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A PUBLICATION OF OUR LADY OF MARTYRS SHRINE



ON HOPE

by St. Isaac Jogues

Alas, my dear Father, when shall I begin to love and serve Him whose love for us had no beginning? When shall I begin to give myself entirely to Him, who has given Himself unreservedly to me? Although I am very miserable, and have so misused the graces our Lord has done me in this country, I do not despair, as He takes care to render me better by giving me new occasions to die to self, and unite myself inseparably to Him.

My hope is in God, who needs not us to accomplish His designs. We must endeavor to be faithful to Him and not spoil His work by our shortcomings. I trust you will obtain me this favor of our Lord, that, having led so wretched a life till now, I may at last begin to serve Him better.

My heart tells me that if I have the happiness of being employed in this mission, *Ibo et non redibo*; but I shall be happy if our Lord will complete the sacrifice where He has begun it, and make the little blood I have shed in that land the earnest of what I would give from every vein of my body and my heart.

In a word, this people is “a bloody spouse to me,” -- “in my blood have I espoused it to me” (Exod. Iv. 4:25). May our good Master, who has purchased them in his blood, open to them the door of His Gospel, as well as to the four allied nations near them.

Adieu, dear Father; pray Him to unite me inseparably to Him.

from The Life of Father Isaac Jogues, S.J. by Felix Martin, S.J.

THIS ISSUE:

ON HOPE
PAGE 1

LIVING AGAIN WITH
THE EUCHARIST
PAGES 2 - 3

ON LOVE
PAGE 4

PANDEMIC SEASON
REFLECTIONS
PAGES 5

ON FAITH
PAGES 6 - 7

2020 POINTS US TO THE
URGENCY OF THE VIRTUES
PAGES 8 - 9

FR. CISZEK AND THE NORTH
AMERICAN MARTYRS
PAGES 10 - 11



LIVING AGAIN WITH THE EUCHARIST

by Beth Lynch

On a column near the sanctuary in the Coliseum is a plaque that reads: “With gratitude for a special blessed place on earth.” Our 2020 Shrine season exemplified that sentiment. Whereas the undercurrents of Covid-19 ran with fear, doubt, and division, our Shrine was a conduit of faith, hope, and love. Here, the pall of the pandemic upon our churches and the deepening ideological divide in our country ran head-on into the unifying element of the Catholic Mass and power of the Holy Eucharist.

When New York State allowed limited gatherings, pilgrims visited in small numbers with masks on faces and hugs “on hold.” But then state fines were threatened on businesses and properties if patrons violated mandates. The lockdown of churches echoed the lament of St. Isaac Jogues during his captivity here nearly 400 years ago, where he led “a truly wretched life in so long and hard trials. . . deprived of the sacraments.” When Montgomery County announced drive-in movies were approved to reopen, it begged the question: If people can sit in their cars to watch a drive-in movie, why can’t they sit in their cars to attend a drive-in Mass?

The percentage of capacity allowed was determined to be 50 vehicles. Parking spaces on the grounds were marked off. Diagrams designed. Hand-sanitizing measures planned. The Shrine’s Board and its Pandemic Safety Committee reviewed all New York State and CDC recommendations and presented the plan to Montgomery County officials. And, mercifully, they were approved. The next step was to create a process reserving a spot. The Shrine reached capacity within ten minutes of posting on Facebook! Like St. Isaac Jogues, people were starving for the Eucharist.

The Shrine’s resident priest, Father Brian Lehnert, vested in red for Pentecost Sunday, presided at the Shrine’s first outdoor Mass. The altar was on the walkway that encircles the Coliseum, several doors away from the main entrances. There was ample space from the rows of vehicles. Orange-vested parking attendants ensured an empty space between each to allow added distancing. A ten-foot radius in front of each vehicle, mostly in grass; families brought lawn chairs and blankets. The holy ground was the kneeler.

At the end of Mass, vehicles were smoothly choreographed to enter the horse-shoe drive at the main door of the Coliseum. Father Lehnert was stationed under a white tent where water, hand sanitizer, and towels were at the ready. Armed with a face mask and face shield, he carried the Blessed Sacrament in a ciborium to each person in the vehicle stopped beside the tent. As one car exited and the next parked at the tent, Father sanitized his hands and continued.

There were smiles, thanksgiving, and tears at receiving Our Lord in the Eucharist after three months of deprivation. Their faces beamed as they drove off -- pilgrims waved and blessed the organizers. Their feelings mirrored those of St. Isaac Jogues when he received the Eucharist after 17 months of captivity: “It was then that I began to live again. It was then that I tasted the sweetness of my deliverance.”

When churches were allowed to reopen, Mass was moved into the 6,500-seating capacity of the Coliseum. Even with over 400 people at nearly every Mass this season, there remained ample social distancing. Pews were marked, and escorts in orange vests provided assistance.



Father Lehnert celebrated the Mass from the high altar, above the palisade, so all could see. The consecration took place at the foot of the huge crucifix that is the apex of the Coliseum, and the apex of our Catholic lives. There, Father's elevation of the Blessed Sacrament elicited a spontaneous "Lo, the Sacred Host we hail!" in the hearts of all present.

To prevent a massive queue during Holy Communion, Father distributed the Eucharist one section at a time, accompanied by an assistant moving the sanitizing table with him. All other sections remained seated. Since there was only one Mass per week, Father Lehnert's private Masses maintained the continuity of the Shrine's Novena of Masses for St. Kateri in July, the Assumption in August, and the North American Martyrs in October. Father also heard Confessions twice per week in the open-air Martyrs Chapel; this was always open for private prayer with the Blessed Sacrament on the other side of the window of the Kateri Chapel. Many people took advantage of these opportunities.

Unscheduled individuals, families, and small groups of pilgrims walked the grounds, visited the Ravine and the Saints of Auriesville Museum, and selected purchases at the Gift Shop. Although hours of operation were limited, the Shrine is not gated and the grounds are open until dusk. Because the list of states under a travel ban was always updating, care was taken to maintain compliance when religious or priests made requests. Among those traveling through were the Bishop of Syracuse with several seminarians; seminarians from Holy Apostles Seminary in Connecticut; and priests from the Diocese of Bridgeport.

Parishes of the Amsterdam area received the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Coliseum including over 40 Confirmandi. Both the National Day of Remembrance for the Unborn and Rosary Coast to Coast were held outdoors at the Monument to the Unborn that overlooks the Mohawk Valley.

This was also the season of sisters. The Sisters of Life from the Bronx made their annual pilgrimage with eager postulants. These Spirit-filled women radiate joy that lifts the moods and hearts of all they encounter. The Sisters of Charity from Schenectady with their guests learned the story of the North American Martyrs and St. Kateri in the museum. Sisters of the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin Mary from the Catskills in N.Y. made self-directed pilgrimage on the grounds. The Sisters of the Visitation of Holy Mary from Massachusetts left their cloister to visit. This is the order of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, the nun who received revelations from the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the 17th century. They fashioned a cross of scrap wood from the Ravine to bring back to their property as a reminder of this "energizing" experience.

In a 1906 edition of *The Pilgrim* a priest describes a kerosene oil lamp over the Pieta statue on the brow of the Hill of Torture. "It is seen for miles as the only conspicuous light on our side of the river."

Light still shines on this holy hill, not in kerosene but in spirit and hope during a challenging time for our country, our Church, and the world. The degree of conspicuousness is limited only by our faith -- here at this "special blessed place on earth."

What a gift to be the site of rebirth during this pandemic year! For as long as we have Mass and Confession here, it will continue, watering the grounds with so much prayer.

Beth Lynch is pilgrimage coordinator and museum manager at the Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs.

ON LOVE

by St. John de Brébeuf

We are, perhaps, on the point of shedding our blood and sacrificing our lives in the service of our good Master, Jesus Christ. It seems that He in His goodness consents to accept this sacrifice from me for the expiation of my great and innumerable sins, and in this hour to crown any past services as well as the sincere, ardent desires of all of our Fathers here...

All our Fathers await the outcome of this affair with great calmness and contentment of spirit. For myself, I can tell you, Reverend Father, with all sincerity, that I have not yet had the least apprehension or fear of death from such a cause. This one thing we all regret, namely, that these poor barbarians through their own malice are closing their doors against the Gospel and God's grace. Whatever conclusion they reach, and no matter what treatment they give us, we will try, as long as God sustains us, to endure it patiently for His service. It is indeed an eminent favor that His goodness extends to us in letting us endure something for His love. It is only now that we consider ourselves truly members of His society. May He be forever blessed for having appointed us to this country, for having chosen us from so many others much more deserving than we to aid Him in bearing His cross. In all things, may His holy will be done! If it is His holy will that at this hour we should die -- oh, fortunate hour for us! And still, if it is His will to reserve us for other labors -- may He also be blessed! If you should hear that God has crowned our insignificant labors, or rather, our desires, help us to bless Him, for it is only for His sake that we desire to live and to die. It is only He who can give us the grace to accomplish this.

from An Autobiography of Martyrdom, François Roustang, S.J., Ed., Sr. M. Renelle, S.S.N.D., Tr.

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ST. JOHN DE BRÉBEUF





REFLECTIONS OF A SHRINE SEASON DURING A PANDEMIC

by Fr. Brian Lehnert

I arrived at the Shrine in the beginning of April not knowing what to expect with the COVID-19 conditions. The first two months were somewhat like a quiet retreat. This was both a blessing and a challenge. This gave me time to let God deal with me. Living at this holy place is a constant reminder that this peacefulness came at a price. The price was the lives of the holy martyrs, but they did not regret this sacrifice. Their love for bringing the Gospel and their dedication to the Algonquin and Huron people was more important than their own lives. Living here is a reminder that complaining about my problems is not productive and these saints have shown a greater way. I was looking to take a sabbatical after 20 years of priesthood. I wanted to renew my love of my priestly vocation. I wasn't sure what exactly I was looking for, so I brought this to prayer. Some priests go to Rome for this time, but something was saying "no" to this path. I couldn't understand why I didn't want to go to Rome! God has His plans. I happened to be talking to a couple of priest friends in this Diocese of Albany. Then a few days later they phoned saying there was a possibility at this Shrine in Upstate New York. They said the Shrine could offer the retreat atmosphere and the light priestly duty I was looking for during my time. I was able to meet with some of the staff at the Shrine and the rest was history. While I was there, the Shrine was blessed to offer some of the first Masses in the New York State during the pandemic. We were able to have Mass outside, which had its challenges, but no challenge was greater than nourishing the desire of the faithful with the holy Mass. The Auriesville Shrine is a peaceful place and that peacefulness seems to draw people seeking forgiveness and healing. It was a gift to this priest -- may it continue to be for many. We are certainly a people and world in need of Christ's peace.

Fr. Brian Lehnert is a priest of the Diocese of Palm Beach, who was on sabbatical at Our Lady of Martyrs Shrine this year.

Living at this holy place is a constant reminder that this peaceful place came at a price.

FR. BRIAN LEHNERT



ON FAITH

by Fr. James Brent, O.P.

“The purpose of life is to know God.” Such a simple and clear statement on the purpose of our lives comes from Saint Thomas Aquinas. In another place he says, “the purpose and delight of our whole lives is to know the Trinity in Unity.” Both statements are an unfolding of what the Lord Jesus himself says in John 17:3: “eternal life is knowing you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

God did not create us to wander in darkness or in the absence of God. He created us rather to know Him, to enjoy His presence, and to be able to pray with the Psalmist: “I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living” (Ps. 116:9). At the root and foundation of such a life -- life in the presence of God -- is the gift of faith.

Faith is a gift of grace, a special gift given to us out of God’s love, and it is a special gift for knowing God. The gift is a specific quality of the heart. It is a stable disposition of the heart to welcome the light of God to whatever degree it pleases Him to shine His light in our lives, and to affirm with certitude whatever it is God reveals. The liturgy of the Church provides the best comparison for getting a sense of what faith is. Every year at the Easter Vigil the paschal candle is lit from the blessed fire. The candles of the people are then lit from the paschal candle. The deacon then processes with the paschal candle, and three times stops, holds the candle high, and chants “the Light of Christ!” All of this is to show that Christ is the light of God, and each of us receives His light and His light radiates in us by the grace of our baptism. That is why in baptisms throughout the year, the same paschal candle is present in the liturgy. When a baptism takes place, after the pouring or immersion in the water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a small candle is lit from the paschal candle and handed to the newly baptized or to the godfather. When the newly lit candle is handed over, the minister says “keep the flame of faith burning brightly.” The liturgy of the Church teaches us clearly that faith is a special light received from God in Jesus Christ, and thanks to grace His divine light illuminates our souls. Faith is the light of God shining within us in the depths of our hearts.

This light is a mysterious splendor. Just like a white light passing through a prism reveals many colors present in it, so the light of faith has several distinct rays within it.

In the first place, faith is a fixed tendency to trust and affirm what God has revealed to the human race, i.e. everything that comes down to us in the testimony of the prophets and apostles. This fixed tendency is traditionally called a theological virtue. Thanks to this virtue or fixed tendency of the heart, when a person full of faith hears what God has revealed, the person simply believes it all. The faithful affirm in all simplicity that Jesus is Lord, that He freely chose to die on the cross out of love for us, but that God raised Him from the dead, and now He stands before the Father interceding for us, and the Father answers His prayers by pouring out the Holy Spirit upon us, especially in the sacraments of the Church. Thanks to the virtue of faith, the faithful simply believe in the perpetual Virginity of Mary, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the mystery of the holy Trinity, and all the other mysteries of our faith. These mysteries naturally give rise to many questions. The questionings are not doubts (or need not become doubts). Rather, every question is a call to grow in understanding of what God has revealed, and so faith also ponders the mysteries in love like the Blessed Virgin Mary who “kept all these things pondering them in her heart” (Lk. 2:19). Faith, therefore, gives birth to meditation, sacred study, contemplation, indeed, to the whole response to the Light that is living and true theology.

In the second place, faith is the beginning of eternal life in us. Eternal life is a personal, experiential, familiar form of knowing God. Faith is contact of the mind with God Himself, and the fruit of such contact is life in the presence of God and the presence of God in us. Whoever lives in such contact with God in the depths of the heart cannot but be one with Him. That is why Saint Thomas Aquinas says that by faith a person enters into “a union similar to marriage” with God, and also that by faith a person “perceives many things of God in a manner higher than reason.” Now just as in a marriage, the union merely begins on the day of the wedding and is meant to grow from that day forward, so union with God begins in faith and is meant to grow through faith (and hope and charity and the seven gifts of the Spirit) into the full enjoyment of the presence of God dwelling within us. In this way, God recovers fallen humanity from its sense of the absence of God, heals our hearts of the calamity of the Fall, and renews us in the life born from knowing the divine Light.

In the third place, faith is the root and source of contemplative prayer. “Contemplation,” the Catechism says, “is a gaze of faith fixed on Jesus” (CCC 2715). When two people trust each other and abide in love together, their communication tends to simplify, to become more interior, more silent, and yet mysteriously richer and more intimate. So too it is with the faithful who pray. Those who believe -- in all trust and love -- what God reveals, and give themselves to the practice of prayer, tend to become more interior souls, more silent, abiding more with a simple awareness of the presence of God living within. They begin to experience for themselves the meaning of these words: “he who believes in me out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:38). Such contemplative awareness can become radical. One great example is the French Carmelite nun Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity. She was a contemplative soul, and by grace was given from an early age to pondering the reality of the Trinity dwelling in her soul. “I have found Heaven on earth, since Heaven is God, and God is in my soul,” she wrote. What was her secret? What was the secret of her growth in radical awareness of God dwelling within her? “Believe in His Love,” she wrote, “in His exceeding Love.”

All of the teachings and all of the practices of the holy Catholic Church are given to the world to renew the human heart in the divine Light, Love, and Life. In order that we may receive such a renewal of our hearts offered to us, God has given us His Son Jesus Christ, His Holy Spirit, His Mother Mary, His Word in Scripture, His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, His Mystical Body the Church, as well as all the practices of prayer, fasting, and the works of mercy. All of it, every last detail of Catholic life, is for the sake of us coming to know and love the Presence of God dwelling in our hearts by grace both in time and in eternity. And the renewal of the human heart begins with faith.

Fr. James Brent, O.P., is assistant professor of philosophy at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C.



I HAVE
FOUND
HEAVEN
ON
EARTH,
SINCE
HEAVEN
IS GOD,
AND
GOD IS
IN MY
SOUL.

ST. ELIZABETH
OF THE
TRINITY

2020 POINTS US TO THE URGENCY OF THE VIRTUES

by Kathryn Jean Lopez

I fell in love with the North American Martyrs Shrine when my parents took us up there from New York City sometime one Easter break. It was off season, but a Jesuit let us in to see the Coliseum. I don't know if I was 10, but I had the overwhelming sense that what happened here was so powerful, that it had the possibility of renewing the Church. I didn't even know what that meant at the time, and I'm not sure I even could articulate that much. But it was holy ground. Indeed, it is, and in this year where nothing seems certain, our hearts come on pilgrimage this Christmas to Auriesville, New York. I currently write from lower Manhattan, where we had to have stores boarded up for Election Week, for fear that violence would erupt if the incumbent president were to win. What is happening to our nation? There is such anger and misery. I frequently pass by a quite busy abortion clinic and don't have to wonder how this all came to be. We are a brutal culture, my brothers and sisters in Christ. So many pressures guide women toward abortion. Over 61 million since it became legal in the United States. The legacy of *Roe v. Wade* is an intimate violence that is behind closed doors. So, we can both look away and pretend it isn't a bloody mess – in the life of a woman and everyone she is close to and encounters, obviously, in the death of an innocent, but also on our country and culture. Abortion changes people and ... everything. We cannot pretend this does not have a long-term effect, all around.

And so here we are with a culture of riots and bullying. Families struggling. Children abused and abandoned. Even a Church that is not without more than its share of the filth of evil. This is why we must spend time, at least in our prayer, in Auriesville. I marvel that St. Isaac Jogues is on the bronze front doors of St. Patrick's Cathedral in midtown Manhattan, in normal times, we like to think of ourselves as the center of the world. But travel a few hours, and you can find yourself in the Ravine, where a tomahawk took him to his earthly end. The man who had to go back to France after his hands were mutilated by the very people he was here to serve, only to come back out of love of God and His creation.



As we approach the end of this grueling 2020, which has been a time of death and fear and separation from the sacraments, and move forward into a new year, where conditions will not magically improve, what are the lessons to take with us? We are a pilgrim people on a journey to eternity with God. Everything we do must be ordered to this. That means living a life of virtue.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that “A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.” I don’t know about you, but my experience of 2020 is this agonizing sense that I want God. I want God in the Sacraments. I want God to show me how to live more and more each second of every day. I don’t ever want to abandon Him, and I know He doesn’t abandon me. But, goodness, am I weak. Those months without the Mass, without Confession. I felt like I would never have the grace to face martyrdom, because I couldn’t even manage that. But, on the other hand: What a gift -- to know what is truly most important in life, what makes the virtues possible!

For these end-of-year moments of pause, we focus on the theological virtues. Again, the Catechism explains that “the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object.” The Trinitarian life is what we’re called to. It’s what, from the best that I can tell from their writings and testimonies, the Jesuit martyrs lived. It’s what the radiant Lily of the Mohawks, Kateri Tekakwitha lived. It’s what we must. Now is our only time to witness to the truth of Jesus Christ. This year points us as the martyrs did to the cross of Jesus, to see that great love He has for us -- to die for us. We must be willing to die for Him. Do we love God that much?

Kathryn Jean Lopez is senior fellow at the National Review Institute where she directs the Center for Religion, Culture, and Civil Society. She is author of the book A Year with the Mystics: Visionary Wisdom for Daily Living.



WE ARE A
PILGRIM
PEOPLE ON
A JOURNEY
TO ETERNITY
WITH GOD.
EVERYTHING
WE DO MUST
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TO THIS.

KATHRYN JEAN
LOPEZ

FR. CISZEK AND THE MARTYRS: REFLECTIONS ON SINFULNESS AND THE LOVE OF GOD

by John DeJak

On August 4, 1964, Fr. Walter Ciszek, S.J., began his annual eight-day retreat in preparation for his final vows, which he would take on the Feast of Our Lady's Assumption, August 15, 1964. The site for this particular retreat was the Shrine of the North American Martyrs (also known as the Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs), in Auriesville, New York. It is built on the site of Ossernenon, a small Indian village on the south bank of the Mohawk River. St. Kateri Tekakwitha was from this village and it was the inhabitants of this village who ultimately killed St. Isaac Jogues, St. René Goupil, and their fellow Jesuit companions in the 17th century. The Shrine has long been a spot for prayer and meditation for the faithful across the country.

There is something mystical about the place. When one arrives, he feels the centuries in his bones. Looking across the expanse towards the Mohawk River and seeing the sharp incline below from the height of the old village of Ossernenon, one can't help but feel the need for silence when meditating upon the events of that spot. It was there, down the sharp incline, that the Jesuit saints were forced to "run the gauntlet" -- running up and down the hill while being stoned with sharp rocks and lacerated by blades and spears of the savage tribe. Upon that holy spot now lies a circle of rocks -- possibly from the same era -- now configured into a Rosary.

The Jesuits have long cultivated devotion to these holy places, having erected a coliseum-style church in 1930, no doubt reminding the faithful of today that the suffering of the 17th-century Jesuit martyrs had a spiritual relation to the suffering of the early Christians in Rome's Flavian Amphitheater. Not far away from the Shrine Church is a ravine. As one walks down the ravine, there is an eerie silence. One encounters several small altars, commemorating the area -- the exact spot still unknown -- where St. René Goupil's body was dismembered and thrown to be consumed by wild animals and the ravages of time. The place and the moment of one's visit cannot but call forth emotion for the one who irrigated the land with his blood, so that the seed of faith could bloom in North America.

And so it was, in August 1964, that Fr. Walter Ciszek, S.J., fellow Jesuit with the martyrs, came to the place of their tortures and death. Fr. Ciszek had seen his own share of torture and probably knew -- more than most -- a taste of their sufferings. How close he must have felt to them as he made his retreat! How intimate his relationship with them as he made the same meditations from the Spiritual Exercises that they had made centuries earlier. How humble he must have felt being in the presence of the ground watered by their blood and witness. This whole history and Father's recent return from his own sufferings in Russia, must have colored his meditations and spiritual insights and inspirations.

Fr. Ciszek's reflection on his own personal sinfulness, as composed by him during a meditation during this retreat in 1964, should help us today in overcoming our own sinfulness. Let us allow Father to speak to us today, as we continue striving to be the saints that God created us to be:



... if You
call for a
total
sacrifice of
life itself,
Your
unworthy
servant is
ready. There
is nothing I
will refuse
You, if You
will it.

FR. WALTER CISZEK

The Lord did not punish me enough in the camps. Instead, when all was lost and no hope existed, He almost miraculously saved me from perdition. Why? I don't know, because there is nothing worthwhile I did for Him, but rather the opposite. He regarded the good prayers offered for me and the power of these prayers did the miraculous for me.

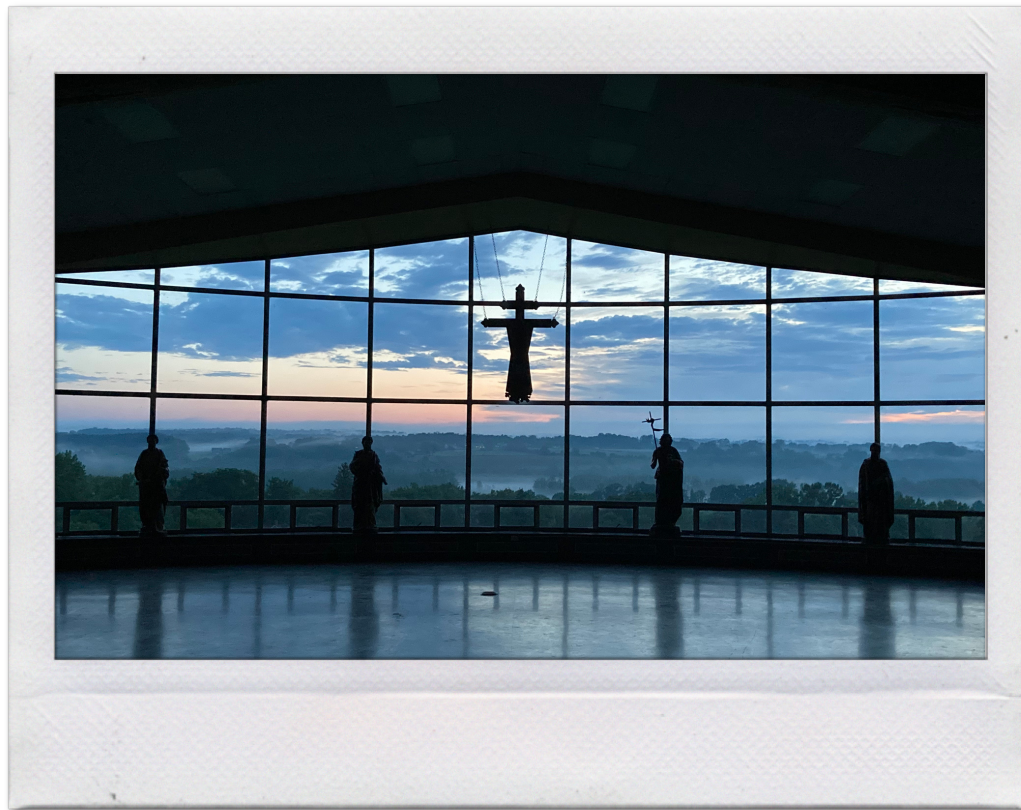
What am I worth in comparison with all men? Many excel me in natural and spiritual gifts. With angels and with the saints in Heaven there is no need of making comparisons. And if compared with God, I am nothing. The most insignificant of creatures who dared to sin against his Creator. Vile, selfish, corrupt, yet sullen enough to live with people, and presumptuous enough to pray to God whom I offended. Sin made me obnoxious, degraded in the eyes of God, a monster that only sin could make. Yet in spite of all this, the Lord regarded my nothingness, preserved me, cared for me, and delivered me from Hell itself without my deserving this in the least. Where is God's justice? Where are His sanctity and other attributes, to condescend so low because of me and lavish His blessings on one so unworthy of them.

Why this for me? Why spare me, when You did not spare others far worthier than I? Confused, abased, humiliated to the depths, Lord, I express my deep gratitude to Thee. You have done so much for me, let me do something for Thee. Whatever you ask from me, I shall do, however humiliating, difficult, dangerous -- or even most ordinary, but requiring hidden sacrifice, immolation, in daily insignificant and unrecognized actions. Or, with all sincerity yet modest and simple humility, if You call for a total sacrifice of life itself, Your unworthy servant is ready. There is nothing I will refuse You, if You will it. You have conquered sin, evil, and death itself; that is why You are life and resurrection itself.

(This article was originally published in the Fall 2015 issue of For and From the Friends of Fr. Walter Ciszek, S.J., the quarterly newsletter of the Fr. Walter Ciszek, S.J., Prayer League).

John M. DeJak is co-editor of With God in America: The Spiritual Legacy of an Unlikely Jesuit and serves on the Shrine Board of Directors.

THE PILGRIM



At the end of this challenging year, we wanted to take the opportunity to reflect on not only our year at the Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs in Auriesville, New York, but also who we are as a Church, as Christians. The blood of the martyrs is truly the seed of the Church and it is clearly evident on these holy grounds. There is something in Auriesville that we all need to be able to move forward into a new year: the confidence in Christ shown by the Jesuit martyrs who gave their lives here to proclaim the good news and by St. Kateri, who was born on the Shrine grounds a mere ten years later.

We hope some of the words in the pages of this *Pilgrim* bring light and inspiration as we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord and receive the graces of Christmas to let us be Christ in the world, whatever the cost.

I will never forget the joy that radiated from all who attended our outdoor, “drive-in” Masses early in the pandemic and the Sunday Masses in the Coliseum as Summer turned to Fall. We need Jesus, and He never stops giving Himself to us, despite it all.

Please be assured of our prayers for you and our dedication to continue to offer the sacraments in perpetuity on these holy grounds. Let’s keep laboring in His love, ever more and more for the glory of God. Thank you for your support of the Shrine and thank you for your prayers!

God bless you and Merry Christmas!

Julie Baaki, executive director, Our Lady of Martyrs Shrine