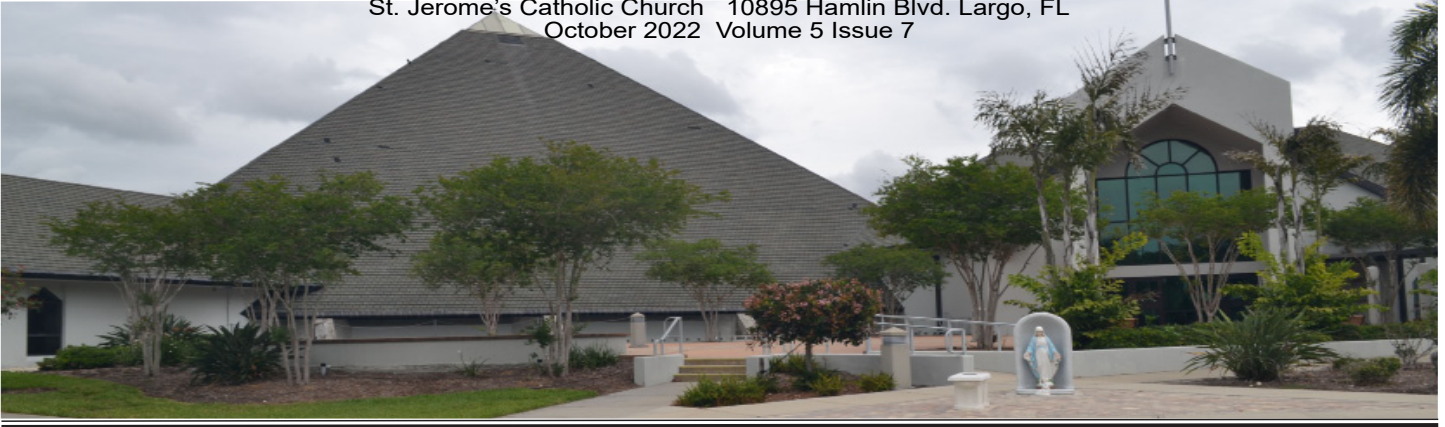


KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Divine Mercy of Jesus Council 17249

St. Jerome's Catholic Church 10895 Hamlin Blvd. Largo, FL
October 2022 Volume 5 Issue 7



New Movie about Mother Teresa Brings More Light to Her Life

The so-called "definitive movie" about Mother Teresa of Calcutta will be in theaters in October. It sheds new light on — and delivers powerful images of — the life of this venerated Albanian-Kosovar nun.

Sept. 5 was the feast day of the St. Teresa of Kolkata. She died on Sept. 5, 1997, and was beatified by Pope John Paul II only six years later, on Oct. 19, 2003.

Her life inspired thousands of books. Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa on Sept. 4, 2016.

The film *No Greater Love*, produced by the Knights of Columbus, adds even more information to her life.

Divided into chapters that tell the salient moments of Mother Teresa's life, the film is fragmented with interviews with missionaries, members of the order she founded, and biographers of Mother Teresa.

The movie is not only a reflection on the life of the saint but also gives a general perspective of the great

work that the Missionaries of Charity founded by Mother Teresa do all over the world: in Brazil, in the fields on the border between Mexico and the United States, in the Philippines. Born in Skopje to an Albanian-Kosovar family, a minority of the minorities in the Balkan region, she soon felt the missionary impulse, entered the Missionary Nuns of Our Lady of Loreto, and left for India, where she began to work as a teacher.

After witnessing the shocking impact of local suffering in the streets of Calcutta after some riots, she realized her mission was, first and foremost, to be with the poor. Indeed, with the poorest of the poor.

From this vocation was born a work that has touched the entire world. It spread from the slums of Calcutta to the Bronx, helping those stricken with another kind of poverty: marginalized AIDS patients, who, at the end of the previous century, were at first treated like lepers at the time of Jesus.

Eventually, her vital work was recognized by the world.

In 1979, Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize, and in Oslo, she delivered a touching speech in which she labeled the nations that legal-

ize abortion as "the poorest nations." Mother Teresa's friendship with St. John Paul II bore many fruits, including a house of the Missionaries of Charity right in the Vatican, where they are today.

Part of this saint's enduring legacy is her spirituality, her struggle with the "dark night of the soul."

What is powerful in the film is the images. The producers had full access to the Missionaries of Charity's archive, finding unpublished or little-known footage, including that of Mother Teresa acting as an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist.

Patrick Kelly, supreme knight of the **Knights of Columbus**, emphasized that the film was born "thanks to the relationship of trust between the Knights of Columbus and the Missionaries of Charity."

After all, Virgil Dechant, the predecessor of Kelly's predecessor as supreme knight, was a personal friend of Mother Teresa. They collaborated, sharing the mutual value of charity, at the foundations of the **Knights of Columbus**, considering that "charity is the fundamental principle of the Knights of Columbus."

In a letter sent to Kelly, Pope Francis thanked initiatives that "help, in a creative way, to make zeal for evangelization accessible especially to the younger generations."

Cardinal Sean O'Malley, archbishop of Boston, talked about his friendship with Mother Teresa. Although he often asked her to send nuns to his diocese "to bring healing and consolation," Mother Teresa always fulfilled the requests.

The movie's message is that "Calcutta is everywhere" — because there are those in need everywhere: "There is a work of charity yet to be done."

By Andrea Gagliarducci



FROM THE DESK OF THE GRAND KNIGHT



Bill McClelland

LAUGHTER
is the best
MEDICINE

I once had a phone attached to a wall, and when it rang, I picked it up without knowing who was calling.

My wife says I keep pushing her buttons. If that were true, I would have found mute by now.

There is no such thing as a grouchy old person. The truth is that once you get old, you stop being polite and start being honest.

Never iron a four-leaf clover. You don't want to press your luck.

Autopsy Club here tonight. It's open Mike night.

My neighbor said he slipped on my gravel, but it was his own dumb asphalt.

Telling a woman to calm down works about as well as trying to baptize a cat.

Man: Drink till you want me.
Woman: I can't drink that much.

FROM THE DESK OF OUR PASTOR



Fr. Tom Morgan

🎈 OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS 🎈



Chuck Lake
October 3

Bill McClelland
October 5

Ed Palus
October 6

Joe Moore
October 8



Gene Sanders
October 14

Paul Grant
October 25

Wesley Stanick
October 25

Lou Glorioso
October 29

Waldo Ubiquitous
October 30

JOURNEY OF Faith

by Jim Hand, Editor

As I was growing up in southern Indiana, I encountered very few bullies. One was in my neighborhood and the other was in my school. The neighborhood bully, Gary Shipley, was a few years older than I was, and I never did figure out why he thought he should bully me. I recall only one major incident of his bullying me and it's laughable now. He tried to pick a fight with me in my front yard as I was bouncing a tennis ball to kill ants on the sidewalk in front of my house. I had no desire to fight him, so he threw me to the ground and sat on me. It didn't hurt or frighten me but I remember calling for my mom to come help me. That frightened Gary enough to get up and go home (2 houses away). Laughable, eh? In my defense, I was just a kid.



The other bully, Eugene Pierce, was a thin kid, a couple of years older than I was, and I wasn't the only kid he bullied, but, again, he never hurt me or came close to it. The worst I can remember is that he threatened to take off my pants and run them up

the flagpole that was in front of my elementary school. For some reason that threat was enough to keep me out of the Boy Scouts, because when I went to sign up, there was Eugene, standing on the steps of Riley School, looking right at me and then at the flag pole. I turned right around and ran home. That's not only laughable but pitiful. There were a few other times when Eugene bullied me, but he never hurt me.

In retrospect, as an 85-year-old, I suppose that bullies probably felt lonely and inferior, only wanting a friend or two but not even knowing it. It's hard to have much wisdom when you're only a kid. I have a feeling that if a friend or two of mine had stood up to Gary and Eugene, that would have been the end of the bullying.

The same thing can be said about many things in my life that I regret. If only I had given some thought to whatever was going on that was bothering me, things could have been very different. How blessed we are that we have a saviour who forgives our stupidity and weaknesses. How comforting that is. I regret that I didn't have such insight years ago. Even so, Jesus and God are still forgiving me. What a blessing!

THE SERENITY PRAYER

God, give me the grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time accepting hardships as a pathway to peace, taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it, trusting that You will make all things right if I surrender to your will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen

ST. FRANCIS' FEAST DAY IS OCTOBER 4, 2022



In 1964, The General Secretariat of the Franciscan Missions was founded in the US. The sole purpose was to promote Catholic missionary work by raising funds for friars throughout the world. But our history goes even farther back, to when St. Francis came to devote his life to aiding the poor.

The patron saint of Italy, Francis of Assisi was a poor little man who astounded and inspired the Church by taking the gospel literally—not in a narrow fundamentalist sense, but by actually following all that Jesus said and did, joyfully, without limit, and without a sense of self-importance.

Serious illness brought the young Francis to see the emptiness of his frolicking life as leader of Assisi's youth. Prayer—lengthy and difficult—led him to a self-emptying like that of Christ, climaxed by embracing a leper he met on the road. It symbolized his complete obedience to what he had heard in prayer: "Francis! Everything you have loved and desired in the flesh it is your duty to despise and hate, if you wish to know my will. And when you have begun this, all that now seems sweet and lovely to you will become intolerable and bitter, but all that you used to avoid will turn itself to great sweetness and exceeding joy."

From the cross in the neglected field-chapel of San Damiano, Christ told him, "Francis, go out and build up my house, for it is nearly falling down." Francis

became the totally poor and humble workman.

He must have suspected a deeper meaning to "build up my house." But he would have been content to be for the rest of his life the poor "nothing" man actually putting brick on brick in abandoned chapels. He gave up all his possessions, piling even his clothes before his earthly father—who was demanding restitution for Francis' "gifts" to the poor—so that he would be totally free to say, "Our Father in heaven." He was, for a time, considered to be a religious fanatic, begging from door to door when he could not get money for his work, evoking sadness or disgust to the hearts of his former friends, ridicule from the unthinking.

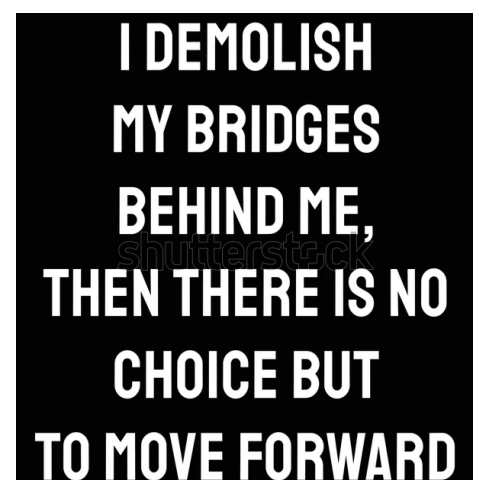
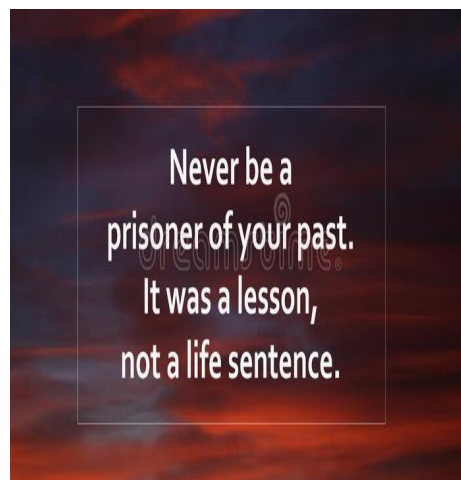
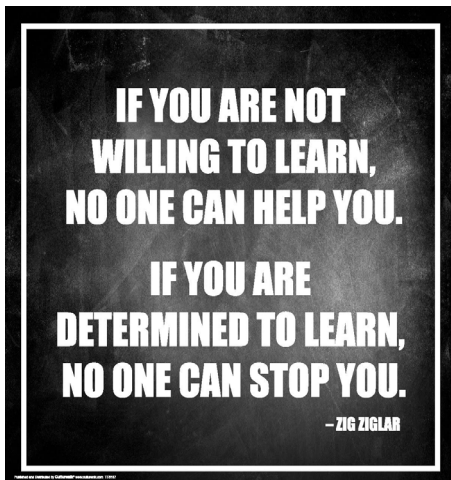
But genuineness will tell. A few people began to realize that this man was actually trying to be Christian. He really believed what Jesus said: "Announce the kingdom! Possess no gold or silver or copper in your purses, no traveling bag, no sandals, no staff" (Luke 9:1-3).

Francis' first rule for his followers was a collection of texts from the Gospels. He had no intention of founding an order, but once it began he protected it and accepted all the legal structures needed to support it. His devotion and loyalty to the Church were absolute and highly exemplary at a time when various movements of reform tended to break the Church's unity. Francis was torn between a life devoted entirely to prayer and a life of active preaching of the Good News. He decided in favor of the latter, but always returned to solitude when he could. He wanted to be a missionary in Syria or in Africa, but was prevented by shipwreck and illness in both cases. He did try to convert the sultan of Egypt during the Fifth Crusade.

During the last years of his relatively short life, he died at 44, Francis was half blind and seriously ill. Two years before his death he received the stigmata, the real and painful wounds of Christ in his hands, feet and side.

On his deathbed, Francis said over and over again the last addition to his Canticle of the Sun, "Be praised, O Lord, for our Sister Death." He sang Psalm 141, and at the end asked his superior's permission to have his clothes removed when the last hour came in order that he could expire lying naked on the earth, in imitation of his Lord.

Francis of Assisi was poor only that he might be Christ-like. He recognized creation as another manifestation of the beauty of God. In 1979, he was named patron of ecology. He did great penance—apologizing to "Brother Body" later in life—that he might be totally disciplined for the will of God. Francis' poverty had a sister, Humility, by which he meant total dependence on the good God. But all this was, as it were, preliminary to the heart of his spirituality: living the gospel life, summed up in the charity of Jesus and perfectly expressed in the Eucharist.



PETE McCABE SHARES HIS LIFE STORY



I graduated from high school in 1979. My original plan was to go to one of the service academies and get commissioned in the military. My best chance was at West Point; the West Point track coach came to my high school to recruit me. Instead I went to an out-of-state college because I got an ROTC scholarship and eventually got commissioned in the Air Force. I was in the Air Force for 28 years and retired as a Colonel. I would have stayed 28 more if they would have let me. I got to fly in the B-52, flew 25 combat missions during Desert Storm, lived in different parts of the country, lived in Germany for four years, and got to work with some amazing people.

After my military service, I went to college and got my Bachelors of Science in Physics. I also have three Masters degrees and a PhD in Political Science. All of these degrees were paid for in some way by the Air Force.

I have been a defense contractor for the last 11 years. I have worked for numerous companies supporting both US Central Command and US Special Operations Command. Recently I have been writing and publishing articles, chapters, and books for the Joint Special Operations University.

With the last name of McCabe I naturally was a cradle catholic. I went to Holy Child Jesus School in NYC and had many a run-in with nuns and rulers!



Pete McCabe

I have been a Knight since 1985. Dan Hale, one of my B-52 crew, was catholic and a Knight and convinced me to join. I did my first 3 degrees in one evening. That was a long evening, and it was quite an experience.

I must mention one event in my mind that had quite an impact on my life. I participated in a military pilgrimage to Lourdes while living in Germany. In fact I took a German military train there and it picked up military from various countries along the way. The week I was there was the most spiritual experience I have ever experienced. I just wish I could have had my wife and girls there as well. Speaking of my family, my wife Denise, and I just celebrated our 39th anniversary. We have two daughters, Katie and Beth, who are married and live in the area.

I have been a part of many councils within the US and Germany. The more successful ones were the ones in which most members were active. I hope our council can continue to grow and have an active membership.

Well-Known Actor Converts to Catholicism



Shia LaBeouf

Actor Shia LaBeouf has announced that he has converted to Catholicism after performing the role of a mystic Franciscan Capuchin priest.

LaBeouf was already baptized by his uncle but was unaware of the completed ordinance when he accepted the role of the titular character in Abel Ferrara's Padre Pio. While he admitted he took on the role to save his acting career in an interview with Bishop Robert Barron, the actor was so moved by the research that went into the role of Padre Pio that he became a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

"I know now that God was using my ego to draw me to Him, drawing me away from worldly desires," LaBeouf said. "It was all happening simultaneously. But there would have

been no impetus for me to get in my car, drive up [to the monastery] if I didn't think, 'Oh, I'm gonna save my career.'"

The actor reported he lived with a monastery of Franciscan Capuchin friars and attended Latin Mass to prepare for the role. "It was seeing other people who have sinned beyond anything I could ever conceptualize also being found in Christ that made me feel like, 'Oh, that gives me hope,'" LaBeouf said. "I started hearing experiences of other deprived people who had found their way in this, and it made me feel like I had permission."

LaBeouf became particularly fond of Latin Mass, claiming it "affects me deeply ... because it feels like they're not selling me a car." However, Latin Mass is disappearing across the world after Pope Francis's mandating that the Extraordinary Form in Latin no longer be practiced in parish churches. Latin is still allowed in non-parish churches, and the Holy See has since made a few exceptions, including three Latin Masses in Arlington, Virginia.

"The most high-profile Catholic

conversion of the year was nourished by a form of the Mass that the bishops, on the orders of the pontiff, are doing their very best to stamp out," reporter Adam Shaw tweeted in response to the reports of LaBeouf's conversion story.

The Vatican went on to issue further restrictions last December, prohibiting confirmations and ordinations from being performed in Latin.

Pio, born in 1887, was similarly given an exception by the Holy See in his old age to continue to administer Mass in the 1960s in Latin, as he could not read very well but had the Latin memorized. He was also given an exemption that allowed him to administer the ordinance while seated.

The mystic priest was ordained in August 1910, with signs of stigmata, or crucifixion wounds matching those of Jesus Christ, first appearing less than a month later. Pio would go on to serve in the Italian military during World War I and later begin to show bleeding heart, side, hands, and feet wounds. These stigmata would reportedly go on to bleed for 50 years, healing completely upon his death in 1968.

Bingo Returns to St. Jerome's to Everyone's Delight

As you should know by now, bingo has returned to St. Jerome on Thursdays from 1 to 3 pm. There had been quite a long hiatus since it closed due to COVID.

Fr. Tom offered bingo to the Knights as a way to generate fundraising. At the time, the council recognized that in order to take advantage of this opportunity it would require Knights to make a large commitment of time. It also would require the council to develop charity programs to donate and be involved in.

It is a culture shift for our council's time, talent, and treasure. We found a bingo expert at Fr Lopez Council--Mike Hayek--and tailored the old bingo program to cut down the hours from 6 to 4. We agreed to a six-week trial run, and now have completed 20 weeks. To meet the immense labor needs, we developed two teams, first of 6, then 8 and now 9 knights. Many brothers have given many hours. The two team captains currently are Pete McCabe & Jim Blackwell, but others will need to

step up to this role. Other guys like to drop in and we always find something for them to do. We pray as a team before bingo play, and there's plenty of time for fraternizing as well.

Growth has been steady, earning a little more each week, as a few more people come to play. The council earns 80% of proceeds, which after expenses, has been \$350-\$400/wk. We share 20% with the church, which alone will raise over \$5,000 this fiscal year. But expenses are high: we will spend over \$2,000 on donuts, and \$4,000 on supplies. Every week, we give away twenty bingo prizes, ranging from \$35 to \$200. This amount grows with the number of players, and weekly we now pay out over \$1,000. We supplement this with incentives like spinning a cash wheel or offering 4-5 door prizes.

The bingo participants take the game very seriously. Most play with more than one card and still eat a snack. Playing requires complete concentration, and this is part of the appeal for repeat players. A false

bingo is tolerated but not without a few groans. There are snacks (coffee, donuts, etc.) but players certainly come for more than that. They enjoy socializing and bantering with the "boys in blue". Bingo is easy to learn if you spend an afternoon and help support the charity. Doors open a little before noon, and play starts at 1pm. There are some basic rules, imposed by the county, such as that only adults may be present, and the proceeds need to go to a non-profit.

We have concluded that Bingo is here to stay.

In order to run the business, brother knights, and some women will continue to rotate in and out of volunteering for it. It gives our council the ability to make a difference for many charities, to feed the poor, help the homeless, lift up the youth, protect the unborn, and participate in K of C charities like wheelchairs for VA hospitals, Coat for Kids, Food for Families. We as a council are lifted up by this growth in charity, made possible by bingo.

By Jim Blackwell



Barb Behring takes a spin on the Wheel of Fortune



Balls are always clearly displayed and called over the PA system.



Wayne Nuñez concentrates intently as do all the players. Disturbances are discouraged.



Donuts are always a popular snack item, but as you can see, they don't last very long when bingo is being played.



Choir members often come dressed in fancy hats. Whether or not it brings them good luck remains to be seen. The hats certainly add to the good time they're having, though. See the next page for more choir members and their fancy hats.



Friends enjoy sitting together. As you can see, they are having a lot of fun, win or lose. Needless to say, winning is more fun.



Edgar Lecuyer, Bill Bannon, Pete McCabe, and Jim Blackwell are some of the Knights who keep things running smoothly.



It's obvious that this couple are having fun. Smiles are readily available when you're having fun.



This is just a sample of the number of players who show up every Thursday. Just take a look at the parking lot and you'll have an even better idea.



Greg Musick enjoys calling the numbers. No lollygagging allowed!



Mark Godcharles and Tracy Swain express their friendship



Some more choir women enjoying how they look. Who doesn't enjoy being dressed to the nines? By the way, if you know where that expression came from, please let me know.
Jim Hand
Newsletter Editor

The Conversion Story of Claude Newman

JOURNEY OF Faith

I had heard of the story of a death row inmate who had converted

to Christ's Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church after having experienced a Marian apparition but, frankly, you hear about these stories all the time and they turn out to be little more than pious tales rather than historically accurate accounts.

Having spoken with Fr. Malcolm O'Leary, the pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Vicksburg, Mississippi, I'm convinced that the greater aspects of the story are credible. In other words, there's more truth than myth in the tale and the few discrepancies between versions of the story are barely enough to choke a skeptic. Born in Stuttgart, Arkansas, Claude Newman (1923-1944) was an illiterate, black sharecropper raised by his grandmother, Ellen Newman, of Bovina, Mississippi. In 1939, Mrs. Newman married a man named Sid Cook who repeatedly sexually and physically abused her. This angered Claude.

In 1940, at the age of 17, Claude found employment as a farmhand on Ceres Plantation in Bovina, Mississippi and got married. On Dec. 19, 1942, egged on by his friend Elbert Harris, Claude lay in wait at Sid Cook's house. By this time, Sid and Claude's grandmother had separated. As soon as Sid entered his home, Claude shot and killed him, took his money, and fled to his mother's house in Arkansas two days later.

In January, 1943, law enforcement captured Claude and returned him to Vicksburg, Mississippi. He confessed to the crime, but his lawyer urged the court to reject his confession as being coerced. Despite this, Claude was found guilty and sentenced to die in the electric chair. An appeal to retry the case was rejected and he was scheduled to be executed on January 20, 1944.

Prison chaplain Fr. Robert O'Leary (1911-1984)—no relation to the current pastor of St. Mary's whom I interviewed—came to know Claude very well during the latter's imprisonment. While on death row, Claude shared a cellblock with four other prisoners. One night, as the five men sat talking, Claude noticed a Miraculous Medal around his fellow prisoner's neck. Curious, he asked the man as to its meaning. The man either didn't

want to speak or was otherwise furious at Claude's question. He gave it to Claude, who picked it up and placed it around his own neck without fully understanding its significance.

During that night, some sources say, Claude was awakened with a gentle touch upon his wrist. He awoke to find, as he later explained to Fr. O'Leary, "the most beautiful woman that God ever created." Shocked at the appearance of this woman in his prison cell, Claude panicked, but the mysterious Lady calmed Claude saying, "If you would like me to be your Mother, and you would like to be my child, send for a priest of the Catholic Church." At that, the apparition disappeared.

Claude started yelling "A ghost! A ghost!" and demanded to see a Catholic priest.

Fr. O'Leary was called first thing the next morning and met with Claude who nervously told the priest what he experienced the previous night. Moved by the experience, Claude and his cellmates asked to be received into the Catholic Church.

As part of the catechetical instruction, Fr. O'Leary came to understand that Claude was completely illiterate and knew almost nothing about Christianity. He believed in God's existence but knew nothing else.

A few days later, two religious sisters from Fr. O'Leary's parish school visited the prison. They were intrigued to speak to Claude about his remarkable experience. During the same trip, the sisters met some of the women held in the prison. Several of those prisoners had heard about Claude's experience through the prison grapevine and asked the sisters for instruction so that they too might become Catholic.

Several weeks passed, and Fr. O'Leary came to the point of needing to teach the catechumens about the Sacrament of Confession. The sisters sat in on the class.

The priest introduced the sacrament when Claude interrupted him, saying, "Oh, I know about that! The Lady told me that when we go to Confession, we're kneeling down not in front of a priest, but in front of the Cross of

her Son. And that when we're truly sorry for our sins, and confess them, the Blood He shed flows down over us and washes us free from all sins."

Fr. O'Leary and the sisters sat in perfect stunned silence. Claude mis-

took their shock for anger and furiously apologized. "Oh, don't be angry! Don't be angry!" he pleaded. "I didn't mean to just yell that out!"

Overcome with emotion, the priest replied, "We're not angry, Claude. We're just surprised. Have you seen the Lady again?" Claude pulled the priest

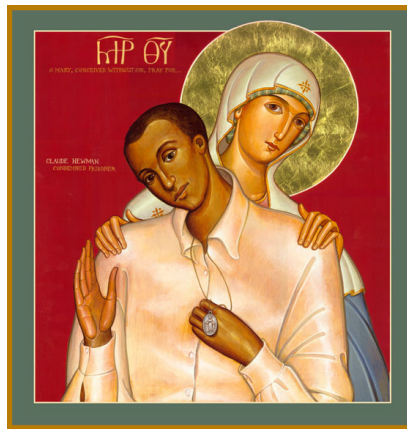
aside not wanting his cellmates to hear what he was about to say. When they were alone, Claude whispered, "She told me that if you doubted me, I was supposed to remind you that you made a vow to her while you were lying in a ditch in Holland in 1940 during the war. She said she's still waiting for you to keep your vow."

Fr. O'Leary later related, "Claude then told me precisely what the vow was." Claude's revelation absolutely convinced Fr. O'Leary that Claude was telling the truth.

Apparently, Fr. O'Leary had promised the Blessed Virgin Mary that he would build a church in honor of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception. The priest was later able to do exactly that in 1947 when he was transferred to Clarksdale, Mississippi to serve a black parish in need of a church building. The Bishop of Natchez, Mississippi had been sent \$5000 by Boston Archbishop Cushing for the Negro missions. The money was exactly what was needed to build the church for which the Blessed Virgin Mary had been waiting.

Stunned, Fr. O'Leary returned with Claude to the discussion on Confession. Claude reminded his fellow prisoners, "Don't be afraid of going to Confession. You're really telling God your sins, not the priest. You know, the Lady said that Confession is something like a telephone. We talk through the priest to God, and God talks back to us through the priest."

A week later, Fr. O'Leary was preparing to teach the prisoners about the Blessed Sacrament. The Sisters were again present for this lesson as



(continued on next page)

well. Unbidden, Claude spoke. "The Lady told me that in Communion, I'll see what looks like a piece of bread but she told me that it's really and truly her Son, and that He'll be with me just as He was with the Lady before He was born in Bethlehem. She told me that I should spend my time like she did during her lifetime with Him—in loving Him, adoring Him, thanking Him, praising Him and asking Him for blessings. I shouldn't be distracted or bothered by anybody else or anything else. Instead, I should spend that thinking about Him."

After this period of catechesis, Claude and his cellmates and the women prisoners were received into the Catholic Church. Claude took the name Claude Jude. The baptismal log at St. Mary's parish in Vicksburg records his baptism as being on January 16, 1944. Fr. O'Leary officiated and Sr. Bena Henken was Claude's sponsor. Fr. Malcolm O'Leary, the current pastor of the parish, verified this for me when I interviewed him.

Claude's execution was scheduled for 12:05 AM on January 20, 1944—just four days later. As a last request, Claude wanted



cake and ice cream for himself and his fellow prisoners saying, "All of my friends are all shook up. The jailer is all shook up. But you don't understand. I'm not going to die; only this body is going to die. I'm going to be with the Lady. So then, I'd like to have a party."

Though the warden was initially reluctant, Fr. O'Leary persuaded him to accept the generosity of a wealthy patron of the parish who supplied the ice cream and cake for the convicts' party.

After the party, Claude requested a Holy Hour with a recital of the Stations of the Cross.

The prisoner received the Viaticum moments prior to his execution and Fr. O'Leary prayed with the condemned man.

Fifteen minutes prior to the execution, Sheriff Williamson halted the procedure, citing that the governor had given Claude a two-week reprieve. Unbeknownst to Claude and Fr. O'Leary, the sheriff and the District Attorney were secretly trying to get a stay of execution for Claude to save his life. However, when Claude found out, he started to cry saying, "But you don't understand! If you ever saw her face, and looked into her eyes, you wouldn't want to live another day!" Claude lamented, "What have I done wrong these past weeks that God would refuse me my

going home?"

Fr. O'Leary later testified that Claude sobbed as one who was completely brokenhearted.

The priest had a sudden inspiration and reminded Claude of a fellow prisoner, James Samuel Hughs, a white prisoner similarly on death row, who hated Claude intensely. Hughs was an ex-Catholic and a convicted murderer. "Maybe Our Blessed Mother wants you to offer this denial of being with her for Hugh's conversion," offered Fr. O'Leary. "Why don't you offer to God every moment that you are separated from your heavenly Mother for this prisoner, so that he won't be separated from God for all eternity."

Two weeks later, Claude was finally put to death by the electric chair on Feb. 4, 1944, having offered the intervening time for the expiation of the sins of the reprobate James Hughs.

Fr. O'Leary later testified to journalists and his fellow priests, and to the current pastor of St. Mary's: "I've never seen anyone go to his death as joyfully and happily. Even the official witnesses and the newspaper reporters were amazed. They said they couldn't understand how anyone could go and sit in the electric chair while at the same time actually beaming with happiness."

Claude had his favorite dessert, coconut pie, on the night before he died. His last words to Fr. O'Leary were, "Father, I'll remember you. Whenever you have a request, ask me, and I'll ask her."

Claude's death notice was printed in the Vicksburg Evening News on the day of his execution. He was buried in the historic African-American Beulah Cemetery in Vicksburg.

On May 19, 1944, three months later, James Hughs was scheduled to be executed for his crimes. Fr. O'Leary said of him, "This man was the filthiest, most immoral person I had ever come across. His hatred for God and for everything spiritual defied description." He refused to speak with any clergyman and showed no remorse for his crimes. Once strapped into the electric chair, he was asked if he had any last words. At that, he let lose a stream of the vilest invective and blasphemies.

Suddenly, Hughs froze as if in horror staring off at the corner of the room. He screams pierced the otherwise respectful silence of the execution chamber. He begged the sheriff to fetch a priest. Fr. O'Leary came for-

ward and the execution chamber was cleared so that the two might speak privately. Hughs gave his confession, suddenly remorseful of his past life and the murders he had committed. Apparently, Hughs had experienced two visions while strapped in the electric chair. The first was of Claude Newman who stood before the Blessed Virgin Mary, her hand resting upon his shoulder. Claude only spoke once saying, "I offered my death in union with Christ on the Cross for your salvation. She has obtained for you this gift of seeing your place in Hell if you don't repent."

The second vision was of Hughs' final disposition if he refused to repent. James Hughs was executed as soon as he had finished his Confession and given the Viaticum.

Now, even if we were to presume that our Lady's apparition wasn't true, even though we have no proof that Claude Newman had lied about it, the burden of proof for all of the rest of these events lies upon the skeptic: Why did Claude convert to the Church having never been catechized ever before?

Why was his testimony so powerful as to then be able to convert several other inmates?

Why was Claude saddened at word of his reprieve?

How did Claude know so much about the sacraments despite his ignorance about every other aspect of Christianity?

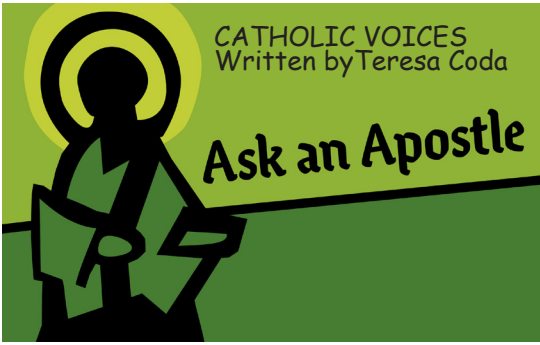
How did he know about Fr. Robert O'Leary's secret vow to the Blessed Virgin Mary?

Why was Claude's conversion enough to convert James Hughs, who was otherwise not given to repentance, let alone spiritual considerations?

Frankly, I was skeptical of the story until I spoke with Fr. Malcolm O'Leary who admitted that he believed it. But does it matter? Whether the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared or not, she was still present in that cell. Why wouldn't she be—five of her children were there as well. In addition, a soul was saved and that saved soul saved others in turn.

As Stuart Chase pointed out, "For those who believe, no proof is necessary. For those who don't believe, no proof is possible." No matter where you fall upon the spectrum of credulity, you might consider looking up the March, 2001 issue of *The Catholic Family News* in which appears John Vennari's article entitled, "The True Account of Prisoner Claude Newman." This article is taken from Fr. Robert O'Leary's 1960's radio broadcast testimony.

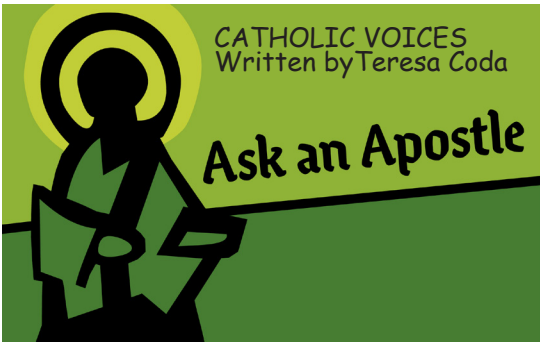
Written by Angelo Stagnaro, for the *National Catholic Register*



Q: My parish has the chalice back at Mass and it makes me uncomfortable because of COVID-19. I do not think it safe. What can I do about this?
A: I have to admit that I was shocked to learn through your question that some parishes have brought the chalice back. I had no idea! I assumed by month six or so of the pandemic (you know, once I had passed the "this will

blow over by Easter" phase of thinking) that churchgoers everywhere had said a collective and final goodbye to the communal cup. I guess I was wrong! This is just to say that your discomfort with the return of the chalice is understandable, and I would bet that you aren't the only person at your parish who has safety concerns. In regard to your "What can I do about this?" quandary, I would first say that you can simply not drink from the cup. The church teaches that the real presence of Christ exists "whole and entire" in the individual elements of the consecrated bread and the consecrated wine; in other words, you don't need to receive both elements of Holy Communion to fully participate in the Eucharist. I sense, however, that you may want to do more than refrain from per-

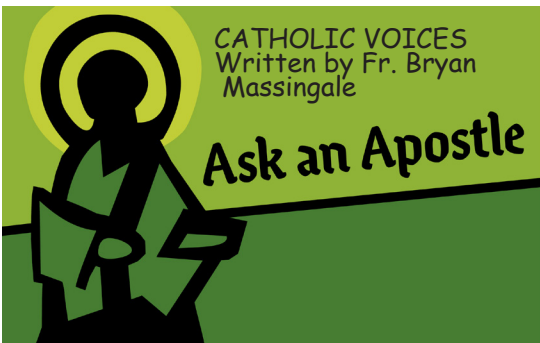
sonal drinking from the cup. You are a part of your parish community, and you potentially have concerns about the safety of others, even as they don't seem to have concerns for themselves. It could be that you wish for the cup to be removed as an option for everyone. If this is true, you should feel empowered to write a letter to your pastor and parish council, or to schedule a visit to discuss the matter of safety and the common good with them. While I don't know what the results would be (In a way, this issue is not so different from the question of mandating vaccines—again, an instance in which policy "cares" for the safety of others more than they seemingly care about it for themselves—and that has been complicated, to say the least), I do think that all members of the body of Christ should feel comfortable using their voices to express their considered thoughts and ideas.



Q: I recently discovered that early in our relationship my now-fiancée had been cheating on me. It was a long time ago (four years), and she was the one who told me about it and said she was sorry, and I've tried to forgive her for it, but it still makes me question our relationship. I want to be forgiving and not hold her past mistakes against her, but I don't

know what to do.
A: I hear in your question that you want to forgive your fiancée but that you are struggling to let go of what happened in the past. I want to commend you for honestly and earnestly grappling with a tough situation, and I'd like to share two thoughts that come to mind as I consider your quandary. First, forgiveness takes time. You mention that you just recently learned of your fiancée's infidelity. This is a hard reality to have discovered, and however long ago it occurred, it is new information for you. New information changes not only how you look at your fiancée now but also how you understand your past four years together, and, well, that's a lot. It's OK to need some time to wrap your mind around this new information, and it's OK to not

immediately feel forgiving toward a person whom you love but who has hurt you. The second thought has to do with how we define forgiveness. Is forgiveness acceptance of what happened in the past, and erasure of any hard feelings surrounding those events? Or is it a willingness to move forward, even as you still feel hurt and possibly angry over what happened? Is forgiveness a feeling, or is it an active choice that we make? Is it something that we will into being, or do we only experience forgiveness of another through the grace of God? I ask you to consider what forgiveness means to you, and to perhaps discuss with your fiancée what forgiveness might look like in your scenario. I suspect that how you answer these questions may impact how the path of forgiveness will take shape in your life and your relationship.



Like many Americans, I have followed the investigation of the events surrounding the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. Listening to the testimonies given during the public hearings, I've felt anger, dismay, and sadness. The witnesses also arouse in me another emotion: admiration. I admire the courage of the Black women poll workers from Georgia who refused to back down in the face

of threats to themselves and their families. I am inspired by the courage of Republican lawmakers who acted for the good of the country over the short-term interests of their political party. I admire the courage of the young White House aide who broke ranks with her elders and spoke her truth concerning the events of that day. In the midst of harrowing violence and grave constitutional danger facing the country, the courage of women and men gives me both relief and hope. The common denominator in all of these people is courage. Traditionally, four virtues are called cardinal—from the Latin word for "hinge." These four—prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude are considered

the chief capacities that enable one to live a moral life. These virtues empower Christians to live lives that more and more imitate Jesus. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, virtues "dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love." Of the cardinal virtues, Thomas Aquinas gives pride of place to courage. He declares that courage (or fortitude) is the condition of every virtue because it provides the strength of will needed to exercise any virtue consistently. Courage is the willingness to do what is right despite obstacles, frustrations, and fear. This is a key point. Aquinas holds that courage is not the absence of fear. Rather, it is the ability to overcome fear. It is the strength of character to persevere in doing the right thing despite being afraid.



The Beheading of St. John the Baptist, Caravaggio, 1608