughout the past year to provide Our Lord to the pilgrims in the Eucharist and Confession, in addition to Fr. Roger Landry and Fr. Pat Iannotti, include Fr. Brian Slezak, Fr. Francis Vivacqua, Fr. Brian Maxwell, Fr. Rendell Torres, Fr. Charles Onyeneke, Fr. John Wilson, and Fr. Nathaniel Resila, among many others.

2021 also saw the opening of Jogues Lodge, the newly renovated residence for visiting priests who can now stay onsite for private retreats. It was well received by the numerous priests from across the country who were hosted this season. The many weekday Masses they celebrated for the public would not have been offered otherwise and the merits therein would not have been attributed for those in need.

These pilgrims, clergy, events, and sacraments dovetailed into a Shrine season of fellowship, devotion, and praise of Our Lord Jesus Christ, through Our Lady of Martyrs and our beloved Auriesville Saints, "on whose constant intercession in your presence we rely for unfailing help" (Eucharistic Prayer III).

May "God's work continue" at the Shrine in 2022 and beyond and may the Saints of Auriesville pray for all those visit this sacred place!

