

Liturgical and Pastoral Activities
at the Eucharistic and Marian
Center Spiri-Maria, Lac-Etchemin
(January, February, March and April)

1. Saturday and Sunday, January 22 and 23, 2005
Solemn ceremony in honor of the Lady of All Peoples and the Unity of Christians
2. Saturday and Sunday, February 12 and 13, 2005
Solemn ceremony in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception
3. Saturday and Sunday, March 19 and 20, 2005
Solemn ceremony in honor of Saint Joseph
4. Saturday and Sunday, April 2 and 3, 2005
Solemn ceremony in honor of the feast of the Divine Mercy of Jesus
5. Saturday and Sunday, April 16 and 17, 2005
Solemn ceremony in honor of Jesus, the Good Shepherd

The program for the two days of prayer begins at 9:30 a.m. on both days, and includes a Marian Hour, Mass, a Eucharistic Hour and time for personal adoration.

Everyone is cordially welcome!

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ENGLISH RETREAT

Friday, April 22 to Sunday, April 24
Theme: "Mass is worth living!"
Retreat master: Fr. Daniel Gauthier

* * *

For information and registration, contact Charlotte Bélanger at:

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626 route du Sanctuaire
Lac-Etchemin, Qc G0R 1S0 Canada
Tel./fax: 418-625-3333; E-mail:
spiri-maria@communaute-dame.qc.ca

We wish to express our sincerest condolences to the families who have lost a loved one. Before the reality of death, may Christian hope be a source of comfort and peace.

IN MEMORIAM

- ARPIN, Marie - Kedgwick River, N.B.
- DESROCHERS, Orphir - Warwick
- DESROSIERS, Father Marcel - Nicolet
- DUBÉ, Marie-Eugénie - Lac-des-Plages
- FIORITA, Assunta - Montreal
- GAGNÉ, Marie-Anne - Quebec
- GILBERT, Jeanne - Longueuil
- LANHAM, Dolores - Owensboro, KY
- LAROUCHE, Jeannine - St-Honoré-de-Chicoutimi
- LAVOIE, Laurent - Baie-St-Paul
- LAVOIE, Maire-Ange Bouchard - Chicoutimi-Nord
- LEDUC, Janita Mercier - Lac-Etchemin
- MORIN, Françoise - St-Georges-de-Beauce
- RIOUX, Harvey - Edmundston, N.B.
- ROY, Marie-Rose - Pointe-Verte, N.B.
- SIMARD, Brother Laurent, O.F.M., Utsunomiya, Japan
- THIVIERGE, Claire Brault - Ville St-Laurent, Montreal
- VIALLET, René - Ste-Anne-des-Chênes, MB

**IT ALL
BEGAN AT THE
VATICAN...**

When he went to Europe to preach the annual retreat of the Knights of Mary (from France, Belgium and Holland) at Lourdes, Father Denis Laprise was also able to make a short stopover in Italy, more particularly in Rome, where he was able to meet with certain Church authorities, one of whom was His Excellency Archbishop Piergiorgio Silvano Nesti, C.P., Secretary General of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (C.I.V.S.C.V.A.).

This meeting with the C.I.V.S.C.V.A., which had not been planned at the outset, was requested by Father Denis himself, on the express recommendation of a friendly Vatican authority whose name it is better not to mention at this time.

After this meeting, which took place October 30, 2004, finding it necessary to restate more clearly certain facts that came up during the interview that lasted almost two hours, Father Denis wrote one letter to His Excellency Archbishop Nesti to thank him, and another to give him required explanations. Following are Father Denis' letters.



« Totus Tuus »

La Communauté des Fils de Marie

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Lac-Etchemin, November 9, 2004

Most Reverend Excellency
Archbishop Piergiorgio Silvano Nesti
Secretary General of the C.I.V.S.C.V.A.

Most Reverend Excellency:

When I visited Rome October 29 and 30, I had not planned to visit any dicastery whatsoever. However, a Roman authority whom I met enquired about the current situation of the Sons of Mary. I replied that we were in "statu quo".

Thereupon he insisted that I do something about it during my short stay in the Eternal City, that I knock at all the doors, telling me that this was in accord with the Gospel: "Knock, and it will be opened to you...." That is how it happened that I went to your Dicastery to request an interview with you, even though I had no fixed appointment.

Thus, I am most grateful to you for having opened the "door" to me so that I might let you know what is most important to us.

During our conversation you invited me to write to you. So, most willingly, I am acceding to your request in addressing you the letter that follows.

Sincerely yours in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Father Denis Laprise, O.F.F.M.

* * *

Father Denis' Letter
to His Exc. Archbishop Silvano Nesti

Lac-Etchemin, November 9, 2004



Fr. Denis
Laprise

Most Reverend Excellency,

Further to our meeting of last October 30, I wish, first of all, to sincerely thank you for having received me. Upon my return to Canada, after having consulted with a few confreres involved in the events we spoke of during our discussion, it is appropriate to clarify certain specific points in order to avoid all confusion. Here are the events as they were lived by the persons involved.

- Appointment of the Pontifical Commissioner and His First Visit in Rome

During our interview, Your Excellency, in the presence of Father Diego Di Odoardo and supported by him, you maintained that the Pontifical Commissioner, after his appointment on March 24, 1997, had not been received by Father Jean-François Mastropietro and by the confreres living at the Passionists' Generalate House.

Here are the events as they took place. After his appointment, the Pontifical Commissioner, His Excellency Bishop Gilles Cazabon, did in effect visit the Sons of Mary on April 21, 22 and 23, 1997, at the Passionists' residence. He was welcomed by Father Jean-François Mastropietro and the students whom he met one by one. All the confreres can testify to this. After that visit, Bishop Cazabon thanked us in his letter of May 9, 1997, which is proof that we received him.

- Departure of the Students

Two years later, that is, on April 23 and 24, 1999, following misunderstandings and threats received by Father Jean-François Mastropietro from the Congregation and the Pontifical Commissioner, the process for the departure of the students was set in motion. Here is an account of the events:

As it had been agreed upon with Bishop Cazabon, the Sons of Mary in Rome were preparing to receive him on April 24, 1999. Everything had been prepared for his visit. In fact, even the Passionist Sisters had been informed of the presence of a distinguished visitor in order to prepare an appropriate meal.

So Father Jean-François went to the Residence *Domus Sanctae Marthae* at the time agreed upon in order to pick up Bishop Cazabon and bring him to the Sons of Mary for a meal. Bishop Cazabon, after a ten-minute conversation with Father Jean-François during which he threatened more than once the existence of the residence for studies, finally decided to cancel the visit. It was the Pontifical Commissioner himself who refused to come to meet the Sons of Mary as had been planned, and who thus cancelled his visit.

It was after this conversation with Bishop Cazabon and further to the serious threats of rapid intervention with the C.I.V.C.S.V.A. concerning the existence of the residence for the student Sons of Mary in Rome that, upon the advice of different authorities, the decision was taken to close the Scholasticate in Rome as quickly as possible. In effect, the Pontifical Commissioner had clearly expressed his reservations regarding the future of this residence. The students subsequently left Rome on May 6 and 7, 1999.

– The Departure of the Sons of Mary from the Archdiocese of L’Aquila

As I tried to explain to you during our meeting, the arrangements for the departure of the Sons of Mary from the Archdiocese of L’Aquila were made in due form with Archdiocesan authorities. Everyone was aware of the situation, with the exception of the parishioners. Concerning the final departure from L’Aquila, His Excellency Bishop Giuseppe Molinari could certainly confirm the reception of three letters written by Father Pierre Mastropietro to the Archdiocesan authorities; you would also have received copies of those letters. Here are the dates of the aforementioned letters:

- October 1, 1996: Letter to His Exc. Archbishop Mario Peressin explaining the impossibility of guaranteeing the presence of Sons of Mary in the Archdiocese.
- December 13, 1996: Letter to His Exc. Bishop Giuseppe Molinari clarifying certain facts and mentioning the Sons of Mary’s intention of releasing themselves from all responsibility to the Archdiocese.
- December 28, 1996: Letter to His Exc. Bishop Giuseppe Molinari informing him that the pastoral services of the Sons of Mary would cease as of January 1, 1997, and of their departure from the Archdiocese.

It should be noted that this departure was motivated by just causes and for the physical and psychological welfare of the Sons of Mary involved in the pastoral ministry within the Archdiocese.

Furthermore, in the days that followed, Father Pierre Mastropietro handed over all the documents of each of the parishes, including a detailed inventory of all that belonged to the parish, the list of the bank accounts and parish assets, the keys to the churches and rectories, all of which was noted in minutes that were signed and countersigned by the Archdiocesan Chancery. The Sons of Mary left the Archdiocese of L’Aquila in a respectful manner for detailed reasons which you will find in the letters mentioned above, but which can be summed up thus: ***They left in order to safeguard their dignity and their equilibrium and because the authorities who should have intervened to clear up the difficult situation and repair the damage caused did not do so.***

– Appointment of the Superior General

With regard to the appointment of Father Eric Roy as the Superior General of the Community, it must be remembered that we are still in the period of foundation and that the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* is clear when it states that “loyal recognition and safekeeping should be accorded to the spirit of founders, as also to all the particular goals ... which constitute the heritage of each community”. (PC 2)

The foundress made known this change to Father Eric Roy on May 8, 2003, as well as to a few confreres present including Father Victor Rizzi, the Superior General at the time, a change that would be effective on May 31, 2003. Thus this appointment is totally legitimate for the Community which has the tremendous privilege of being able to count on the presence of the Foundress who is still living.

That is why, even before his first visit, this change was mentioned to the Pontifical Commissioner, Archbishop Terrence Prendergast. During his first visit, he himself said that he would ratify this appointment. Furthermore, a letter was sent to him immediately after his visit, July 13, 2003, so that he could proceed.

In closing, all that has been stated here can be attested to at all times by the Sons of Mary who were the main participants in these events, and other proofs can be provided at an opportune time.

On the strength of which I remain sincerely yours in Jesus and Mary,

Father Denis Laprise, O.F.F.M.

cc.: To whom it may concern

(continued on page 12)

Our Readers Speak Up...!

Yours Is Such a Beautiful Work!

Many, many thanks for the papers I received yesterday. I spent a good part of the day allowing myself to be edified! Yours is such a beautiful Work!

In the paper I learned that you have musical works available: a sacred concert under the theme of the Immaculate Conception; the Community of the Sons and Daughters of Mary sings its love of the Eucharist (with meditations). Are there others like that?

I am never surprised at my reaction to the reading of your paper. By nature, I am a “bawler”..., but yesterday afternoon, tears of joy flowed before the beauty of your work (the pictures show us just a very tiny part of it, I’m sure!). What a mystery. A faint image, but an image nonetheless of what Heaven will be like – the Kingdom! You give us signs of it, symbols of it. It is not surprising that hell’s fury should be unleashed.

Ever since I have known you, I have always been amazed at the power of the Spirit at work in you. What a consolation for our time! What hope for tomorrow! Erected on the Cross, your Community is destined for Victory. I have been united to the two for a long time: Cross – Victory; Death – Resurrection!

P.S.: Keep me in your prayers. You are always in mine.

Your friend, your brother,

October 14, 2004 Father Gerald

“I Bless You!”

Father Maurice Péloquin was brilliantly inspired to entitle his article in *Le Royaume*, no. 169, “The Cross and the Triumph of Love”. It is truly through the Cross that the triumph of Love of the glorious family of the Army of Mary will come. It is by the Cross that Jesus triumphed and again it will be by the Cross that Mother Paul-Marie and all her sons and daughters will triumph.

From a truly filial heart, I bless you, under the regard of Mother Mary.

Father Émile Thibault

Finding Oneself Between the Hammer and the Anvil

I receive *Le Royaume* regularly. In the last issue, I read with keen interest the exchange of correspondence between you and Cardinal Ouellet and Father Pierre Mastropietro. To find oneself between the hammer and the anvil is a very uncomfortable position; but especially when the hammer descends from “On-High”, then everything fits into a plan that is greater than we are. But in the end “He” knows how to strike fair blows that will work to the advantage of the entire Church.

Naturally, I add my fair share of prayers for you, for the mission to which you feel called and for the entire Family of the Sons and Daughters of Mary.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

October 28, 2004 From the Vatican, X...

The Hour of Light Will Come

The Masses sent by Sister Chantal have already been celebrated for your intentions. I am very grateful for your expressions of trust and affection for me as a priest. For so many years, I have been passionately studying your providential Life of Love with a view to the Kingdom, the second phase of which – its second period of preparation – came to an end last September 14 (1971-2004).

I met Archbishop Ouellet in Madrid a few years ago during a symposium on von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr, and he seemed to me to be a man of God (He has his plans and, in truth, it won't be long before He manifests Himself.)

That which is new in your life and that God is accomplishing is very great and difficult to assimilate by those following classical theology. But the hour of light will come for the mystery of the Immaculate. I believe that Marc Bosquart's intuitions are becoming increasingly more precise in their formulation.

With the promise that I will continue to pray for the perseverance of all, now that "it is accomplished".

November 1, 2004 Padre Joaquin Ferrer

Issue No. 169 of Le Royaume Leaves No One Indifferent

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. No one remains indifferent after reading the issue no. 169 of *Le Royaume*. I think this will make both sides grow in their search for an "agreement".

The letters of May 31 and June 18 between Marie-Paule and the Archbishop of Quebec are extraordinarily respectful. Both suffer for love of God. On the one hand, your Mother listens to her conscience in refusing the meeting she herself had asked for; on the other hand, His Eminence accepts the cancellation with great humility and advises Marie-Paule that he prays that the Holy Spirit may enlighten both sides... There is suffering, much suffering, but also a lot of humility. And both want to take this step in obedience to the Lord. I find that very beautiful.

We should mention that there is much sincerity (even if that is not a criterion of discernment). The frankness and loyalty to God of your Mother seem to be the ultimate goal of her life.

The Army of Mary and the Church are at the crossroads. May God help you in the steps taken for the good of His Church. May it all happened for the good of the Church! This evening, at the Eucharist, I thought of you. All is not over. Sincere greetings.
Claude Gilbert

Gestures of Love and Charity

In a homily in Montreal, the priest told us that the gestures of love and charity we make in this world serve to extend the Kingdom of God. Because of the formation we have received in the Work we strive to always surpass ourselves a little more so that His Kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven. How beautiful it is to have been called to be a part of this work for our time, this time in which the three worlds are being revealed to the little ones that we are.

Yves and Nicole LeCorre

(IT ALL BEGAN AT THE VATICAN... continued from page 11)



Father Pierre Mastropietro

THE DISCIPLE IS NOT ABOVE THE MASTER...

"When some of the Jews again reached for rocks to stone him, Jesus protested to them, 'Many good deeds have I shown you from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?'" (Jn 10:31-32)

The more that history is written, the more it repeats itself. And in spite of the fact that some will cry out for all to hear, in season and out of season, that Revelation is well and truly closed – not to say dead –, it is nonetheless true that the Lord, the Good Shepherd, the Living One constantly present at the center of the grand History of God and men, continues to intervene, in an often unexpected manner, but one that is always perfect and marvelous, in the lives of His sheep in order to protect them, warn them, prepare them and lead them to the celestial pastures.

If it is true that "the disciple is not above the Master", it is often true as well that to walk in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd, and thus to become increasingly day by day a "pastor after his Heart", one must also accept to participate, each in his own small measure, in the "special treatments" reserved for Him here below, more particularly those from other pastors more concerned with themselves than with the sheepfold and who, unfortunately, in the course of history and still too often today, accomplish the work of mercenaries when they are not outrightly doing that of the wolf.

For which of my deeds do you wish to condemn me today? There you have the question which Father Benoît Picard would have had, and still has today, every right to ask of the authorities who, through the instrumentality of His Excellency Bishop J. Peter Sartain, Bishop of Little Rock in Arkansas, U.S.A., succeeded in having him sent away from the diocese af-

ter he had worked generously for more than six years as a visiting priest who, because of his health, was to have been taking rest, while assuming mainly the responsibility of chaplain to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity at St. Michael's Monastery in Hot Springs.

If, after his two quite recent meetings with Bishop Sartain, Father Benoît was open to and accepted with respect and dignity the decision finally taken by the local bishop, the fact of the matter is that certain direct witnesses from the very beginning felt that it was necessary not only to bear witness to the many and good fruits God produced in such a short period of time through the intermediary of a poor dedicated servant in spite of his quite frail health, but also to show, by this very fact and without bitterness or lack of charity, all the falseness of the "hearsay" upon which, once again, a presence was judged, stamped and finally buried under a pile of calumnious stones, a presence that itself was the sign of another Presence which, this one, is quite disturbing....

There follow the letters of witness which Sisters Theresa Marie Lalancette and Theresa Dionne, respectively Superior and Assistant Superior of St Michael's Monastery, thought appropriate to send to their bishop, Bishop Sartain, a copy of which they also sent us. This will be followed by Mrs. McCrary's letter which, in turn, sheds light on the regrettable machinations which contributed, to a certain extent, to Father Benoît's departure.

Father Pierre Mastropietro



Sr. Theresa Lalancette

Sister Lalancette's Letter to His Exc. Bishop P. Sartain

Sister Theresa Marie Lalancette
Monastery of Our Lady of Charity
1125 Malvern Avenue
Hot Springs, AR 71901

November 29, 2004

Reverend Bishop J. Peter Sartain
Diocese of Little Rock
2415 North Tyler Street
Little Rock, AR 72207

Dear Reverend Bishop:

I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving, and I presume you also had a chance to steal a little rest. Here, everything is well. We had a wonderful Thanksgiving too.

The reason why I am writing this letter today is that I heard that a number of people are giving you their ideas about the Army of Mary, including Mr. McCrary, who is poisoning so many minds here in Hot Springs with his lies and calumnies. I thought that I could also give you my idea about the most beautiful and helpful movement that has brought countless people back to their faith and as many conversions to the Catholic faith.

I witnessed so many graces obtained through the Army of Mary that my conscience would not be at peace if I did not defend this divine Work. I can tell you

that since I am an Associate with the movement (over twenty years), my spiritual life has improved. For six years now we have had a Son of Mary for chaplain. He bases his teaching on the Bible and the living traditions of the Church from the writings of our Holy Father the Pope, St. Theresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and St. Louis Marie of Montfort. Father also insists on "Love, Charity and Interior Reform". As a Superior, I can see a big change for the better among my community sisters these past few years.

Dear Bishop, I know how hard it is for you to make a judgment after you have heard these negative comments from different people, especially since you are not familiar with the origin of the foundation of the Army of Mary. I am happy, though, that you are taking the time to study this case with Father Benedict, because the adversaries are not interested in learning about this divine Work. They put all of their energy into trying to destroy it.

Father wants us to love our adversaries, and to pray for them. They will experience a short victory. Then the truth will be known and the Immaculate Heart of Mary will triumph. Let us rejoice and pray much.

Sincerely, from a happy and privileged Associate of the Army of Mary, who humbly asks your blessing.

Sister Theresa Marie Lalancette
Superior

cc.: To whom it may concern



Sr. Theresa
Dionne

Sister Theresa Dionne's Letter to His Exc. Bishop Sartain

Sister Theresa Dionne
Sisters of Our Lady of Charity
1125 Malvern Avenue
Hot Springs, AR 71901

November 29, 2004

Reverend Bishop J. Peter Sartain
Diocese of Little Rock
2415 North Tyler Street
Little Rock, AR 72207

Dear Reverend Bishop:

I know you are very busy, so I will try to make this letter as short as I can. I heard that that there is a certain man in Hot Springs who is making trouble for the Army of Mary movement. I am very sorry and I hope and pray that he will change his mind.

I love the Army of Mary and have been a member since 1980. The Army of Mary has helped me spiritually and is still doing it. I try to reform my life even more.

Since Father is here, we have had many conversions, many joining the Church, and some coming back to church after many years of not practicing their faith. One man who had been away from the Church for thirty years told me, "Do not let this priest go."

The priests from the Army of Mary are well trained to believe in the Holy Eucharist, the Blessed Mother and the Pope. When there are ceremonies, the liturgy and the singing are so beautiful you feel as though you are in heaven. You can't help but come away inspired.

On a personal note, Father Benedict has never, since he has been here, spoken in public anything about the Army of Mary. Only his person reflects the holiness of his community. I could say more, but I will leave the rest to the Blessed Mother to defend God's Work.

I excuse myself for being so frank, but I feel it is my duty to defend the Work of God. With God's help, I would be ready to suffer and die for this good Work.

In union with Jesus and Mary, I remain your humble daughter,

Sister Theresa Dionne,
Assistant Superior

cc.: To whom it may concern



Mrs. Cathy
McCrary

Mrs. Cathy McCrary's Letter to His Exc. Bishop Sartain

November 28, 2004

Dear Bishop Sartain,

It is with a heavy heart that I write to you today. I received a phone call last week from a lady in my parish. She had received a puzzling e-mail from my husband about Father Benedict. She was wondering if it had been sent to her by mistake and was concerned for Father.

I teach at St. John's School and since that phone call I've had some parents come up to me saying they have received the same e-mail and are confused as to what it all means.

I think you should know that my husband is a very unhappy man. I have tried

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Mrs. Bette Sargent's Letter to His Exc. Bishop Sartain

December 1, 2004

Bishop Peter Sartain
P. O. Box 7565
Little Rock, Arkansas 82207

The Reverend Bishop Sartain:

Let me preface this letter by saying, I have never written a letter to a priest or a Bishop before. I guess I have never been so affected by any decision concerning the Church before. I am 63 years old and have been a Catholic all my life. I have always considered myself a "practicing Catholic", I married in the Church and baptized my children and gave them a Catholic education and always attended Sunday Mass and Holy days. Daily Mass was not practiced as a rule. I always made a confession at least once a year before Trinity Sunday.

All of this changed when Father Benedict started the Perpetual Adoration Chapel at St. Michael's and became my Spiritual Advisor. All I can say is that Father Benedict, through the power of the Holy Spirit, changed my life. The presence of Jesus as a human is mirrored through him. Everything that I see has a whole new meaning because I can see through his eyes. My weekly confessions and participating in daily Mass said by Father Benedict has taught me so much about my Catholic faith. It is almost as though I have just been introduced to Jesus through Mary. I have always respected decisions made by the Church with regard to practice and some of it I didn't always agree with but I came to accept. I guess I always thought (through my naivety) that decisions made, although not exactly as I would have them, were at least just well thought through. I had no idea that a few conspirators could convince the Bishop that any wrong-doing was happening. I intentionally am restraining myself from naming any names or placing any blame since this is one of the basic rules of life that Father Benedict has instilled in me. In my humble opinion Father Benedict has done more for Hot Springs and unity of all faiths than any priest that has ever been assigned to this town.

I am a member of St. John's Catholic Church and have been for 40 years. I have never felt the reverence or the love that I have experienced during the Sacrifice of the Mass as performed by Father Benedict. All he has ever taught is love and the Gospel. Each sermon explained the readings in a way that took on life to the Mass.

I guess the point I am so concerned with is: How can a Bishop, if he truly is looking for the truth, not see that he is taking away the best thing that has ever happened to Hot Springs? The Corpus Christi Procession, the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel, the spiritual guidance offered to so many, the traveling Pilgrim Virgin Mary, and the teaching that the narrow path is the only path to take in order to reap the rewards of everlasting life. I realize that Father Benedict's work will go on, but please give credit to the one who initiated these wonderful devotions. I can only say that whoever receives this man of love

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(Mrs. Sargent's Letter - from page 13)

is truly the winner and we in Hot Springs, Arkansas are certainly the losers.

My mother always taught me that it didn't matter who was offering the Mass, it was the Eucharist we were there for. I always tried to live by that practice and taught my children the same. However, I never dreamed that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass could be so beautiful and so alive for me as Father Benedict has made it. His Mass is said with such fervor that you actually participate.

In closing, since I'm sure that your mind is made up, I could not let this happen without at least speaking my mind or my conscience would bother me. Father Benedict has left me with a deep spiritual reform in progress. I will, I'm sure continue on the way that he has introduced me to. It will be more difficult without his guidance and understanding but I must go forward.

I have prayerfully written this letter in the hopes that it may shed light on the true meaning of Christianity and I reserve the right to share it with others as you may also do.

Father Benedict certainly practices what he preaches and that is... love your neighbor as God loves you.

Sincerely,

Bette Sargent

*Rev. John McCallum Writes to
Father Benoît*

Father Benedict,

God bless you as you return to Quebec. Thank you for your ministry in Hot Springs and for your gentle insistence that we work and worship together where we can. God has used you here in significant ways. I'm confident God will use you wherever He sends you next. It's been a pleasure to know you.

Grace and Peace,

Rev. John McCallum

(A First Baptist Church minister in Hot Springs)

*Mrs. Betty Corcoran's Letter
to His Exc. Bishop Sartain*

December 10, 2004

Most Reverend J. Peter Sartain
Bishop of the Diocese of Little Rock
2500 North Tyler St.
Little Rock, AR 72217

Object: Fr. Benedict Picard's departure from Arkansas.

Most Rev. Bishop Sartain,

It is with great sadness that I learned from Fr. Benedict that you asked him to leave Arkansas. In my association with him he has spent many hours enlightening me about the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, so that I have gained a great respect for it. He has also shown me, by example, how to pray more fervently, to love God and my neighbors and enemies. And always he has pointed to Christ as the center of our lives and the importance of the Eucharist. He has been of great spiritual help to me since the death of my husband, a practicing Catho-

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(IT ALL BEGAN AT THE VATICAN... continued from page 13)

very hard over the past 25 years to please him. I realize now that I cannot and it is not my fault. During the teacher's "Virtus" Training last year it hit me like a ton of bricks that I was being abused and in more than one way. The guilt I always carried with me now made sense.

When I began to stand up for myself in a more confident, gentle manner the angrier my husband became. In order to fix me he began to take me to one priest after another so they could prove I wasn't a submissive wife. Finally Father Bill sent us to a marriage counselor in Little Rock. After several sessions my husband asked him if he thought he was abusing me and his reply was yes. Soon my husband began leaving the counseling sessions in an explosive manner and the counselor refused to see us again.

My husband wants to control my every move and threatens me when he can't. When his anger escalated to the point where he was out of control he left. I've told him he can come home when he's ready to calm down and make some changes. I see some of this behavior manifesting itself in my sons and how they treat me and I want this cycle to end.

It seems my husband is now directing his anger towards Father Benedict as if he had something to do with our separation. This is not true; if anything Father always encouraged me to be forgiving and charitable towards my husband. Anything I ever directed much time or energy to, my husband found fault with.

I love my husband enough to say this must stop. I'm just sorry he has now decided to use Father Benedict as the scapegoat as to what is wrong with our marriage.

Father Benedict is a holy priest who has done so much for our parish, the surrounding parishes, our Catholic school and our city. In fact most people refer to him as being one of the most Christ-like persons they have ever met. This goes for our Protestant friends too who have worked with him on several ecumenical projects and prayer services.

We are living in a time period full of corruption and violence and we need priests like Father Benedict who constantly remind us of our call to holiness. Not only does he remind us, but he explains exactly what the Holy Father is telling us to do to achieve this. His homilies are filled with quotes and explanations of the writings of St. Therese the Little Flower, St. Theresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and St. Louis de Montfort's "True Devotion to Mary". He is giving us real spiritual food that people so desperately need.

When you leave his Masses you truly feel that your soul has been lifted up to heaven as he says them with such reverence and devotion. And if that were not enough we must remember he established the Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel and he offers confession both before and after Mass seven days a week so one can keep their soul in a state of grace and spend time with Jesus as frequently as they desire.

And last but not least, Father Benedict isn't just explaining how to grow in holiness he is living it. He is a meek and humble good shepherd who sacrifices himself daily for his flock.

I do not believe anyone who has heard Father Benedict speak, attended one of his Eucharistic or Marian processions or one of his retreats will put much thought into these e-mails. Surely people with much depth will quickly read through the lines.

I apologize for the trouble my husband is stirring up and I humbly ask you to prayerfully look at the fruits of Father Benedict's efforts. If the fruit is good then the tree must also be good.

God bless you,

Cathy McCrary

A copy to whom it may concern

"What Am I to Do With This Man?..."
(Mt 27:22)

Not An Easy Decision..., After Wide Consultation...

"What am I to do with this man?..." (cf. Mt 27:22) There you have the wide consultation Pilate, in former times, had with the Jews of his time, as they handed Jesus over to him as a criminal.

There you have again today, all things considered, the same question reformulated with regard to a Son of Mary whose only real "crime" has been to believe in a Work of God and to support it unreservedly.

After his last meeting with Father Benoît Picard, Bishop J. Peter Sartain, who was probably unaware of the appointment of Father Eric Roy as the new Superior General, addressed a

letter to Father Victor Rizzi to officially confirm the decision he had taken with regard to Father Benoît, that is, his impending dismissal from the Diocese of Little Rock.

This letter, although quite brief, illustrates well the unease and sadness of a bishop subjected to various "rumors" coming from the diocese and elsewhere, which obliged him, reluctantly, to take a decision in the case of an available and dedicated priest, a case in which, humanly speaking, it would have been desirable to have been able "to wash one's hands of it" before rather than afterwards.... Fr. Pierre

His Excellency Bishop Sartain's Letter to Father Victor Rizzi

December 2, 2004

Reverend Victor Rizzi
 Superior General
 Les Fils De Marie
 1145, de la Canardiere
 Quebec, Qc G1J 2C3
 CANADA



Bishop J. Peter Sartain



Fr. Victor Rizzi

Reverend and dear Father:

I am writing to inform you that I met with Father Benedict Picard, offm, on Monday, November 29, to inform him that his priestly service in the Diocese of Little Rock has come to an end and to ask that he return to Canada. Under mutual agreement, Fr. Benedict will return to Canada on December 14.

This was not an easy decision for me to reach, and I came to it only after wide consultation and prayer. Simply put, in my opinion, circumstances in the diocese and specifically in the Hot Springs area have made it increasingly difficult for Father Benedict to continue to minister here effectively. For many reasons, I am saddened to have found it necessary to make this decision, but I truly believe it is best for Father Benedict personally, as well as for the Church. I am grateful for his six years here, and I know the Sisters at St. Michael's Monastery will sorely miss him. I wish him only the best and promise my continued prayers for him.

With every best wish and prayer, I am

Sincerely in Christ,
 J. Peter Sartain
 Bishop of Little Rock

A Mandate Imposed by the Vatican

In the series of events which prepared and then determined the dismissal and departure of Father Benoît Picard from the Diocese of Little Rock, it is important here to place this situation, which at first glance may appear limited and an isolated case, in the context of an ensemble, in order the better to discern what was really at stake and its main actor.

Even if, in appearance, the entire responsibility for the decision taken seems to rest upon the shoulders solely of Bishop J. Peter Sartain, the local bishop, the fact of the matter is that it is simply the result of the direct action of an imposed mandate, in this case that of the present Pontifical Commissioner, a mandate, the normal course of which the Bishop of Little Rock thought it his duty to support.

Moreover, on the occasion of one of his last meetings with Father Benoît, the Bishop of Little Rock confirmed, twice, the Commissioner's special interest in following up on the campaign of misinformation, not to call it a campaign of demolition, against the Son of Mary in that diocese.

In the meantime, right in the period of final gestation regarding the announcing of Father Benoît's dismissal from Arkansas to return to Canada, the Commissioner sent to all the Sons of Mary as well as to their Foundress a letter in which he invited them to meditate with him upon the role and the place of Mary in the Church..., in order that they might better understand their place, especially given certain difficulties raised by Church authorities... Here is that letter.

His Exc. Archbishop Prendergast's Letter to the Sons of Mary

First Sunday of Advent
 November 28, 2004

Dear Sons of Mary,

The peace of Christ!

These last months have been charged for all of us. During that time I have had the opportunity to spend some time with a certain number of you and I appreciate very much the cordial welcome you granted me every time: at Marienthal (August 25 to September 2), in Glen Nevis (October 18-19), at Grandfresnoy (November 3-4 and 12-16). During my sojourn in France I participated in the novena in preparation for the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple and I know that you will soon begin a similar novena for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

This year, we are marking the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the encyclical "Ineffabilis Deus" in which Blessed Pope Pius IX solemnly proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. As I reread that document recently, I reflected upon Mary's role in the life of the Church and in our personal lives, as well as her place in the history of salvation. The reflections which follow are being offered you for that occasion. I ask you to be open to them in prayer along with me and to give thanks to God

(continued on page 16)

(Mrs. Corcoran's Letter - from page 14)

lic. I am a Lutheran and have been a close friend of the Sisters at St. Michael's convent for over 20 years.

Fr. Benedict's aim is to serve all and he follows John Paul II's directions on ecumenism. He has been active in planning community programs about peace and thanksgiving. He has organized the Corpus Christi procession. He is known to say yes to many requests for his presence.

So therefore, I do not understand the sanction you have placed on Fr. Benedict. I hope that you will remove it and bless his return to all of us who love him in Christ.

Sincerely,

Betty Corcoran

cc.: To whom it may concern
 (A Lutheran friend of Father Benoît)

Father Benoît Picard's Letter



Fr. Benoît Picard

Dear Adorers, friends of St. Michael's Convent and Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel:

As most of you already know, I was the target of a series of false accusations and affirmations taken out of context. What you most likely do not know is that I am part of a beautiful Providential Movement called the Army of Mary. My religious Community, the Sons of Mary, is issued from it. The Army of Mary's program of life can be summarized in a few words: "The Catholic Religion intensely lived". As is usually the case with Providential Movements, the Founder - in this case it is a Foundress: Marie-Paule Giguère - is generally persecuted, slandered and rejected. (A few names may be helpful here: St. John Eudes, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Louis de Montfort, etc... Other Saints have also received a similar treatment, as is the case of St. Joan of Arc and Padre Pio just to name two.) Normally, these persecutions also extend to the members of the Movement. So will you be surprised to read that my belonging to the Army of Mary is also challenged?

To make a long story short, two weeks ago, pressured by multiple entities, the Most Rev. Bishop Sartain asked me to leave the diocese of Little Rock. The departure date is next Tuesday, December 14th.

This news may shock and scandalize some of you, but the Cross is always the sign of authenticity of God's Works. The disciple is not above the Master and the grain of wheat must die in order to bear fruit. I have worked hard to bring about an increase in Eucharistic devotion and true Marian devotion, which always lead to Jesus. It was a pleasure to share with you the beautiful teachings of the Magisterium of the Church led by the glorious John Paul II. Other focal points were the teachings of the saints especially those of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila. Now it is time for me to see if I have

(continued on page 16)

(Father Benoît's Letter - from page 15)

toiled in vain or not. Your life and love for our Triune God, Mary and the Church will be the answer.

I want to take advantage of this last bulletin to thank all of you for your wonderful collaboration and generosity with the Adoration Chapel, the different Eucharistic and Marian Processions and other liturgical celebrations, Ecumenical celebrations, Interfaith celebrations and pilgrimages.

I was blessed to work under Bishop McDonald and Bishop Sartain with Msgr. Leo, Msgr. Malone, Fr. West, Fr. Bill, Fr. Alan, Fr. Benjamin and Fr. Rossi, the Deacons and other clergy. I know you will keep on loving, helping and sustaining them and our Holy Catholic Church, no matter what.

A very special "thank-you" to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity who welcomed me 6 years ago. In the year 2000, they so generously opened their doors to the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel. It was an adventure we are all happy we accepted. It will continue to have everlasting and beneficial repercussions for the Community, the Church, the City of Hot Springs and its area.

It has been a pleasure to work with you for the greater glory of God, the extension of the Church and for a greater Eucharistic worship and devotion. A special thanks to the Adoration Chapel Head Coordinator, Mrs. Christy Miller, the Division Leaders, the Hourly Coordinators, the Hot Springs and Hot Springs Village Knights of Columbus, the Men of Mary, the Hot Springs Youth group, St. John's and St. Mary's secretaries, the Hispanic Community and among them a particularly heartfelt thank-you to the Spanish Choir and all the others I would also like to mention, but the list would be too long.

I will keep you in my prayers. Blessings and brotherly love.

Fr. Benedict Picard, O.F.F.M.

Letter to Father Benoît

Father:

I wanted you to know how much you have helped me with my spiritual life. The Adoration Chapel has brought many answered prayers into my life and the lives of my family. The time I have spent there with the Blessed Sacrament has increased my awareness of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I know that God will continue to bless our community and the Church because of what you were instrumental in starting here. The Chapel, Corpus Christi procession and the retreats have improved everyone's faith life. You have made a real difference in making Jesus more real for me and many others in our community. Thank you for all you have done and you will remain in our prayers and please keep us in your prayers.

God bless you,

Marvin Young

(Division leader for the Chapel of Adoration)

– "Mothers have the eyes of the heart; what they can't see, they feel." (Henri Carbonneau)

(IT ALL BEGAN ... - Bishop Prendergast's Letter - continued from page 15)

for the splendid revelation of Mary's place in God's plan in order to draw all humanity into His Kingdom.

It also came to my mind to share with you these thoughts on our Blessed Mother so that they may serve as a preparation, in a fervent prayer, for conversations on a few questions concerning our Catholic faith. My reflections may seem abstract or theoretical, but they are aimed at helping us, together, to look at what the Church teaches concerning our Blessed Mother for the purpose of examining objectively, a little later on, certain difficulties that exist but which I believe are not insurmountable (you see, I am always optimistic!). Regardless of the difficulties, they will have to be dealt with some day because they have been raised by Church authorities. In any case, I urge you to read, meditate and pray with me over these reflections and others which I hope to share with you in the coming months.

In her immaculate conception, Mary appears as the most elevated reflection of the simplicity, the perfection and the richness of God. The immaculate conception of Mary imitates God in whom all is but one, to the extent that she brings together, to the point of making us forget the distance separating them, the qualities that seem to go against everything in our thoughts. A finite reality, she is nevertheless beyond all our definitions and our habitual distinctions.

Thus, Mary, whom Vatican II in keeping with Tradition, refers to as "the cause of our salvation" is the first among those who are saved, the greatest beneficiary of salvation.

An unrivaled symbol of the gratuitousness of God's love, it is through the freedom of her faith and her obedience that Mary tended towards God from the very beginning as though towards the sole and assured finality of her existence.

The most accomplished of all created persons, Mary is not such as a result of a kind of autonomy that would be proper to her, that would isolate her above all things, but, rather, is so in a total dependence upon Jesus, her son and her savior.

The one whom sin never touched is the first of the redeemed because she is a daughter of Adam as we are, taken from our race, made of flesh like us so that the Son of God might take "a human nature from her, that He might in the mysteries of His flesh free man from sin" (Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium, 55). The mother of the Savior of the world, the one who could not be any more closely associated with Him in the work of salvation, also benefits from the effects of redemption. Thus, it is quite naturally, but also "by a singular grace and privilege, that the most Blessed Virgin was preserved free from all stain of original sin" states the definition of the dogma. She is even more profoundly saved than we are because she was "preserved" from sin while we were snatched from its grip.

Preserved from sin – or rather we should say in a more positive manner –, Mary is "full of grace", the daughter of God through a birth that is co-extensive with her entry into our race. From that moment, Mary is the perfect example of the absolute gratuitousness of salvation. "Fashioned by the Holy Spirit into... a new creature," the Council goes on to say, Mary is a pure gift to herself, called "grace".

Yet, this pure gratuitousness does not make of Mary a passive instrument in God's hands. There is no doubt that she is "full of grace", as one can be at the beginning of a journey that will continue all the way to the cross and to glory, but it is through free faith and obedience that Mary is united to God and that she will receive Him (Lumen Gentium, 56).

Finally, the most elevated of all created persons, Mary is not thus through some kind of autonomy or as a result of her own personal resources. It is as a result of her dependence upon Jesus that she is immaculate. It is because of the merits of Jesus Christ ("intuitu meritorum Iesu Christi") and with a view to her role in His regard that she is full of grace. If she is obviously not like the Father a personal relation of the Son, she is, from the very beginning, entirely relative to Him. "The grace held out to us in Christ Jesus before the world began," as Saint Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Tim 1:9), was inaugurated in Mary. Thus, far from narrowing the field of redemption, Mary shows us that it extends to all the centuries, or that Jesus was a work "before the world began".

Already through her immaculate conception, Mary shows us with what caution we must speak of her, that is, praise above which nothing can be placed in the order of human persons; a reserve with regard to the one who proclaimed herself the "humble servant", whose "spirit exulted in God her Savior".

An awe-inspired admiration as well before a diversity that goes far beyond our concepts not for the purpose of producing confusion or denying them, but rather to unite them as only God, in His simplicity, can do.

I ask you, dear Sons of Mary, to pray with me so that we may always understand better and better Mary's place as the first of her Son's disciples as well as our place as we seek to imitate the example of our Mother by walking in Christ's footsteps.

You are often in my thoughts and my prayers. I ask you to continue praying for me and for my pastoral service in your midst.

Yours very devotedly in Christ,

+Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Halifax
Pontifical Commissioner

Father Pierre Mastropietro's Comments

Lac-Étchemin, December 3, 2004

His Exc. Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
Archbishop of Halifax and
Pontifical Commissioner for the Sons of Mary



Fr. Pierre
Mastropietro

Your Excellency:

I received your letter of November 28 addressed to the Sons of Mary and I thank you.

In your letter, you mention your recent visits to the confreres in various residences, underlining that you were welcomed well everywhere you went.

In that same letter, you also refer to the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus* and you indicate to us the reflections which its re-reading brought to mind in light of certain passages from the Word of God and Vatican II.

While appreciating very much your desire to encourage the Foundress and the Community to be open to the fruit of your reflections through prayer and thanksgiving, I am confident that you will not hold it against me if, for my part, I use the opportunity given me by this note to express my astonishment at the strange mixture of partial quotations and of personal and/or interpersonal considerations contained in your letter.

Here, I have no intention of discussing the contents of your reflections, although it would be quite legitimate, among these latter, not to confuse those which in fact belong, according to your expression, to the "splendid revelation" – with which the Sons of Mary are and have always been in full communion –, with those, on the other hand, which are more personally yours, and therefore not infallible perhaps, and by that very fact, a little more open to question. Nevertheless, I think it necessary under the circumstances to share with you, in all sincerity, my deep concern with regard to the timeliness of your present action towards the confreres of the Community.

You must admit, Your Excellency, that your reflections as they were formulated in your letter, no matter how elevated and beautiful they are, because of the complexity of their approach, remain for most of the Sons of Mary, even after years of discussion and conversations with them, as abstract as they are theoretical. This having been said, I can assure you that the confreres and I believe and profess all that the Catholic Church believes and teaches, without excluding any article of the faith, sacred text, document or teaching of the Church whatsoever that has its source in some way or another in Holy Scripture, Tradition or the official Magisterium.

With all due respect, Your Excellency, more knowledge and subtlety are required to decipher the nuances of your reflections as they were presently formulated than the faith and simplicity needed to live, in concrete terms, their exigencies.

In your letter you allude to "difficulties" that "will have to be dealt with some day because they have been raised by Church authorities"... Why then is it so complicated to say things simply? Why so much beating around the bush? Why such a loss of time? Why is it so difficult to state, in a language accessible to all, what these supposed "difficulties" finally are – if they really exist – which the authorities seem to have noted and on the basis of which we have been for so many years, like our Foundress, placed under pontifical mandates, not to say already implicitly condemned?

Without even knowing what we are guilty of or who these unknown and un-touchable accusers are, these latter have enjoyed for years the privilege of writing and stating their opinions in our regard, besides casting with perfect impunity all the stones they think appropriate to throw at us, including the kind against which Jesus Himself wrote figures on the ground one day....

It must not be thought, Your Excellency, that over the years the Sons of Mary have developed a taste for this type of unjust exercise and even less that they intend to expose themselves to it indefinitely, for, patience, no matter how good or heroic it may be, will never be able to undo the regrettable actions which have been continuing against them for years.

At the end of your predecessor's mandate which lasted for more than six years and which did not even allow us to take one small step forward because we were constantly beating about the question of seeking a better established place in the Church for the Sons of Mary, I think you can well understand without too much difficulty that the novelty of your meditation in order to deepen our understanding of Mary's place and then ours in the Church does not offer much of a breath of fresh air for anyone.

You know very well, Your Excellency, that what has been officially defined to this day regarding Mary's place and role in the Church does not pose any problem for the Sons of Mary, quite the contrary...

The Sons of Mary acknowledge not only all the place that has been attributed to and is in fact due to Mary in the economy of salvation, but also all the place which,

(continued on page 18)

Letter to His Exc. Bishop Sartain

Dear Bishop Sartain:

You may be surprised to get a letter from someone outside your Diocese, and from someone you do not know. My letter is to let you know of "our complete surprise" at the recent news that Fr. Ben Picard has been released from his Hot Springs ministry.

When visiting friends in Hot Springs a few years ago, my husband and I had the pleasure of attending Mass at St. Mary's, St. John's and St. Michael's Chapel. And, we've had the pleasure of meeting and knowing several of the priests who were assigned to St. Michael's.

This young priest, Fr. Ben, certainly emanates something special... not only when he is saying Mass and hearing one's confession, but when he is giving spiritual direction... "he is totally spiritual in what he says and in how he lives". It is so refreshing to be in the presence of someone who loves God so, and whose only intention is to lead souls to a deeper sanctity. We thank God for placing him in our path, even for such a short time. And we thank you Bishop Sartain for allowing him to work in Hot Springs so that we could enjoy knowing him.

It seems to us that wherever "good" is being accomplished, there is usually trouble to follow. It goes with the territory! We have only to look back one year to the attacks Mel Gibson had to endure... he was trying to do good in making the film on Christ's Passion. What a firestorm he underwent! And more recently, we see President Bush rudely attacked when he prays or when he talks about God. He is trying to do good by asking blessings for our Country and giving a strong example.

My letter is not meant to be one of rebuke, nor is a reply necessary; what is done, is done. God will find a special place for this young priest and wherever that is, souls coming into contact with him will be blessed and grow in holiness. In our humble opinion, if we had more priests like Fr. Ben, conversions and vocations would be numerous. We are grateful recipients of Fr. Ben's spirituality.

Thank you for reading our letter. May God bless you and your work.

December 12, 2004 C. McCarthy

cc.: To whom it may concern

Appreciations of Father Benoît

I do not know to whom this e-mail should go, but I hope it finds its way to Fr. Benedict Picard's superior. Fr. Benedict is leaving the diocese of Little Rock today and I want it known that he has been a great blessing to the community of Hot Springs. I have not been long in this city, but in my encounters with Fr. Benedict, I have found him to be an inspiration and a powerful example of personal holiness and faithfulness to the Church and to the Holy Father.

He is a caring and gentle man in his person, a faithful teacher in his homilies, and a tireless worker. He has blessed me greatly as a confessor because he does not compromise the truth or play down the

(continued on page 18)

(Appreciations of Fr. Benoît - from p. 17)

seriousness of any sin, yet one leaves his confessional so certain of the tender mercy, forgiveness, and constant personal compassion of the Savior.

His farewell homily last night was uplifting and encouraging. I couldn't help but think it is just the kind of words one would have heard from a St. Francis de Sales or St. Alphonsus Liguori. He left us not with a sense of sadness or injustice, but only with a call to adore Christ in the Eucharist.

Jo Ann Pryor

* * *

Dear Father Benedict,

I'm sorry that you are leaving our community which needs all the help it can get from dedicated people like you. I'll try to get by to personally say good-bye. You have been a gift to us, and to me personally in ways you will never know. God go with you.

Mary Watermann

(A Jewish friend of Father Benoît)

*Letter from
Sr. Mary Thomas O'Keefe*

Live Jesus and Mary



Sr. Mary
Thomas
O'Keefe

December 12, 2004

Thank you for your generosity in allowing Father Benedict Picard to remain in Hot Springs for the six years he was here. During that time, we were all truly blessed to have him with us. His deep spirituality has edified so many people. His true love for each person he has encountered has touched lives in ways that cannot be measured by human instruments. The daily giving of himself to anyone in need was such a model to anyone seeking true giving of self to the Lord. Surely his life of love for others was fed by his formation and echoes what he was taught and willingly embraced.

He will be leaving us, but we pray that he will leave with us as a heritage, the spirit with which he was led. May that same spirit generate a powerful force on all who are willing to be led by it. We can never repay you for giving us such a gift.

At the same time, we want to thank you for allowing Sisters Julie, France and Cecile to be with us for a time. Their generous hearts have given us food for meditation for many years to come.

We ask you to please keep all of us in your prayers as we continue to unite ourselves to you in spirit. May God bless us all.

Sincerely and with love,

Sister Mary Thomas O'Keefe
Directress of the school
and the daycares

(IT ALL BEGAN AT THE VATICAN... continued from page 17)

unfortunately, the Israel of the faith sometimes refuses her, beginning with the place requested, in former times, at the inn in Bethlehem at the time when she was to give birth.

"From the inn to the Manger... from yesterday to today, towards the best established place..." there you have the theme which, among so many others, it would be good to meditate upon, especially as we draw nearer to the feast of Christmas, in order to better understand just to what extent, still today, some may be tempted to concede to the Mother of God and her children as "the best established place" only that of the good old Manger.

Without any intended malice or irony, Your Excellency, there are nevertheless a few questions which, on more than one occasion, we too would have been justified to ask you, namely:

- Do the Sons of Mary already have a place in the Church?
- If so, why the desire to offer them another?
- Otherwise, why claim to want to offer them one if, in concrete terms, the stranglehold of celebrating the sacraments in churches, to mention only that one, is being increasingly tightened on the Work and the Community?

To offer a place is nice and even quite praiseworthy, but in concrete terms, Your Excellency, is there really a place left for us that is free? Apart from the Manger of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I sincerely do not see any other place being available for the Sons of Mary.

Just as it was the case for Mary at the inn, everything seems to be "quite full" in our regard as far as a better established place in the Church is concerned. A lot of people in fact already occupy all the more or less well established places; a lot of people have a large number of cases to deal with and also sometimes, a lot of people with a lot of prejudices to overcome, or even and very simply - and forgive me for using the expression - a lot of people full of themselves...

But who knows if, in the end, it isn't better that way? For, given that everything began from the Manger, it is permissible to think that it is also from the Manger that everything must begin again for the good of the entire renewed Church.

In closing, I would like to thank you, Your Excellency, for your patience in reading this note which I had hoped would be much shorter.

Finally, thank you also for your understanding with regard to all the men and women who, in the silence of Christmas night, will nevertheless have the tremendous grace and joy of still finding a little tiny place open for them, in the simplest and most holy of all the mangers in the world, the one in which the accumulated years have not altered any of its freshness or beauty, or its evangelical kindness and grandeur, the one which, long ago, Jesus, Mary and Joseph used as their dwelling in faith, hope and love and to which they invite us every year to find again the only thing that is necessary...

With the assurance of my best wishes and my prayer,

Fr. Pierre Mastropietro, O.F.F.M.

cc.: To whom it may concern

*Letter to His Exc.
Bishop Peter Sartain*

December 6, 2004

Dear Bishop Sartain:

Please help! There is a big disturbance here in Hot Springs in the Church. People are beginning to talk and rumors are spreading as to why you've asked Father Benedict to leave your diocese. People are beginning to doubt the Catholic faith. The Church is being torn apart. Sadness, turmoil and anger have arisen. People feel they've been betrayed. Hearts are breaking and many tears are being shed. Father Benedict has done nothing but bring holiness to Hot Springs. Peace and happiness have been given. Lives have been changed from bad to good through his teaching of the Catholic faith. Why have you asked Father Benedict to leave? What has he done wrong? What heresy has he committed against the Church? What blasphemies has he spoken?

As a Catholic, "I believe all the Truths that the Holy, Catholic Church believes, teaches and proclaims to be

revealed by God." Has he taught lies? The Holy Father says in the Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* # 7, "Holiness, a message that convinces without the need for words, is the living reflection of the face of Christ." Has Father Benedict not reflected this? I fear and see with my eyes the damage being done toward the Catholic faith and the Church due to the dismissal of Father Benedict. What could a man, so devoted to preaching the Catholic faith, so obedient to God's law, and so dedicated to the priesthood, have done so bad to bring about this action toward him?

I don't understand. What valid reason can be given? On a more personal note, I will sacrifice and offer up my Communion for you every day until this is resolved and an explanation can be given. May God bless and keep you. You are in my prayers.

With faith and love,

Staci Roberson

**Parishioner of
St. Mary of the Springs
Catholic Church in Hot Springs**

Father Eric Roy's Letter to His Exc. Bishop Sartain

December 7, 2004



Fr. Éric Roy,
Superior
General

Most Reverend Peter Sartain
Bishop of Little Rock
2500 North Tyler Street
P.O. Box 7239
Little Rock, Arkansas 72217
USA

Excellency:

I received your letter faxed to Father Victor Rizzi the former Superior General. First of all I thank you for having taken the time to inform us of your decision after a "wide consultation and prayer".

Even though I can understand that the circumstances made things difficult for many, I am saddened to see that once again actions were taken to put aside, rather quickly, an opportunity given to the Church authorities to deepen their understanding and maybe come to recognize a true gift for the whole Church, that is: the Work given by God and founded by his chosen instrument Marie-Paule Giguère. Our Church has an urgent need for such a charisma in order to renew and rekindle the flame of faith in the hearts of all peoples.

We respect your decision, and that is why we won't oppose anything to it. But I just hope that those who advised you were not conscious that it is against a Work of God that they pronounced themselves. I just pray that God will not hold anything against all those who fought that Work of divine Will. It is indeed a heavy responsibility when we think of all those souls who might go astray because deprived of that wonderful means given by God for our time. Despite all this, we remain confident and in peace while we are certain that one day God will prove the authenticity of this Work.

May the Lord and his Blessed Mother protect and guide you in your pastoral ministry with the people entrusted to your care.

Father Éric Roy, O.F.F.M.
Superior General

cc.: To whom it may concern

Stop Turning my Mother's House into a Marketplace!

On Tuesday, November 9, 2004, the Gospel reading of the day seemed to adapt itself to the serious events taking place in France and perhaps elsewhere.

"As the Jewish Passover was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple precincts he came upon people engaged in selling oxen, sheep and doves, and others seated changing coins." (Jn 2:13-14)

If He were to come back today, what would He find? If He had come on this Friday, November 5, to the Cathedral at Metz in France, what would He have found?

He would have found women dancing before His altar and a crowd of over 3,000 people, many of whom were frequenters of nightclubs, used to "rave parties", infernal music and devilish rhythms. Religious joined together with discotheque managers, with the consent of the Bishop's Offices, for the purpose of providing financial aid to sick children and attracting young people to the Church. All of this was shown in television news reports and transmitted in various media, and it shocked many people.

Pope John Paul II tells us: *"He [the Bishop] must serve while governing and must govern while serving. Christ Himself gave us an eloquent example of this. He was constantly serving, but in the spirit of service to God, He was also able to drive out the merchants from the Temple when that was necessary."*

Under the auspices of the "New Evangelization" some pastors are prepared to bargain over anything and to "exchange" the cathedrals of Europe in this manner, as soon as possible. Will they overrun Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and others as well? There is a limit to the offence made to God! Because God is present in His cathedral!

"He made a whip of cords and drove sheep and oxen alike out of the temple area, and knocked over the money-changers' tables, spilling their coins. He told those who were selling doves: 'Get them out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!'" (Jn 2:15-16)

The Friday that followed the feast of the Triumph of the Cross and the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, the readings for the 24th week of Ordinary Time in the *Liturgy of the Hours* presented the serious reprimands of Saint Augustine: *"... You did not bring back the sheep that had gone astray, seek out the one that was lost. The one that was strong, you burdened it, killed it. The lamb is sickly, that is to say, it has a weak heart that will give in to temptations if it meets up with these latter without being wary of them and without being prepared."*

"The negligent pastor, when he thinks he is dealing with this latter, does not say to it: 'My son, if you maintain that you are serving the Lord, follow justice and remain in the fear of the Lord, preparing your soul to face temptations.' He who speaks in this manner fortifies the one who is weak and strengthens him so that when he believes, he will not hope to succeed in this world. For, if he is taught to expect success in this world, he will be corrupted by this very success; when he will face opposition, he will

The Moral of This Story

A Lesson to Be Drawn... in the Light of Events

What lesson can be drawn at this stage in a story which has been going on for so many years, especially in the light of the events surrounding Father Benoît's departure from Arkansas, and the letter of November 28, 2004, sent to all the Sons of Mary by His Excellency Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J., other than that of the magnitude of human frailty which, too often, rather than going to the source of the real problems to solve them, simply continues, unfortunately, to make up new ones in the hope that the pieces of these latter will be big enough to hide the first.

Yes, the magnitude of human frailty in the long list of regrettable events, the proportions and consequences of which are universal, events which abound in the two mandates of the Pontifical Commissioners, that of His Excellency Bishop Cazabon and that of His Excellency Archbishop Prendergast. The large History of God and of men can neither bless them, nor approve them, nor even erase them from memory without committing an even more serious error.

Without wishing to pass judgment on anyone whomsoever, for it is up to God alone to judge intentions and hearts, I think that it would nonetheless be permissible, after so much wrong has been done to the Foundress of the Work and of the Community, not to lose sight of the vital element to be found in the principal events which, since the appointment of Bishop Cazabon in 1997, and that of Archbishop Prendergast in 2003 to this day, confirm always more and better the validity of the grave doubts the Sons of Mary had, as of March 1996, with regard to actual existence of the famous "guarantees" offered by the C.I.V.C.S.V.A. (Congregation for the Institutes of the Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life), and of which, in fact, they have never in any way seen even the faintest glimmer or appearance.

The Ecclesial Spirit... of Putting on Hold

May we be permitted to recall here a few of the "special treatments" granted the Sons of Mary over the last eight years, in order to verify if they were the ones who lacked an ecclesial spirit, or if some others have too much of it... always in the hope that all of us, on one side or the other, are referring to the same spirit...

Let us recall first of all the putting on hold by Bishop Cazabon, as of April 1997, of Father Stéphane Gamache's ordination to the priesthood even though everything was ready before Bishop Cazabon's appointment as Pontifical Commissioner. Let us remember, at the same time, all the generous collaboration of the

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be wounded by it and perhaps it will even cause his death.

"He who builds in this fashion does not build upon solid rock, but sets his edifice on the sand. Now, the rock was Christ. Christians must imitate the sufferings of Christ and not seek pleasures." (French edition breviary, no. IV, p.80)

If it is advisable to read attentively what follows in the Gospel of Saint John and to look ahead at the transposition of events, it is equally good to consider that the cord and the whip were also used on the body of the Redeemer, following the orders of the very ones who felt guilty.

Now, we are at the very heart of the time of the Co-Redemption. Which pastors are driving out the merchants from the temple? And what of those who not only do not find this necessary, but who think that one should go even further in the "Innovations"?

May those who are working towards demolishing and destroying know that they will see what they have destroyed mysteriously rise up.

No! Stop turning my Mother's house, the Church, into a marketplace!

November 28, 2004 François Pillot

Peace and Greetings to the Entire Team

Peace and greetings to the entire team of the paper *Le Royaume* for which I renew my subscription, permitting me not only to follow the events of a "divine and Marian Work" but also to use several texts as a basis for reflection and meditation during mental prayer. Celestial food that fosters very good spiritual health, always centered on the essentials: "Faith, Hope and Charity".

May I be allowed to seize the occasion to underline a few impressions which imposed themselves to my mind after I had read the article "The Cross and the Triumph of Love" by Father Maurice Péloquin whom I appreciate for his oral eloquence so beneficial, but also as a prolific writer.

Many will talk about the missed historic meeting between Mother Paul-Marie and Cardinal Marc Ouellet. On the human level, we could extrapolate on the subject, but on the spiritual level no reasoning is valid when "God's will" is clearly expressed. What lesson must be drawn from this painful, yet luminous event? "One cannot reason about God's will, but simply accomplish it with faith in His love." However, it is obvious that placing our trust in our Foundress will cause us to experience the tribulation which, soon, will not only beat down upon the Handmaid but also upon all the men and women who will persist in supporting her, in following her.

Given that we are in the time of tribulation, it is not necessary to emphasize that this is still the time of the painful Cross. For the moment, "there is no respite from the painful Cross, for everything must reach its term, until the time set by God the Father". Since there is configuration between the Redeemer and the Co-Redemptrix, I could mention as a point of reference that Mother Paul-Marie

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C.I.V.C.S.V.A. in support of all the actions, all the machinations and finally all the Commissioner's lies, going so far as to claim, all together and in a wonderful fraternal unity, that their only desire in all of this was to respect the will of the Superior General. It was quite astonishing to see so much authority conceded to a Son of Mary who had been officially relieved of all his duties... In this as in all things, it is nevertheless a good thing that certain written documents still exist, among them, the one in which an express request was made by the Secretary General of the C.I.V.C.S.V.A. Archbishop Nesti, to Bishop LaRocque in May 1997, a request in which this latter was clearly invited not to proceed with Father Stéphane Gamache's ordination..., just to refresh everyone's memory a little regarding the facts and also to render a little justice to history

Always in the aftermath of this unforgettable putting on hold, should we be surprised that the ordination to the priesthood of Father Stéphane Gamache, as well as that of the other Sons of Mary ordained at the same time, an ordination which finally took place two years later in Nova Scotia, did not echo officially in quite the same way the desire, on the part of the Commissioner and the C.I.V.C.S.V.A., to respect in this case as well the will of the Superior General at that time?

Whatever the case may be regarding the persons' will at that time, one thing is quite certain anyway: that is, that since then, everything in high places that it was humanly possible to do, was done so that a similar circumstance would not happen again. But, the history of humanity continues..., and fortunately, so does that of God.

So many other regrettable events which marked the six-year mandate of Bishop Cazabon as Pontifical Commissioner for the Sons of Mary could be brought up here, but is it really worth doing so? What is important is that we, the Sons of Mary, in spite of all the wrong we have endured, have not lost faith and hope, and we hope, charity as well...

This having been said, one must not believe, for all that, that the confreres and I have, over the years, developed a taste for or a devotion to Pontifical Commissioners.

Some might consider these comments to be filled with irony or scandalous, that is their right and their choice. However, in all sincerity, I would challenge these people to manifest the same amount of patience and humor that was required of us all these years in order to endure without rebelling the kindly "maternal ecclesial attention" to which the Sons of Mary were subjected... And to be sincere to the very end, I am not at all sure that those in charge of the C.I.V.C.S.V.A., beginning with those who in various circumstances had an opportunity both in person and in writing to communicate with one or other Son of Mary, would be capable, judging from their usual, constant and sudden changes of mood, to budge ever so slightly that burden of love and humor which, on the other hand, they were well able to place on our shoulders....

God and History

Whatever the case may be, God who knows well the minds and hearts of each one, knows well what really took place in this entire story, as trying as it was little edifying. Only the last Beatitude mentioned in Saint Matthew can still give an evangelical "hue" to this treatment which has no common sense whatsoever, and allow us to hope in an incomparably better lot in Heaven.

"Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven; they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way." (Mt 5:11-12)

Yes, God who cannot hold the Truth captive to injustice will cause the light to shine forth, at His hour and in His way, upon all these obscure machinations which, although they were officially committed under the cover and by virtue of the authority of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, have nothing in common with the evangelical counsels.

Still in all sincerity, if, in the wake of all these events, I had to make a choice between the only place worthy of the worst scum of the common people ever reserved to a Work of God in the Church and the dishonorable one of those who have no other purpose in life but to ascend to the heights of personal fulfillment, then I believe it would be better to prefer nothing but a Work of God whose place, regardless of what happens, always remains the place He has given it... and ours....

Two Mandates, Two Commissioners... for One Great Action

In making a brief survey of the history of the mandates of which the Sons of Mary have been the object for over a decade, it is difficult to overlook the numerous injustices committed against the Community under Bishop Cazabon's mandate. If, for more than six years, the Commissioner resorted to almost every possible means to prejudice the advancement of the Community and cause harm to the respect of the human and Christian dignity of the confreres, we must nevertheless admit that his successor, Archbishop Prendergast, although his mandate is quite different in its approach and its methods, did not lack either in resources or imagination to complete or bring to perfection the devastating effects of the preceding mandate.

In concrete terms, the present Pontifical Commissioner, appointed a little over a

year ago, has already set in place all the elements of his strategy to now be able to pass on to the great action. In fact, he had already begun doing so before his appointment...

Even before His Eminence Cardinal Marc Ouellet, P.S.S., who at that point had just recently been appointed the new Archbishop of Quebec, had unofficially transmitted the news to Father Victor Rizzi and myself of the appointment of His Excellency Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J. as the new Pontifical Commissioner for the Sons of Mary, the directors of the Work had already been informed from a reliable source of certain unfortunate interventions on the part of this latter with regard to the Work of the Army of Mary and the Community of the Sons of Mary.

Subsequently, other actions taken by the Commissioner were also to harm the Work, the Foundress and the Community. For the moment, we prefer not to speak about them, and so many others, but we reserve the right to bring them to light at the opportune time.

A Ministry That Was Appreciated, and Hidden But Very Real Intervening Parties

The recent events surrounding the abrupt and sudden termination of Father Benoît's ministry in Arkansas – a ministry that was deeply appreciated by many, including His Excellency Bishop Sartain himself – oblige all of us, whether we are Sons of Mary or not, to seriously ask ourselves who the hidden but very real intervening parties were who brought this about.

Bishop Sartain, for his part, during the second last meeting he had with Father Benoît admitted himself having been in close contact, in recent years, with the "apostolic liaison" concerning the Army of Mary and the Sons of Mary, that is to say, first of all with the C.I.V.C.S.V.A., then, with Bishop Cazabon, and finally, more recently, with Archbishop Prendergast. At the same time, Bishop Sartain confirmed this latter's particular interest in the theological concerns of a certain lay person, Mr. McCrary, and his doubts with regard to the Catholic orthodoxy of the Army of Mary and the Sons of Mary stemming from it.

Bishop Sartain also indicated to Father Benoît that the Commissioner had personal contacts with Mr. McCrary and that, in the days to follow, there would be a meeting to study the points raised by this latter, after which His Excellency would contact him again to inform him of the new developments which would be forthcoming.

Under the circumstances, these comments Bishop Sartain made in confidence did not surprise either Father Benoît, the Foundress or her close collaborators in the Work, for they had already been informed through other sources of the regrettable machinations in progress under the direction of the Commissioner.

Although the information transmitted by the Bishop of Little Rock did not really provide anything new, it nonetheless had the merit of confirming the reliability of our other sources and showed us, in this very difficult time for him as well as for us, the dignity, the thoughtfulness and the honesty of this pastor who, without necessarily being in a position, probably, to grasp all the mystical import of the Work and as a consequence without being really able to defend any position whatsoever with regard to this Work, preferred nevertheless to charitably tell the truth and indicate the only real actors in this whole story, to whom he himself cannot be personally linked.

A Cause and a Privileged Participation

Bishop Sartain's decision to maintain a certain distance with regard to the dossier of the Army of Mary and, more particularly, with regard to that of Father Benoît, has certainly indirectly served the cause of the detractors who, for years, have been fighting against the Work and the Community and especially against the Foundress, and who are now more determined than ever to achieve their ends. However, he cannot be held fully responsible for a situation which he involuntarily inherited and in which, he too is, to a certain extent, as a much a victim as a witness.

In order to better place ourselves within the context of the events which preceded and then brought about Father Benoît's departure from the Diocese of Little Rock, something needs to be said about the important role of Archbishop Prendergast's main lay collaborator in Arkansas, Mr. Michael S. McCrary, as the Archbishop exercised his mandate of Pontifical Commissioner for the Sons of Mary.

This Mr. McCrary, a married man and the father of three children, a lawyer by profession, had the opportunity to meet and then get to know Father Benoît a little better through, among other things, this latter's ministry in the Chapel of Adoration at St. Michael's Convent.

Through a series of particular circumstances which it would be too lengthy to go into here, it happened that Father Benoît, in the legitimate and irreproachable practice of his priestly ministry, found himself one day, quite in spite of himself, being unjustly taken to task by Mr. McCrary. This latter, suddenly convinced that this young priest was having a bad spiritual influence upon his wife and family, was quick to attribute to him all the responsibility for his personal difficulties.

This man, quite early on and under the influence of we don't know "whom" or "what", was quick to get in touch with "whomever it may concern", in order to

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is in the "Garden of Olives", accepting the cup being held out to her. But before arriving at such an important stage, the Handmaid, in the image of Christ the Redeemer, had to be "dead to herself" as the Lord confirmed. I could say that this was the essential condition exacted of Christ and of Mother Paul-Marie in order to be able to freely accept the Trial to come. Although there isn't a scourging and a crucifixion like in Jesus' time, the fact still remains that in this time of the end, the Passion can also have a new name: "Excommunication". It could very well be that I am making a mistake, but then it will allow me to make an act of humility which will doubtless benefit my soul.

This very embarrassing situation within the Church itself will bring about a certain schism, that is to say, "to be for or against Mother Paul-Marie who is a part of the Trinity of the Immaculate". The revelation of a mystery which, alas!, will not escape the theological, theological rhetoric, based on false accusations.

The prophecy will be fulfilled, "voices will cry out that she is hateful, that she is the most infamous of creatures" (1958, cf. *Life of Love*, vol. I, p. 329).

Would there be a relationship between these events to come and the apparitions of Our Lady of La Salette? I would be led to think so, since the Excommunication "will prevent, for a certain period of time, the coming of the 'Seventh Day'... the Time of the Kingdom, the Time of the victorious Cross and the Triumph of Love".

We know our Foundress well, she who has always been ready to fade into the background in order to leave all the room to the members of the "Five Works". But what will happen if the members themselves are excommunicated?!

What will some not do to divide and even to cause to disappear the "Community of the Lady of All Peoples"?! Everything is possible... Demonstrate that the Army of Mary is none other than Mother Paul-Marie. How will the media react, the press, radio, television, Internet, etc.?

Will we do like the apostles when Christ was condemned or are we going to remain firm in our faith in Mother Paul-Marie?!... Some members will leave the Work, but will return to it like the prodigal son. But let the Handmaid remain at peace, for without her having lost any of her integrity, she will have obeyed Heaven's commands. That is how it should be. Integrity, Fidelity, Obedience, Courage and Love will have been safeguarded once again.

May the Heart of the Handmaid pierced by the painful sword open a breach in our hearts on that day, fostering in us the grace of an ardent desire to serve God at all times by accepting the True Holy Spirit!

May Mother Paul-Marie remain firmly fixed in the Heart of God the Father, in love and light!...

May Peace and Hope sustain all the Knights of the Army of Mary! One day, the Truth will burst forth!

The poorest among the poor,
November 9, 2004 Michel Renaud

"To Testify to the Truth"

by Father Benoît Picard



Father Benoît and his parents, Aimé Picard and Monique Desroches.

Ordained a priest at L'Aquila by His Excellency, Archbishop Mario Peressin, on September 12, 1991, with two other confreres, Father Benoît Picard first exercised his ministry in the parishes of the Archdiocese of L'Aquila. Having been transferred to Rieti, he was then chaplain at the hospital for a few years. After the return to Canada of the Community of the Sons of Mary and three years spent at Lac-Étchemin because the state of his health forced him to take a rest, Father Benoît was designated as the chaplain for the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity in Hot Springs, Arkansas. That is where he has been dedicating himself for the good of souls for the last six years.

"It is you who say I am a king. The reason I was born, the reason why I came into the world, is to testify to the truth." (Jesus to Pilate; Jn 18:37)

The truth always has the last word. Its power is ineffable. One can ignore it, scorn it, trample it, reject it, crush it and condemn it, the truth always comes back fresh, intact, surprising, overwhelming and luminous... What can the darkness of lies do against the sun of the truth which resolutely rises on the horizon?...

It was precisely under a flood of calumnies that I was dismissed from the Diocese of Little Rock in Arkansas after having worked there for six years as the chaplain to the Community of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity and experienced such joy in exercising my priestly ministry.

Meeting of November 23, 2004

Last November 23, the local bishop, His Exc. Bishop J. Peter Sartain "under pressure from or upon the suggestion of the Pontifical Commissioner for the Sons of Mary, His Exc. Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S. J., and other religious authorities from Canada and the Vatican," said to me: "I ask you, and this is very important to me as the Bishop of Little Rock,

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have access to and then to spread everywhere a remarkable amount of defamatory material – which it must be said in passing is quite up-to-date –, of all kinds of falsehoods already circulating here and there concerning the Work, the Foundress and the Community, in order to harm Father Benoît personally, and finally to sufficiently discredit his presence in Hot Springs to render it inevitable that he would be expelled from the diocese as quickly as possible.

An Interrogation, an Apostolic Liaison, a Coincidence...

What was noteworthy as well, at the end of this memorable episode of jiggery-pokery and mud-slinging, was the surprising rigorousness of the theological interrogation to which Mr. McCrary attempted, via Internet, to submit Father Benoît on two occasions, inviting him to debate on a topic taken entirely out of context and well outside Father's area of competence.

Without wishing to underrate or disparage Mr. McCrary's knowledge or ability, we must nevertheless seriously question ourselves with regard to the real source of this interrogation which was too meaty and too in-depth to be the work of a single novice in the matter. And without wishing to lack charity, everything points to this being a document put together "in collaboration" and in all likelihood in very close "liaison" with an apostolic liaison, of which the Commissioner is the central figure...

In reference to the apostolic liaison, it is nevertheless interesting to note the extraordinary and rather strange coincidence between Mr. McCrary's interrogation and an event that took place in Rome, a few days earlier, on the occasion of Father Denis Laprise's meeting with His Excellency Archbishop Piergiorgio Silvano Nesti, C.P., Secretary General of the C.I.V.C.S.V.A., and Reverend Diego Di Odoardo, C.P., his assistant.

Meeting at the C.I.V.C.S.V.A.

Here one would need to specify that at one particular point during the meeting of October 30, 2004, between those responsible for the Congregation and Father Denis, Archbishop Nesti raised an issue that, in high places, has been reproached the Sons of Mary for some time now, that is to say, that of not having accepted to reply to a document containing fifteen questions regarding the "theological concerns" of certain authorities in our regard...

Father Denis, surprised by this statement, immediately replied that neither he nor any other Son of Mary had ever heard of such a document, in any way whatsoever.

That is when, always following his good old habits, Archbishop Nesti became agitated and argued forcibly that he was sure of his statement. Father Denis, for his part, could only reaffirm that he knew nothing of this, but to no avail. The Secretary General then called in his assistant so that he might confirm this false accusation, which Father Diego did quite readily, as has been the case in the past. And given that Father Denis could not make his interlocutors listen to reason, he could only reiterate his surprise and his bewilderment before these false accusations, without winning his case.

Unless Archbishop Nesti's statement is more or less directly "linked" to that other questionnaire sent a few days later by Mr. McCrary to Father Benoît, we, the Sons of Mary really have no idea what it is all about, for, unless again it is a matter instead of some other document, more or less official, prepared but not yet received – which we would still not have had the "filial" privilege of receiving –, this famous unknown questionnaire remains an unsolved mystery to which, obviously, it is quite difficult to provide a follow-up with fifteen answers.

In the hope however that the document in question is not a pure fabrication on the part of the authorities of the C.I.V.C.S.V.A. for the occasion – in order to test the actual level of the Sons of Mary's sense of humor before their sporadic changes in mood – we can reassure ourselves with the thought that, in the end, these "momentary changes in mood of the Secretary General and his assistant", although they may appear rather spirited, are nothing more, in fact, than "bad moments" like so many others that must be endured. And whether one refers to the kind of atmosphere to be found either inside or outside the Congregation, one thing is certain in any case, and that is that the time or rather the historical moment we are living is nonetheless very bad...

The Unanswered Questions and the Fruits of Grace

As far as the Sons of Mary are concerned, we will not stop to speculate on whether or not the incidents of the two theological questionnaires mentioned and which one would have liked to submit to the confreres of the Community and which came about almost simultaneously, both on the part of the C.I.V.C.S.V.A. and of Mr. McCrary, were the result of a concerted action or a mere coincidence.

Nevertheless, knowing the close and personal links the Commissioner has kept with the Congregation as well as with Mr. McCrary, and how very well they function, we are not at all worried about the smooth running of the apostolic liaison in operation, until such time as the Lord Himself will decide to put an end to it.

At any rate, in the case of Arkansas, the goal of Father Benoît's dismissal now having been achieved, I doubt very much that, henceforth, the prepared questionnaire will be of much use, except to spread a little bit more of the poison of doubt and lies. And even if, under the circumstances, the questionnaire from

Mr. McCrary and/or whomever it may be will not have received all the hoped-for answers from Father Benoît, we can nevertheless rejoice with this latter over the fruits of God's grace with which his religious and priestly ministry have been gratified.

And, in the end, after six years of the presence and the service of Father Benoît in Hot Springs, and regardless of the outcome of the present situation, the fruits of divine grace will bear a silent witness, at the hour and in the manner set by God, sometimes much more eloquently and much more powerfully than all the regrettable talk of those who believe for a moment they are serving a noble cause while they forget that one cannot hold in contempt or unjustly fight against the works or servants and handmaids of God without fighting against, as well and above all, the One who raises them, leads them, protects them and blesses them.

Two Events... in a Long List

Assuredly, in regard to the false accusations brought against the Sons of Mary as well as the lies spread in their regard over the last few years, many events took place which could be recounted here, but the list risks being as long as it is disedifying.

Whatever the case may be, it is nevertheless advisable to mention two more events quite similar and in a certain way closely linked, which illustrate well just to what extent all throughout the pontifical mandates which the Sons of Mary have had to put up with, lies, regardless of the manner in which they have been used by the authorities concerned, always occupied a dominating and privileged place, as if they found their well-established place and their reason for existing in the very nature of these mandates and vice versa.

The first event took place during the memorable meeting of last October 30 when Father Denis Laprise stopped in at the C.I.V.C.S.V.A. In the course of the conversation, the Secretary General, always with his usual forcefulness and sharpness, accused the Sons of Mary living at the Generalate House of the Passionist Fathers in Rome of having refused to welcome His Excellency Bishop Gilles Cazabon, O.M.I., during his visit to the Vatican as Pontifical Commissioner in 1999. For his part, Father Denis again attempted, calmly, to rectify the facts, suggesting in a positive manner that he himself would check with his confreres in order to verify and eventually confirm this assertion. But, in this as in all things, the presumed guilt of the Sons of Mary in the face of false accusations against which there can be no recourse, prevailed once again.

The second and last event also took place quite recently, not in Rome but in Quebec and concerned more particularly His Excellency Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J., the present Pontifical Commissioner.

A priest presently responsible for dealing with certain matrimonial cases in a diocese in Quebec, in the course of his work, recently had an opportunity to converse with a lady in the Army of Mary who, furthermore, accepted to bear witness.

Without going into the details which this priest kindly referred to, quite freely and spontaneously, in his conversation with this lady, it is nonetheless interesting to take note of a comment which is blithely circulating at this time in high ecclesiastical places, to the effect that the directors of the Work and the Community at Lac-Etchemin refused to welcome Archbishop Prendergast. Another wonderful fabrication to be added to the preceding one mentioned above and which concerns Bishop Cazabon! Furthermore, what a surprising coincidence, to say no more, that once again both statements were made at about the same time.

In the Aftermath of So Many Events...

In the aftermath of all these events and so many others which we could mention, at the end of three mandates for which we have never received any report whatsoever, although we would have had every right to this, what good can we expect from the present mandate of our Pontifical Commissioner? Quite sincerely, everything and nothing at one and the same time.

If, after we have patiently endured all the annoyances and harm inherent in the regrettable actions perpetrated by these mandates and their main actors, the only thing that can be said about us, falsely and at the same time besides, is that we closed the doors of our residences and our hearts to the two Commissioners when, in fact, we have always welcomed them cordially and deeply respected them, then this must mean that everywhere in high places everyone is completely short of breath, arguments, ideas or quite simply out of lies, to reach the point of always spreading everywhere the same false accusations.

It is nevertheless fortunate that we, the Sons of Mary, further to so many injustices and so much harm, have kept, even after several years, certain pieces of written proof which illustrate, without a single doubt, not only the somewhat spirited "special treatments" reserved to us but also and above all the falseness of the accusations which the large History will never forget and upon which some day it will shed light.

A Basic Pattern and a Question for Each and Everyone

If in closing we had to draw some little lesson from this story, where ought we to begin if not with another look at the pattern basic to this story, which – like the watermark of this page of history – constantly comes to light, like some indelible ink stain on the large history of God and men, and which has no other designation

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that you not defend yourself, that you not defend the Army of Mary or the Sons of Mary." But why such a strict and unjust ban when an individual was spreading freely, especially on Internet, writings stating that I believed and propagated teachings harmful to the unity of the Church and contrary to the faith, something which was totally false, without any foundation or proof. All those who listened to the homilies or retreats I preached can confirm this.

I asked my bishop to indicate to me the errors I was supposed to have made in my teaching. He was unable to indicate a single one. I never promoted the Army of Mary, since most of the Sisters and a few lay people have been members of it for more than twenty years. Our small internal meetings consisted of Mass, adoration, the rosary, edifying texts, hymns and the consecration to Mary according to Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort. When I asked him to tell me what I should remove from all of that, my bishop was unable to give me an answer. Only a few very close friends were informed of the existence of *Life of Love*. Bishop Sartain was unable nor did he wish to indicate to me, even once, what the problem might be with *Life of Love* and the other writings, which would justify his banning the lending of these books to friends thirsting for God.

Towards the end of this meeting which lasted nearly two hours, and seeing that the truth regarding Marie-Paule and this providential Work for our time was being so badly flayed, I said to him: "*If I am attacked personally, I will not defend myself; but if the Work is attacked, I will defend it. I promise you that!*" And yet the Work and Marie-Paule herself were already being attacked.

Meeting of November 29, 2004

During our next meeting on November 29, after prayer, reflection and consultations, Bishop Sartain said to me, in essence: "*Father, what I found most difficult at the end of our last conversation was more specifically my impression that it would be difficult for you to obey me with regard to the promoting of the Army of Mary and its writings, and defending it publically or privately against the attacks which could be levelled against it. As a consequence and with regret, I have decided that the time has come for you to leave the diocese.*"

I had already foreseen and understood that at our first meeting, to the point where I had thought it advisable to make the necessary arrangements to obtain an airline ticket to return to Canada on December 14. Furthermore, knowing the battle being waged against the Army of Mary in Quebec, I had warned the Sisters in Hot Springs many times not to be surprised if, one day, I would have to leave.

Why was I being dismissed from the diocese when I never promoted *Life of Love* and even less the writings of Marc Bosquart, against which false accusations are rampant? During the meeting I said to the Vicar General who was with the Bishop and who repeated the unfounded

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than that of **human frailty**.

It is rather sad to see how this human frailty can sometimes, even under the guise of duty, trust or collegiality, lead certain little and even great men of the Church to prefer – and only God knows for what reason – to safeguard their image rather than the supreme law of the good of souls.

If something is to be learned following this page in history, it is mainly that the account of it does not end simply with the regrettable events quoted above. In fact, it is through these latter, amid all the maze of mandates with their incongruous elements and all the twists and turns of perpetual, shameless backroom dealings, that are unveiled and finally revealed, at this time, all the in-depth meaning and the mystical import of a great combat which has been going on for so many years, and the only real reason it exists is to be found in the mystery of a mission entrusted to a woman by God for His Work and for His Church.

Yes, a mission entrusted to a woman, a poor humble woman, simple and unassuming, who accepted to give her life totally to God in sacrifice, accepting out of love for Him to suffer all that He willed, in order to win for Him the greatest number of souls in His beautiful heaven. A woman who has loved so much and yet who, more than anyone, has been and will continue to be calumniated, detested and hated. A woman, Marie-Paule or Mother Paul-Marie, rejected by the great men of this time which is our time, but chosen by God for His Church.

Stone rejected by the builders or the cornerstone for the renewed Church? That is the question... the inextricable crux of an insolvable problem for some and the extraordinary key to the opening to and understanding of a mystery for others...

Lac-Étchemin, December 6, 2004

Father Pierre Mastropietro

“One Single Little Place for the Truth...”

As we were finishing up this issue of the paper, Father Eric Roy received an e-mail from His Excellency Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J., Pontifical Commissioner, concerning the action officially taken by the bishop of Little Rock in Arkansas, sending Father Benoît Picard back to Canada.

We have taken the liberty of reproducing Archbishop Terrence Prendergast’s e-mail below which, under the circumstances, demonstrates once again that frankness and transparency – and that’s the least we can say – have

not been the main virtues of this mandate, nor of that of his predecessor, Bishop Gilles Cazabon.

At the end of this unfortunate episode, what should one think of the better established place in the Church which has been offered the Sons of Mary for so many years, if there is not even one single little place left for the truth? It would seem that between the Inn and the Manger, some detours are sometimes imposed which are just as long as they are tortuous.

Father Pierre Mastropietro

His Exc. Archbishop Prendergast’s Note to Father Eric

December 7, 2004

Dear Fr. Eric

I have just received a fax from Bishop J. Peter Sartain of Little Rock, AK, informing me that he has terminated Fr. Benedict’s ministry in Little Rock, effective December 14.

Though Bishop Sartain and I had had a telephone conversation several months ago, this is the first I had an inkling that this step was to be taken.

Could we speak about this when you have a free moment? I will try to reach you myself. I will also have the letter Bishop Sartain sent to me scanned so I can send it to you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Terrence Prendergast, S.J.

A Happy and Blessed Christmas Time!

In the radiance of the very first Christmas night, what can we wish you in this new year dedicated to the Eucharist if not the grace of living, more and more every day and in union with the Immaculate Virgin, through and for the Eucharist?

May the Word made flesh, full of Grace and Truth – He who is the true Light that enlightens every man – consecrate you in His Truth. In the midst of a world swayed by the falsehood of sin, may He grant that you communicate always more fully in His sacrament of love, in order to persevere, with strength and courage, in fidelity to His Grace and Truth, today and for ever.

A Year of Peace and Love!

(Fr. Benoît Picard - continued from p. 23)

accusations which the adversaries had communicated to him, that he had absolutely no idea what he was talking about. Quite humbly, he replied: *“That’s right; I have no knowledge in this matter.”* And the Bishop stated, in reply to my question, that he had never read the first volume of *Life of Love* which I had given him a year earlier.

My ministry in the Church in Arkansas is considered to have had such a positive effect that the Vicar General concluded: *“I know the fruits of your work and they are good fruits. In the past I have praised you and I did so without duplicity. I thank God for what he has accomplished here through you. I know that it will continue because of your openness to His will. I will feel the void caused by your departure because you were a strength in the deanery.”*

To which Bishop Sartain added: *“Father Benoît, let me reiterate what Monsignor has just said and add my own personal approval of what he said regarding the fruits of your priestly ministry. Your absence will be felt because I believe that you are sincere, a good priest, that you love God and the Church. I have no doubt in that regard and I know that you have helped many people.”*

In short, it is for having desired the good of souls, by bearing witness humbly and discretely within a providential Work for our time, as well as for having wanted to defend the truth when this Work and my reputation were being insidiously attacked – without, for all that, anyone being able to give proof of a tangible mistake or of the validity of an accusation brought against me – that I have been asked to leave the Diocese of Little Rock. Consequently, I must come to the realization that in spite of the fact that there seemed to be dialogue, the Work has once again been judged and rejected without really having been heard. No matter what I would have said, it would not have made any difference because the rejection of the Work had been decreed even before I met with the bishop.

Far be it from me to judge Bishop Sartain in this matter because I know, since he often repeated it to me, that he did what the hierarchical authority, that is to say, the Pontifical Commissioner in particular, suggested he do.

Father Benoît Picard, O.F.F.M.

