

## "What a Haven of Peace!"

Monday, July 11, 2005

I thought it appropriate to share with you my impressions of the last weekend spent in retreat at the Spiri-Maria Center in Lac-Etchemin, even if my witness does not reveal anything very different from what you have most certainly already heard.



Invited by several members of the Work, I left for Spiri-Maria in a spirit of complete openness of soul to prayer, the giving of self, meditation, etc. The highway leading to it, weaving its way through an enchanting landscape bordering mountains and forests was already preparing me for the withdrawal from the day-to-day whirlwind of activities and helping me to empty my mind of its many thoughts. As I arrived at Spiri-Maria, I was so taken by the majestic whiteness of the place that I had to stop on the side of the road in order to be able to fully enjoy its beauty. What a

haven of peace in the middle of the forest!

The welcome was so warm, simple and charitable that already I felt at home. The cleanliness of the rooms and the quality of the balanced meals could not have been surpassed by the great hotel chains. Bravo also for the quality of the texts presented during the retreat! They touch and can be helpful to all age groups, regardless of their needs. I was so surprised to be able to view a video of Mother Paul-Marie. That was a providential gift which I was not expecting and which gave me an opportunity, for a few moments, to appreciate even more the "Magnificat" of this dear Mother, to use the expression of Sister Kasumovic.

Now, what can one say of the chapel! What a place! As I set foot in it I felt an incredible divine presence. Simply standing at the back, without saying a word and deeply touched, the Lord could already see what was in my heart; my soul was laid bare. He understood everything... I felt that my heart was heavy and vulnerable. I was searching for understanding, compassion, a simple and genuine spirituality. I had just found all of that here, at the Spiri-Maria Center, there for me to renew myself to my spiritual depths. Alleluia!

Moreover, throughout the entire weekend, every time my eyes came to rest on the host with the figures of Christ and the Lady (representing Ida's vision), strangely enough, one single word always kept coming back to my mind: "Finally." For me, this "finally" gives to Mary, and by that very fact to all the women, Her place within the Church. Finally!

On Sunday morning, I was filled with much emotion during the last celebrations, for I knew that I had to leave and that

I still had so much to do. During the five hours of travelling on the return trip, I tried to maintain the same state of soul by listening to the touching and inspiring hymns of the extraordinary choir of the Community of the Sons and Daughters of Mary.

I will continue my spiritual progression while respecting the fact that those around me will not be following the same pace, but it will not be easy. I will return to Lac-Etchemin, but with my husband next time.

Finally, whether we are believers, atheists or agnostics, I find it hard to believe that anyone could enter that place, experience its Eucharistic celebrations filled with a deep religious reverence, angelic hymns and an exceptional spirit of recollection, and leave without being touched in some way or another! Having read only volumes I and II of *Life of Love*, I can identify with Mother Paul-Marie when she describes her moments of closeness with God during ceremonies.

Once again, what a haven of Peace!... I can understand better now why Fathers Pierre Mastropietro, Eric Roy, Luc Beaudette and others, the nuns and the volunteers, can inspire such calmness, gentleness, love and respect in those around them. With a simple look or a handshake, I was drawn by their aura of holiness. How good it would be for our priests and our lay people to discover this same aura of holiness in our religious authorities.

Like a cancer patient in the terminal phase, the Church, unfortunately, can only accept the consequences of a practice that finds its inspiration more in man than it does in God.

United in prayer,

Nicole Bourgeois

### Liturgical and Pastoral Activities Eucharistic and Marian Center Spiri-Maria, Lac-Etchemin

(September, October, November and December 2005)

1. Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 10 and 11 (*Special program*)  
*Solemn ceremony in honor of the Triumph of the Cross*

#### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

9:30 a.m.: Ceremony followed by a solemn Mass

12:00 p.m.: Lunch and adoration

1:45 p.m.: Ceremony (continuation)

#### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

9:30 a.m.: Repetition of Saturday's ceremony with different conferences

Taking of the habit (Community of the Sons of Mary)

Solemn Mass

12:00 p.m.: Lunch and adoration

1:45 p.m.: Ceremony (continuation)

2. Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 17 and 18 (*Special program*)  
*Solemn ceremony in honor of the Triumph of the Cross*  
(with the presence of pilgrims from France)

#### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

9:30 a.m.: Ceremony followed by a solemn Mass

12:00 p.m.: Lunch and adoration

1:45 p.m.: Ceremony (continuation)

#### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

9:30 a.m.: Repetition of Saturday's ceremony with different conferences

Solemn Mass

12:00 p.m.: Lunch and adoration

1:45 p.m.: Ceremony (continuation)

3. Saturday and Sunday, October 15 and 16  
*Solemn ceremony with the theme: The prayer of the rosary at the center of our lives*

4. Saturday and Sunday, October 29 and 30  
*Solemn ceremony with the theme: Missionary after Christ*

5. Saturday and Sunday, November 12 and 13

*Solemn ceremony with the theme: The suffering Church and the souls in purgatory*

6. Saturday and Sunday, November 26 and 27

*Solemn ceremony in honor of Saint Catherine Labouré and the Miraculous Medal*

7. Saturday and Sunday, December 10 and 11

*Solemn ceremony in honor of the Immaculate Conception - Mary, full of grace*

Sunday, December 11 - Christmas concert by the Choir of the Immaculate at 2:00 p.m., under the direction of Father Hervé Lemay

On the ordinary days of prayer, the program begins at 9:30 a.m. On Saturdays, it begins with a Marian Hour followed by a solemn Mass, lunch and time for adoration, and the Eucharistic Hour in the afternoon. On Sundays, the program begins with a solemn Mass, followed by the Marian Hour, lunch and adoration, and the Eucharistic Hour in the afternoon. There is a second Sunday Mass at 2:30 p.m.

Everyone is cordially welcome!

### What a Unity of Thought!

The last issue of the paper *Le Royaume* was absolutely wonderful, like all the others besides! They shed a dazzling light for anyone who really wishes to see. Thank you for everything that has permitted our eyes to see and our ears to hear what many others would have liked to have seen and heard.

This paper brings us so much joy, consolation and peace. I wonder what heaven will be like..., given that the material we read in the paper is so rich in spirituality that it lifts us up to the seventh heaven! How magnificent it is to see the True Spirit at work among all the lovers of Mary. What a unity of thought, faith, love and expression, all of which is so enlightened, in each of the pages of the paper *Le Royaume*!

I congratulate all the participants in this apostolate that is so very fruitful and I wish all of them a long life.

Pauline T.-Avon