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HOSPITALERS

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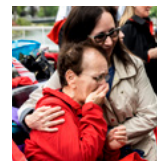
IN THIS ISSUE



3 The Pilgrimage for Life 2020



5 Spirituality of COVID-19



13 Miracles Do Happen Long Distance



14 The National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help

Coronavirus *Opening the Heart to Prayer*

Terms previously unfamiliar to many Knights, Dames and everyone else in our society are rising to the top of the vocabulary chain-lockdown, self-quarantine, stay-in-place, social distancing. Some might remember the fears of the summers of the polio epidemic of the late 1940's and early 1950's, but there was a serious outbreak of polio from 1916 through the early 1950s in various parts of the United States. More than 40,000 cases were reported in 1949 with over 2,500 deaths in the United States.

Not many could remember the pandemic spread of influenza in 1918-1919. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports the following on its website: "It is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population became infected with this virus. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide with about 675,000 occurring in the United States."

The world of the twenty-first century has been turned upside down by the coronavirus as the struggle to contain its spread and impact continues across the globe. Measures never seen before in the United States are being implemented with indefinite lifespans. Limiting the physical contact between people as a means of preventing the spread of the coronavirus has impacted the daily lives of almost every American and across the globe.

One of the biggest impacts for many church-going people is the closure of churches and the lack of access to Mass, the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance. In a world connected electronically, opportunities have been developed to provide alternatives to physical access to community prayer. Masses are available every day from a variety of sources. Pope Francis recently created a circle of prayer, saying the Rosary with the faithful from around the world; he continues to offer opportunities to join him in prayer. The opportunities for daily Mass and daily praying of the Rosary, for virtual retreats and for prayer life with a community of like-minded spirits are expanding seemingly every day. ■

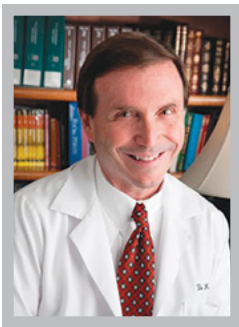
Visit the American Association website for opportunities to pray and other information related to the pandemic.

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Please visit our website at:

orderofmaltaamerican.org to find the latest information about the American Association, our local Areas, and the Order of Malta. Links are also available to other Association websites and the Sovereign Magistracy in the "About the Order" section.

Since its redesign, the Order of Malta, American Association mobile app continues to be updated regularly with new photos and user friendly improvements to its features such as daily prayers and the member directory. This app is available for Android and iOS devices in the app store when you search "Order of Malta, American Association."



AT THE END OF FEBRUARY, after consultation with global medicine and infectious disease physicians, the leaders of the Lourdes Pilgrimage medical committee recommended the difficult decision to cancel the Lourdes Pilgrimage. The risks to the Malades and the safety of all our pilgrims was the major concern; there was also the practical issue that cancelling the pilgrimage closer to the planned date would be more devastating for our Malades and more costly and inconvenient for all those who had made arrangements to travel.

Although this was a difficult decision that disappointed all of us, especially our Malades, it was the correct decision. That decision was confirmed when the Order from Rome cancelled the entire pilgrimage on March 12 and the Domaine was closed on March 16 for the first time since the original apparition in 1858.

In the near future (if not already), we will receive a calendar of events planned to bring us together to celebrate the Lourdes Pilgrimage remotely through the wonders of modern technology. We will come together by conference calls to pray for our Malades and Malades-in-Spirit as well as for all those infected with the coronavirus. Additional opportunities for prayer are highlighted on our website; with shutdowns and stay at home requirements, these opportunities are a blessing.

We are hopeful that this pandemic will be controlled soon and we will be able to have Lourdes in a day activities in September for our Malades, Malades-in-Spirit, Caregivers, Dames and Knights. They will be scheduled in different Areas so many of you will be able to attend. Our Year of Formation Candidates will benefit from these activities that will be part of the opening of the world again to our community of prayer.

I mentioned on our March town hall conference call that we have begun the explorative phase of a fundraising effort. Our Strategic Planning Committee realized the need for us to increase our endowment in the Malta Human Services Foundation and the Pilgrimage Foundation to support our growing ministries. The current crisis calls out to us the importance of increasing our endowment to provide the resources to support our current and future ministries as well as to have the flexibility to address new kinds of opportunities that unforeseen crises can create. We need to have the resources to ensure that we will always be in a position to step up to help the sick and the poor, day-to-day and in major crises.

As part of the explorative phase of this effort, some of you have been contacted by our consultants, CCS, to share your opinions regarding the fundraising effort's overall feasibility, its case statement and the potential that such an effort might have to achieve the goals of securing our future ability to support our ministries and support our future Pilgrimages' ability to provide for our Malades and Caregivers. This initial "study phase" was organized in anticipation of a capital campaign. The conversations we have been conducting through CCS, now in the context of the Coronavirus, will serve us well as we consider priorities once the pandemic has passed. Thank you to all who have participated.

Invitations and registration materials for our Tri-Association Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Wisconsin have been sent out. This Pilgrimage provides a wonderful opportunity for us to come together as a lay religious community. Because we weren't able to go to Lourdes this year, joining us in Wisconsin is all the more important. I urge you to seriously consider coming to Wisconsin; although it is different from the Lourdes experience, it is an apparition site of the Blessed Mother and offers us an opportunity to pray together to her. It also provides the unique opportunity to join together with our confreres from the Federal and Western Associations in a truly spiritual experience that includes time for fellowship and service.

I pray that all of you and your families remain healthy during this challenging time.
May God bless you and all that you do,

Peter J. Kelly, MD
President

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The Pilgrimage for Life 2020

The Pilgrimage for Life is chaired by Nancy and Dr. Robert Graebe and Dr. Joseph Dutkowsky.

Dr. Joseph Dutkowsky, Co-Chair of the American Association's Pilgrimage for Life, told the crowd gathered at the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, DC, that his late wife Karen, who started the Association's Pilgrimage for Life because "we need to be there," hoped that the pilgrimage would grow to 200 people. The Association's numbers have grown steadily over the years. This year, the numbers grew to over two hundred people when Bishop Edward Scharfenberger, Conventual Chaplain from Upstate New York, Bishop of Albany (and now additionally the Administrator for the Buffalo Diocese) was joined by a large contingent from his diocese for the March.

Members have been encouraged to participate to give witness to their Faith, part of the charism of the Order

and this year, more responded than in any year since the Pilgrimage for Life began in the Association. It is much more than a March although the March is an important component of the overall schedule. The Pilgrimage is a spiritual journey, an extended moment of prayer for the unborn and all those affected by the crisis of abortion.

On Thursday, a highlight was the talk delivered by Sister Cecelia Rose, SV. She was joined by Katy Feeney who led the group through a beautiful version of the Stations of the Cross.

The Vigil Mass for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception was attended by a standing room only group of people committed to the cause of life. Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann, Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas and Chairman of the USCCB Pro-Life Committee, was the chief Celebrant and Homilist. Archbishop Naumann summed up the current environment succinctly, "Sadly, in many ways for pro-lifers the days have grown darker. In recent years, abortion advocates have abandoned their slick slogan of choice. The former proponents of choice now seek to coerce Pro-Life Americans to become complicit in the killing of unborn children as evidenced by demanding tax funded abortions, com-

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PELLING ministries like the Little Sisters of the Poor to provide abortifacients in their health plans, and efforts to force Catholic hospitals to provide abortions.”

On Friday, Bishop Scharfenberger said Mass for the group, joined by several hundred students who provided the face and the voice of the tens of thousands of students that walked in the March in the afternoon.

No one knows for sure how many people participated in the March this year but one hundred of them were from the American Association and more than one hundred more joined the American Association with Bishop Scharfenberger. A visit from the President and a few drops of rain added their own backdrops to a march that spoke a million prayers and hymns over the course of several hours in the Capital of the country. Surrounded by so many people committed to make a loud roar out of a relatively short walk, one could sense that the energy of that day would be carried home to every corner of the nation.

Hopefully, you will get a great deal from Sister Cecelia Rose’s talk which is included in the insert to this newsletter. ■



■ HIGHLIGHTS

An Investment in Who We Are and What We Do



When the Strategic Planning Committee looked over the horizon last year to where the Association wants to be, one recommendation they made was to double the endowments for the Malta Human Services Foundation and The Order of Malta Pilgrimage Foundation. The Board of Councillors unanimously approved the

recommendation and the project was announced at the Annual Meeting in November 2019.

President Peter Kelly started the process by appointing Gail and Joe Berardino to lead the work. We have engaged CCS, the preeminent strategic development firm in Catholic fundraising campaigns, to help a study group evaluate the timing and feasibility of fundraising.

Our Chancellor Ed Delaney joins Andy Aoyama, President of the Malta Human Services Foundation, FJ McCarthy, President of the Pilgrimage Foundation and Dr. Peter Kelly, President of the American Association, to work with Joe and Gail, Dr. Trexler and Ray LaRose to oversee the study. This study was begun prior to the awareness of the pandemic that the world has been facing; its completion will assist us as we move forward when this global crisis is behind us.

Whereas the Strategic Planning Committee was looking strategically over the long term horizon, the study group is conducting grass

roots, exploratory conversations with approximately fifty Association members through one-on-one interviews conducted by CCS.

Through these confidential interviews, we will learn from a cross section of our members their vision for the works of our Order, the needs identified by our local Areas, their appetite to help with fundraising and their assessment of the proper size of our endowments to meet the anticipated growth of our members and our challenge to defend the faith and serve the sick and the poor. These interviews will be conducted over a three-month period and should be completed and analyzed by early summer.

Our charism calls us to serve the sick and the poor. We know the Order will survive this pandemic. We also know that our members will seek today, tomorrow and decades from now to continue and enhance our works with the sick and the poor. Endowments are necessary to provide financial means to support these works in good times and in bad. Many of our members desire to leave a legacy of hope and support that will transcend current and future challenges, while ensuring the charism of our beloved Order is preserved for Knights and Dames in the years to come.

Although the interview process is in its early stages, we are gratified, as always, with the selfless responsiveness of our members and their strong endorsement that we need to tend to both the spiritual and temporal needs of those we are called to serve in the Order.

As things progress, we will keep you informed.

This article was contributed by Gail and Joe Berardino



Spirituality of COVID-19

As brothers and sisters in the Order of Malta, an enduring spiritual moment is the Pilgrimage, involving travel to distant holy places, and caring for others along the way, especially our “Malades.” Now we are on another pilgrimage, one we didn’t seek, but one thrust upon us. We pray for relief from the spread of this illness. Yet perhaps the time now is for praying to become as much as Christ as possible in accepting whatever tragic dimension this contagion may become, and what it does in the deepest parts of our heart as we relate to the Lord.

Now our calling may require us being “hospitallers” and “Malades” simultaneously. At the extreme, we may be caring for others in institutions and hospitals. This may also occur in the closed quarters of our family, even in isolation or quarantine. There must be some special spirituality if that occurs. We ourselves might become “Malades,” needing the care, love, and nourishment from others. What might all this mean for our own personal sanctification?; This is a phrase I remember always, thinking of Dr. Trexler’s moving introduction to the spirituality of our Order during Investiture Weekend.

In a few weeks we have quickly gone from fist-bumps to six-foot distances, and now in places, what is called “stay-at-home.” Isn’t this a form of quarantine? For plagues and pandemics, this treatment has been used for hundreds of years. Our Churches are closed. It is all very, very sad.

But what can all of this mean for our spirituality and our relationship with God?

Taking care of the sick or infirm changes us. In my own life, I have been called (as many of you know) to care for my son William (whom many of you have met). Many professional op-

portunities have been turned down in my ongoing role as William’s 24/7 chief cook and bottle washer. So I have had to learn much more patience as one’s own normal pace of life now becomes secondary in many situations. Can you learn patience by will-power and gritting one’s teeth? For me, not so much. It is attained by enjoying my son’s company, immersing myself in his joys or his (many) requests. As he has been telling me for many years, “Dad, God put you on earth to serve me.” I’m finally beginning to think that may be true.

As many of you have experienced in the Order, we become kinder, gentler, speaking in a softer voice, when we work with those who need us. The Sermon on the Mount provides not only our marching orders for a better world but a healing balm for our own souls.



So just as the lifestyle, routines, goals, and even hopes and dreams may be changed by a special needs child, the possible lengthy isolation and quarantine during an infectious disease outbreak will do the same, but for everyone. Can this bring us closer to God if it occurs? On the other hand, is there a chance of becoming the village crank in our own homes?

We may have a job that puts us in harm’s way, or we may be inclined to volunteer to help others who are in harm’s way. These actions may also put us at risk. While this is what we are called to do as an ideal, it gets more complicated when we have families, especially chil-

dren, who need us. This clinical psychologist suggests talking to everyone at home about this, especially when calls for volunteers occur if things get very bad.

Lots of time at home can be a good time for spiritual reading, rosaries. The Old Testament offers lessons on how the Chosen People dealt with plagues, pestilences, and communal sorrow. For those in need of repentance, seven psalms are devoted to this. In a few hours the entire Gospel of Mark can be read, from beginning to end.

The 900-year history of our Order reveals heroic help to the sick and poor. This has required good sense and planning; the Order itself is doing this as I write. The Gospel of Matthew offers a spirituality that complements our active approach:

“Be not solicitous, therefore, saying, What shall we eat; or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed. For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefor first the Kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not solicitous for the morrow, for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.” (Mt. 6:31-34; Douay-Rheims)

I will do my best to protect my son, and his friends, many of whom live in group homes, cramped quarters where infection may spread quickly in groups of people with already-compromised immune systems. I know that right now, other members are thinking and praying to be guided on their own unique path to care for those who will need us in the days ahead.

Let’s hope that in due time, this will have passed and we will all be saying prayers of thanksgiving, but we pray to remain positive and spiritually mindful of other possibilities that may occur. ■

William Van Ornum, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist, retired full professor at Marist College, and chief-cook-and-bottle-washer for his son, William Eugene.



How the Church Has Changed the World

Pilgrimage into Poverty

Anthony Esolen (in *Magnificat Magazine*)

I'm writing this month about Lourdes, and my fingers should tremble. Six million people visit the grotto every year. I've never been there. Franz Werfel, though not himself a Christian, wrote a fine book about Saint Bernadette's visions, and how no one believed her at first, not even her family; how she was ridiculed, slapped in prison, called a fraud by skeptics; how she maintained her simple faith throughout; and her honest account of the facts.

The journalist Malcolm Muggeridge—he who would introduce the world to Mother Teresa in the 1969 documentary, *Something Beautiful for God*—accompanied a pilgrimage to Lourdes with his film crew in 1965. This was long before he and his wife entered the Church in their very old age. He didn't witness what the Church, with her severe criteria,

would certify as a miraculous cure. But he recalled the beauty of the place; the light shining in the eyes of a young lady, crippled and dying, whom he had met and spoken to as she went down to the waters. He believed, in a way he couldn't yet describe, that Jesus the healer was present: "At Lourdes, too, bowing their heads, abating their twitchings, holding out their hands, if they have any, as the Blessed Sacrament approaches, they recall his healing words: Daughter, your faith has made you whole; go in peace."

There's no place in the world like Lourdes. To go there in faith is to make a pilgrimage into poverty. Muggeridge would understand, because he had seen through the vanity of what the world calls great. Mother Teresa would understand. Muslims go to Mecca, to adore the power of God. Hindus go to the mighty Ganges River to immerse themselves in the waters of an ancient mythology. But Lourdes? It's a mustard seed by comparison. It's a bit of leaven that an ordinary woman kneaded into some dough. It is a pearl hidden in a field. It is a stone that the builders tossed aside.

THE GIRL WAS SMALL

To whom should the Virgin Mother appear? To such as Bernadette Soubirous. Her family lived in terrible poverty. At the time the visions came, their rented home was an



old jail cell, twelve feet square, with a stinking privy in the back. Bernadette was only beginning, at age fourteen, to learn to read. Lourdes was a forgotten village in the foothills of the Pyrenees. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” asked Nathanael, but that was before he met Jesus.

On a cold and rainy day, February 11, 1858, Bernadette, her sister, and a friend went out gathering sticks for firewood. Think of Elijah and the widow and her son, in the years of famine. The grotto of Massabielle had no glorious spired basilica on it then. It was a muddy and miserable place, a watering hole for pigs, where the Gave River washed up all kinds of garbage, some of which the poor children would gather up and sell.

Bernadette wasn't there to play a game. The other girls had crossed the river, which was so cold it made them cry. Bernadette needed to get across too, so she asked the girls to toss some rocks into the water for stepping stones, while she was busy sitting down, taking off her stockings. That was all she was thinking of, the practical matter of getting across the river without bringing on an attack of her asthma or ruining the stockings.

Then she turned and saw a lady dressed in white, silently saying the rosary.

She didn't know who it was. She even told the girls to keep quiet about it. She didn't trust her judgment. That's why she brought holy water to the grotto the next time she felt drawn to visit it, to splash upon the lady, in case it was an evil spirit. But the lady smiled.

She told Bernadette to come to the grotto every day for a fortnight. We might say that the pilgrimages began then. Her family came with her. People in the village came. The police had to come to keep order. Curiosity seekers came. Scoffers and skeptics came. Christians came.

What did they come to see? On February 25, the lady made Bernadette smaller than ever: she told her to do two things that no one could understand. She was to go crawl underneath a projecting rock and drink from the “fountain” there; and to eat some of the grass. There was no fountain. It was a small puddle, more mud than water. Bernadette scratched at it until she could drink a little, and she ate the grass, too. Imagine her muddy face, flecked with weeds. Who could believe in her visions now? Even her family lost heart.

But the spring bubbled up beneath the mud. After the miraculous cure of a paralytic woman, the crowds returned, much to the chagrin of the local police. In all of this, Bernadette never put herself forward. All she did was to keep her promise to the lady, to return to the grotto, where she prayed silently, her countenance glowing with both sadness and joy.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Bernadette's parish priest, an impatient fellow, finally told the girl to demand from the lady her name. This came after the lady had commanded a sacred procession to the grotto, and a chapel to be built at the site. The procession was the

first organized pilgrimage to Lourdes. Ten thousand people were there. But Bernadette still did not know the lady's name. She did not presume to know. She didn't even admit that she had been responsible for any cures. She refused all money. She wanted only to obey the lady, and to study for her First Communion.

The fortnight passed. The Soubirous family was as poor as ever. Lourdes was thronged with visitors. Bernadette had returned to her ordinary life. Then on March 25, she heard the call again, and this time the lady revealed her name, in the girl's dialect. Tell the priest, she said, *Que soy era Immaculada Councepciou*: I am the Immaculate Conception.

Bernadette rehearsed the strange words on her way to the priest. She didn't know what they meant. Pope Pius IX had recently declared as a matter of faith that Mary had been conceived without taint of original sin. Bernadette did not know that. The priest did—and he was stunned.

How shall I put these things together? A young man with his hip devoured by cancer enters the waters of Lourdes. He has, on one side, no hip at all. When he returns from Lourdes, he begins again to walk and run as he used to do. X-rays show that there is no more sarcoma. Instead there is a hip, sound and sure.

Where did that come from? You can't persuade your body to make new tissue out of nothing. The *(continued on page 8)*



(continued from page 7)

new bone came from the smallest of places, that mustard seed, that leaven. What lies within the smallest of the seeds? God Almighty does: the power that made the universe from nothing, the eternity that is wholly present in every smallest twitch of an atom. It's no more difficult for God to make worlds than for him to make cells rush in multiplication and build up bone; each is as nothing at all, to God.

When the flesh of Mary began to be knit in the womb of her mother Anne, what then was the work of God? He wrought a miracle, preserving Mary from that fall of Adam that is the shadow that falls upon each of us when we are conceived. We are born paralytics, hunched toward sin and death. Mary was born in full health of soul. She stood upright.

CHRIST THE HEALER

By 1908, the fiftieth anniversary of the apparition of Mary to little Bernadette, the Lourdes researcher Georges Bertrin counted 3,962 bodily cures. Only about one in fourteen of these were of nervous conditions. Many of the rest involved the inexplicable and immediate growth of healthy tissue. Bertrin says also that even if some of the cures were doubtful, there was a far greater number of cures that were never recorded at all.

France since the revolution had been riven by materialists on one side, who hated the Church and scoffed at the piety of ordinary people, and faithful Christians on the other. So the Lord raised up the small against the great. Think of the poor parish priest Saint John Vianney, patron saint of students who have trouble with their exams. Think of Bernadette.

And think of the thousands and millions of people who came to Lourdes. Think of the spiritual miracle of conversion of heart. Which is more difficult, to heal a clotted artery, or to soften a life-long hardening of the heart in sin? Even in the earliest days, sinners came to Lourdes to sneer, and left in tears of joyful repentance.

The fact is, we all need the water from Lourdes. It isn't like the Ganges, one of the most polluted rivers in the world, but which harbors a germ that eats the germs on your flesh. Lourdes water has no such germs. Or it does have germs: the germinal seeds of faith, hope, and charity. Lourdes is available to us at all times. Christ the Healer is ready with the living water. We have only to submit, and to ask—and not heed what the scoffers will say. Some of them too will one day come down to the everlasting spring.

Anthony Esolen is professor and writer-in-residence at Magdalen College of the Liberal Arts in N.H., translator and editor of Dante's Divine Comedy (Random House), and author of *How the Church Has Changed the World* (Magnificat).

"How the Church Has Changed the World—Pilgrimage into Poverty", by Anthony Esolen

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**Deceased Members:
January 1, 2019 – Present**

Marjorie Lane Bycraft, DM	South Bend, IN
Mary Higgins Clark Conheeneey, DM	Saddle River, NJ
Roger H. Cook, KM	Marana, AZ
Edith C. Cunnane, DM	Creve Coeur, MO
Daniel J. Ferry, KM	Kirkwood, MO
Ellen M. Flynn, DM	La Crosse, WI
Luis J. Fujimoto, DMD, KM	New York, NY
Thomas Garesche, KM	Holderness, NH
Frances O'Connor Hardart, GCDM	Bronxville, NY
Dolores E. Loughlin, DM	Charlotte, NC
Thomas M. McEvoy, KM	Larchmont, NY
Peter Frederick Muratore, KMOB	Morristown, NJ
Rev. Richard Murphy, ChD	Vero Beach, FL
Geraldine Chapey Pasternak, DM	Belle Harbor, NY
Gerard P. Peplowski, KM	Grosse Pointe Woods, MI
Kathleen O. Shine, DM	Walpole, MA
Scott J. Steffan, KM	Jacksonville, FL

**American Association History is
being written as we speak.**

Dr. Robert Fredericks is writing a history of the American Association at Dr. Kelly's request. He would like to speak to anyone who may have had relatives who were members of the American Association from 1927 through 1977, or may themselves have been members during that time. Send an email to staff@orderofmaltaamerican.org or leave a message at 212-371-1522 with contact information and Dr. Fredericks will contact you.

The Strategic Plan — More than Area Support Payments

Twenty-seven Areas have received a total of \$108,800 as the first enhanced Area Support Payments. The enhanced payments resulting from the recommendations in the Strategic Plan that were approved by the Board of Councillors at their November 2019 meeting. The increased payments are based on the numbers of members who have paid the full Annual Contribution by the end of January. In the past, the Area Support Payments were released in June and were calculated at \$20 per paid member. The payment for those who paid by the January deadline has been increased to \$100. A second payment of \$50 will be distributed to the Areas in the summer for each of those who complete their full Annual Contribution between February 1 and May 31.

The increased payments are intended to support the Areas in their work— Area Chairs have wide flexibility in using the payments.

The recommendations of the Strategic Plan for the Areas go beyond just increased financial support. A new Committee has been established at the Board level, the Area Support and Development Committee. Chaired by BOC member Michael Donoghue and Vice Chair Peter Bewley, the committee is staffed by Board and Area members who have significant experience at the Area leadership level. A recent hire in the Executive office, Emma Smith, will be working with the Committee and with the Area leadership in support of their mission.

Areas will also benefit from work underway to help all members grow in their awareness of the unique spirituality of the Order of Malta. Father Eric Hollas, OSB of St. John's University, Collegeville, MN and George Molinsky, KM (Ohio) are working with a team to develop a module to be deployed to the Areas in the Fall. An overview of the module was presented with great support at the Association's Chaplains' Convocation in February. It is expected that many Areas will engage their Chaplains to lead the Area members through the module when it is released.

The Strategic Plan also recommended a redefinition and separation of the Auxiliary Corps into two separate entities, Auxiliary (ages 18 to 40) and Associates (ages 41+), each with separate focuses. The goal is to support the future growth of the Association, directing the resource and development of a younger cadre of Auxiliary who participate in the works of the Association and Area. One possible outcome in providing them with a link to the Order is some of them choosing full membership as Knights and Dames. The Auxiliary will continue to provide the hands-on opportunities that many young people seek as their spiritual path continues to evolve. Members of the Auxiliary are being invited to

participate in the leadership of this direction; the Board's Auxiliary Committee is working to expand the role of young Auxiliary in developing and deploying opportunities for their peers.

Associates, those over forty, will work with Knights and Dames in the field in projects that appeal to them; they will be invited to participate in Association and Area activities as time and space permit, and will pay the same price as Knights and Dames for participation in pilgrimages, retreats, the Annual Dinner and other Area events. After being involved for some time with the Knights and Dames in spirituality, service and social activities, some Associates may be interested in pursuing membership as a Knight or Dame.

There is no fee to join or be a part of the Association as an Auxiliary or as an Associate member.

A separate article deals with a study underway on fundraising.

American Association Chancellor Edward Delaney chaired the Strategic Planning Committee; he commented, "The plan is not just a piece of paper; it is intended to define a direction and present the guideposts as we move into the future. As we continue to make progress and report on it, I am confident that the effects of the commitment to the recommendations made in the plan will be positive at every level in the Association. All of the focus of the plan is ultimately directed at the Areas where our members live the charism."





Holy Family Hospital

A Work of the Order in its Finest Tradition

Nine centuries ago, the Order's very first hospital in Jerusalem took in the poor and the sick regardless of race or religion. Among 11 wards was one devoted to obstetrics. Not only were physicians and surgeons employed, but also nurses and wet-nurses for babies and orphans. Today, at the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, the Order continues that mission of caring for the sick, the poorest, and most vulnerable.

For the past few years since my investiture, I've been going to Bethlehem as one of a number of doctors who come

from abroad to volunteer their time teaching as visiting professors. I recently made my fourth trip this past January. Each visit has left a deep impression on me as I see firsthand the plight of the women and babies in the Bethlehem region as well as the marvelous work our Order does in serving them.

In the Palestine, the situation for pregnant women is more than difficult. There are many barriers between them and high quality maternal and neonatal care. Only a few kilometers from Bethlehem, in West Jerusalem, are some of the best, most modern hospitals in the world. But a wall might as well be an ocean for the Palestinian women who are barred from crossing it. And there are other walls beyond the physical one. Unemployment reaches 70% in the district, 100,000 women live in refugee camps, and there is no social welfare, no health insurance. Many women cannot pay for care or even to travel. As a result, many give birth in less than adequate conditions.

The Holy Family offers them a place to turn to. It serves many of the women in the area's three refugee camps--45% of the women who deliver at the Hospital. Almost all of the Bedouin population in the region, among the poorest of people, come as well. No one is ever turned away because of inability to pay.

The Holy Family's state of the art NICU is the only place in the region where premature babies as young as 24 weeks are able to receive the intensive care they need to survive. At other hospitals in the region, mothers are simply turned away if they are in labor that early and their babies considered miscarriages. On the first day of my most recent visit, I joined our doctors for their rounds and was impressed by the life-saving care they gave to a newborn, premature infant with pulmonary hypertension who seemed on death's door. I found them delivering the same care we would give in any high level NICU in the United States. Within days, the doctors stabilized the baby and had set



it on the road to do well and to thrive. At other hospitals in the region, she'd have been given up as hopeless.

During this visit, nearly all of the NICU's 18 beds were filled, half of the babies on some sort of respiratory support. Twenty-two percent of the babies were Christian, an unusually high number. I'm reminded each time I am there of the words of the late Cardinal Hickey--we help the needy "not because they are Catholic, but because we are Catholic." Regardless of their faith, all the mothers that deliver there are proud to go home with their babies wrapped in a blanket and wearing a knit hat, both emblazoned with the Cross of the Order. It is a point of pride because by saying they delivered their baby at the Holy Family, they are saying they gave the best for their baby, because that is what our Hospital provides.

At Holy Family, where Christians and Muslims work side by side taking care of patients of both faiths, inter-religious harmony is nurtured. In addition, by providing a place for Christian Palestinians to work, the Hospital helps to maintain their presence in the Holy Land, maintaining a multi-faith community. Many of the patients, but also the doctors and nurses that come to

train or work there, come from the villages where there is only one religion. At the Hospital, they see that people of different faiths can live in peace and mutual respect.

I am impressed on every visit by the professionalism and skill of our doctors at Holy Family, their compassion, their eagerness to learn the latest in neonatology, and their commitment to our Order's mission to serve "our lords the sick and the poor." I always leave feeling ever more grateful to be a part of this Order which here in Bethlehem and the world over opens its doors to families like the original Holy Family two thousand years ago, turned away by everyone else and in desperate search of hospitality. And I leave hopeful because by saving the lives of the most vulnerable, regardless of race or religion, in a place where they might otherwise be lost, our hospital helps promote peace among peoples in the place where the Prince of Peace was born.

Michael Espiritu, MD, KM, is from the New York Area, a neonatologist at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medicine, and Assistant Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at Weill Medical College of Cornell University.

Update on Conditions in Bethlehem

In the first week of March, COVID-19 found its way into Bethlehem, resulting in a total closure and geographic isolation for the city and surrounding region. The border closed as well, resulting in hundreds of thousands of Palestinians furloughed with no pay. This resulted in a dire economic situation for the entire region. Our Holy Family Hospital Mobile Medical Unit has not been allowed to make its weekly rounds. Yet, babies cannot wait to be born; mothers cannot wait to deliver. Our staff are sacrificing greatly to carry out their vocation to care for the mothers and babies of Bethlehem and to keep our NICU operating at full capacity most days. Our spirits are buoyed by the support and prayers coming from all over the world for the staff, the mothers and babies and the people of Bethlehem. To stay up to date on COVID-19 crisis in Bethlehem or to see how you can help, you can visit www.birthplaceofhope.org/covid19.



Finding Peace at the Baths

“Brancade.” A whisper, more mouthed than spoken, sends six women into a highly choreographed routine. Brancade. I know it means “stretcher,” but the bluntness is used only to break the language barrier between volunteers. Marie is rolled through the outside curtain to the small room I stand in. She twitches. We comfort her, but her pain is clear. We move Marie onto the smaller, handheld brancade. I place a pillow under her head. We turn. We slide. We lift. We turn. Get ready. We can only do this together.

We draw back the second curtain revealing another small room, the room everyone comes for. Stone walls surround a single long rectangular tub of water. I know this room well. I first laid eyes on this peculiar space when I visited Lourdes, France last summer, but I grew up hearing stories about this mystical place. My mom would call Lourdes “the Blessed Mother’s living room.” Now, I hear her words float through my head. Surrounded by unstable emotion, I hold onto these words.

Returning to Lourdes, I immediately recognize the lined up chairs, the steps down to the inner room, the brancade hanging at my right. France already seems foreign with its different customs, but Lourdes is a different dimension. Thousands of souls fill the sanctuary day and night, looking for healing from the sacred spring water. Our intangible faith is grounded in 69 miracles that occurred in just 150 years. Here, together, we embark on Marie’s journey.

This year I have a journey to make, too. I come feeling the weight of the world upon my shoulders and without knowing my true North. My family experienced a tragedy. My Aunt left a rift in my heart. It’s tempting to close myself off. In this, I feel a part of Marie’s pain. I see Marie’s hopes and dreams, but most distinctly

I see her family, her life, and all of its wonderful intricacies. Our new realities will never resemble the old. It rattles me. I struggle to fully comprehend this fact. Impatient, I try to sweep it away, to create distractions from it. I become stagnant in this way of thinking, until I remember the warm joy beyond the pain.

Looking back on my experience with Marie, I realize I was petrified. Marie completely trusted me when I didn’t trust myself. I stood in a room filled with strong, experienced women, and I barely knew the steps. I had a job to do. People were counting on me to completely turn my focus outwards and bear the whole of my responsibilities. I gave the best I had to offer.

Patricia mouths “Un, deux, trois,” and we lift. Marie glides off the gurney. We lift Marie down the steps to the water. “Arretez, fermetevi, stop!” We must move in unison. There is no margin for error. Slowly, we lower her into the water, dark, cold, and eerily coffin-like. My arms start to shake. I can’t do this. I nearly slip on the wet granite. No. I can do this. I won’t let myself drop Marie. Breathe. We lift Marie back to safety on the stretcher. We sigh with relief.

Even the air feels lighter. On the gurney, Marie wistfully smiles. She looks up at me with glassy eyes and whispers, “Merci beaucoup, merci beaucoup,” and she grasps my hand. I ask, “Ça va?” Marie replies “Oui, ça va très bien.” She has a glint of knowledge, or maybe peace in her eyes. I know something’s changed because I feel it too. Perhaps peace has begun to fill my own rift, to restore my sense of North. Just before we part, I give her one of my rosaries. Our paths, momentarily crossed, resume their separate trajectories. For the first time, I feel the bliss of life again.

This essay was contributed by Grace Hamerschlag.





Miracles Do Happen Long Distance

Grace Knows No Boundaries

With the cancellation of the Lourdes Pilgrimage for the first time since the Association started to go in 1986, many are feeling a kind of spiritual hunger. In January, one of our chaplains received a letter from someone for whom he and others had prayed while in Lourdes in 2019. This is shared to remind everyone that the miracles of Lourdes transcend time and space and to help, just a bit, satisfy that hunger.

Dear Chaplain,

I write to offer you and the Knights and Dames of Malta my gratitude and a witness to God's grace. When you went with the Knights and Dames of Malta to Lourdes (last year), I asked you to remember my brother and his wife in your prayers at the shrine. At the time, we had just learned of his well-hidden high-functioning alcoholism (marathons, promotions, etc.), which had only been discovered when his liver shut down and he began having seizures. The doctors would not even discuss transplants, because he was not expected to live long enough to meet the minimum requirements for abstinence to make a transplant viable. While in the hospital, he contracted pneumonia, shutting down his kidneys. We were prepared to face his death within weeks.

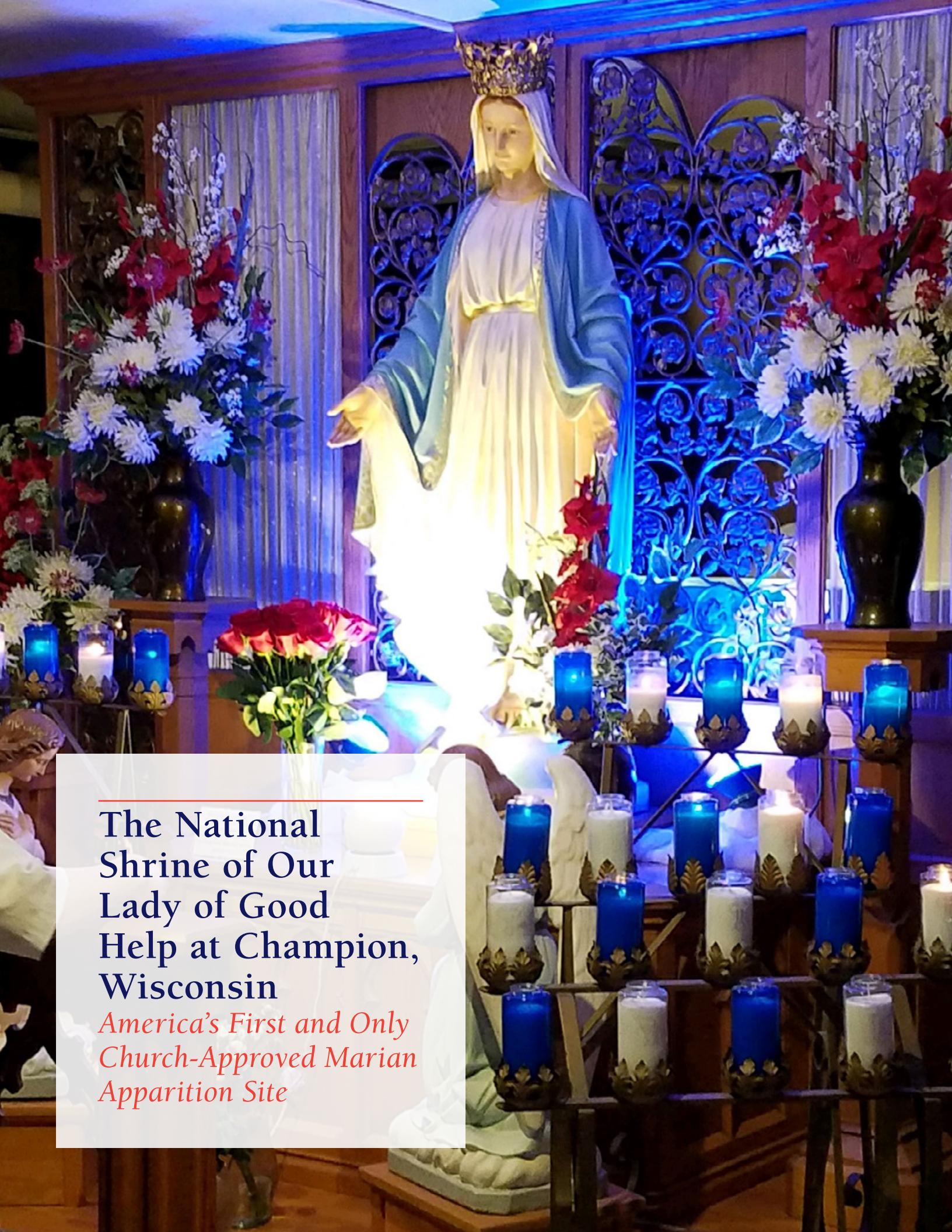
At a moment's notice, my siblings and I flew to the hospital, expecting our visit to be the last. He had made his confession and received last rites. We hosted a "party" for his young children to be able to see him one more time, covering as many of the machines and hoses with the help of the nursing staff. In the night, I took down his last letter to his children.

Through the grace of God, today his organs have healed, and no transplants are deemed necessary. When his case is discussed among the doctors who saw him last April, many express surprise that he is even alive to be discussed. His doctor has described it as miraculous on more than one occasion. He is back to work supporting his family, going through outpatient rehab and AA, and he has been sober for nine months. There is, of course, much mental and interpersonal healing still needed, but the fact that he now has the chance for that healing is an incredible gift of mercy for all of us.

Perhaps it was as simple as bringing names from our town to Lourdes, but I will always be grateful that you brought my brother and sister-in-law before Our Lady at Lourdes to present them before God.

Sincerely,

A Grateful Brother



The National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help at Champion, Wisconsin

America's First and Only Church-Approved Marian Apparition Site

Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe and Champion all are part of a select group of places worldwide where the Blessed Virgin Mary is believed to have appeared. In America, The National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help at Champion covers the peace-filled holy ground deemed ‘worthy of belief’ by authority of the Catholic Church, that Mary, the mother of Jesus, appeared. Identifying herself as ‘The Queen of Heaven who prays for the conversion of sinners,’ Mary appeared in October 1859 to a Belgian immigrant woman, Adele Brise, on the grounds of Champion Shrine, when the town was known as Robinsonville.

According to the direct accounts of those who worked with Adele throughout the years of her mission work, she was instructed, in a series of locutions by Our Lady, to ‘make a general confession, pray and offer communion for the conversion of sinners and to gather the children in the wild country and to teach them what they needed to know for their salvation.’ She further instructed Adele, to ‘teach the children their catechism, how to ‘make the sign of the cross’ and how to ‘approach the sacraments.’ Mary ended her apparition saying: ‘That is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing, I will help you.’ These locutions by Our Lady of Good Help became the foundation of a lifelong legacy of catechetical mission work by Brise with local families. She traveled on foot in a 50-mile radius around the present-day shrine to teach and instruct as she was told by Mary. Adele’s father later built a chapel on the apparition site where she also began her teaching work.

On October 8, 1871, twelve years to the date of Mary’s last appearance, a Midwestern drought caused two of the worst fires in America’s history – one in Chicago and the other in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. The same drought caused an inferno that began raging through the rural area, threatening the chapel in the town of Robinsonville. Local families who had been involved with Adele Brise as part of her mission work in catechesis traveled during the fire to the chapel on the shrine’s grounds, many with babies, small children and farm animals, to pray the rosary. On their knees and in procession all night long, as the areas near the shrine were reduced to ashes, those who gathered at the shrine prayed the rosary, asking Our Lady of Good Help for her intercession with her son Jesus to save them from the fire. Their prayers were answered and rain came and extinguished the fire just as it reached the chapel and shrine grounds.

In Champion Shrine history, this event is marked by what many believe to have been one of the first graces granted through intercessory prayer with Our Lady of Good Help, to Jesus. This and other miraculous instances at Champion Shrine continue to be a harbinger of hope for thousands who travel on pilgrimage to pray for help and healing. To this day, many descendants of those whose lives were spared during the October 8, 1871 fire come to celebrate the miracle

of the fire on that day annually, praying the rosary all night long into the following day, the day shrine historians believe marks the anniversary of the last appearance of Mary at Champion in 1859.

In December 2010, after a period of prayerful discernment during which he reviewed years of research and investigation by expert Mariologists, The Most Rev. David L. Ricken, Bishop of Green Bay, determined it ‘worthy of belief’ that the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to Adele Brise.

On August 15, 2016 The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops declared Champion a ‘National Shrine,’ by formal decree distinguishing ‘The National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help’ the first and only Catholic Shrine in America with a Church-approved Marian Apparition Site. This and other international media coverage of events that have occurred continue to draw thousands to Champion Shrine. Champion Shrine grounds include a new prayer and events center, Mother of Mercy Hall, a welcome center, chapel and apparition oratory in the lower level of the oratory, outdoor rosary walk and stations of the cross, a welcome center with Shrine history, a gift shop and the original historic schoolhouse building (where Adele Brise once taught containing a meeting gathering rooms an onsite cafe.

The Chapel, Apparition Oratory, outdoor stations of the cross and outdoor rosary walk are open 365 days a year, from 7a.m. until 7p.m. Large gatherings, outdoor masses, processions, Eucharistic healing services and religious events are held throughout the year to carry out the message of Our Lady of Good Help and to carry on the mission she inspired in Adele Brise. All are welcome to experience the peace of Champion Shrine in the presence of Mary through intercessory prayer to her son, Jesus.

For more information about worship opportunities and religious retreats and events at Champion Shrine visit www.shrineofourladyofgoodhelp.com.

With the cancellation of the Lourdes Pilgrimage this year, members of the Order of Malta in the United States turn their hopes to the Tri-Association’s planned pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, which is scheduled for August 6-9.

The article above is reprinted from the website of the Shrine with their permission.



ASSOCIATION CALENDAR

May 21

Ascension Thursday

May 28

Board of Councillors Meeting
(teleconference)

June 24

Feast of Saint John the Baptist

August 6-9

Wisconsin

Pilgrimage to Our Lady of Good Help

August 15

Feast of the Assumption

August 20-31

Association Trip to the Mediterranean

September 8

Feast of Our Lady of Philermo

September 16-17

St. Louis, MO

Board of Councillors Meeting

October 2-4

Medway, MA

Association Retreat

October 13

Feast of Blessed Gerard

November 1

All Saints' Day

November 12

New York City

Board of Councillors Meeting

November 13

New York City

Annual Meeting, Investiture,
Annual Dinner

November 14

New York City

Mass for Malades, Caregivers,
and Malades in Spirit

November 14

New York City

Subpriory Mass

November 15

New York City

World Day of the Poor

November 26

Thanksgiving

December 8

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

December 25

Christmas

On the first Wednesday of each month,
there is a Spiritual Outreach call at 11AM ET

Our Mission

The American Association of the Order of Malta has as its mission to promote the glory of God through the sanctification of its members, through witness to and support of the Catholic faith and through active service to the sick and the poor.

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Change of address?

Please notify the New York Office.

If you have recently moved, changed phone numbers, or created a new email address, we encourage you to visit: www.orderofmaltaamerican.org/members/update and fill out our information update form. This online form provides members with a quick and simple way to update any, or all, of their information that is stored in the American Association's database. Members with and without active email addresses can now submit an update to their home address, professional, and even educational information on our website using this new form. We hope that you will utilize this new method and help keep the American Association's records up to date.

You can also email mail@orderofmaltaamerican.org or call our office at (212) 371-1522 with your contact information updates.