



COURT CEDAR RAPIDS 1768 · ST. THERESE, THE LITTLE FLOWER

Wisconsin Bus Pilgrimage

July 2025

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

We had a JOYFUL Trip!

- The bus was full! In addition to our **Spiritual Guide, Fr. Chris Podhajsky**, we had 53 pilgrims on the journey.
- Our attendees included:
 - A Carmelite from West NY, NJ.
 - A lady from Lake Helen, FL.
 - A lady from Indiana.
 - A lady from Nortonville, KS (a Court member's cousin).
 - Fourteen Catholic Daughters from our Court, along with three of their spouses.
 - Friends and family of Catholic Daughters.
 - Many other men and women from around the state of Iowa.
- We were also blessed to have a great driver, **Mike Mitchell**, from Windstar Lines who is happy to make more pilgrimages with our group.

Thank You for Joining Us!

Door Prizes!



This is an acrylic replica of the stained-glass window of **Our Lady of Champion** as she appears to Adele Brise located in **Mother of Mercy Hall** on the grounds of the Shrine. It makes a great sun catcher or Christmas tree ornament. It is a perfect gift as a reminder of the Shrine.

(3) were won: **Louis Winchip, Uyen Tran, and Jeanne Smith.**

This is an acrylic replica of the stained-glass window of **St. Joseph** located in **Mother of Mercy Hall** on the grounds of the Shrine. Both replicas are available at the Gift Shop or you can order them online.

(2) were won: **Marla Tursi and Mary Jo Evers**



“The Scarlet and the Black” is a 1983 film. It tells the thrilling true story of an Irish priest in the Vatican who organizes an underground network in Rome to hide the Jews and others from the Nazis during WWII. Gregory Peck stars as Msgr. Hugh O’Flaherty, who uses disguises to do his dangerous work and hide from the ruthless Nazi commander (Christopher Plummer) who wants to murder the priest.



(1) copy was won by **Maria Pranger**

Many photos have been shared from our pilgrimage. Thank you! Following is a sample of those photos. All photos may be viewed at our CDA website.

<https://catholicdaughterscr.org/bus-pilgrimage>

Our Journey: June 25-26, 2025

Day 1: Our Lady of Champion

- Our bus picked us up in the parking lot of **St. Pius X Catholic Church** and we were on the road at 6:00 AM as planned. We stopped in Dyersville to pick up **Fr. Chris Podhajsky** and a couple from LaPorte City, the **Pranger’s**.
- The day was cooler than expected with a light rain most of the day.
- En route we prayed the Rosary and several prayers that were included in an impromptu prayer book for the trip.
- A few ladies also brought religious DVD’s to share with the group and **Fr. Chris** selected from them for our on-board entertainment.
- Several drawings were held for miniature stained-glass windows, including three of **Our Lady of Champion**. Two additional drawings for **St. Joseph** miniature stained-glass windows were held on Thursday.
- Upon our arrival at Our Lady of Champion, we were welcomed with a light lunch. Before we explored the grounds, **Pilgrimage Coordinator Kathy Ciha** provided us with an engaging history of the **Shrine** and the life of **Adele Brise**.
- **Fr. Chris** celebrated Mass at 4:00 PM. Before heading to our hotel, **Fr. Chris** led us in the Rosary around the Rosary Walk.

Day 2: Holy Hill

- Shortly after arriving at Holy Hill, we gathered for Mass in the Basilica. Mass was at 11:00 AM and **Fr. Chris** concelebrated with **Fr. Mark-Joseph DeVelis, O.C.D.**, rector of Holy Hill Shrine. Fr. Mark-Joseph was very pleased to have our group join them. Following Mass, he spoke about the Shrine and its history.
- Immediately after Mass, we enjoyed a light lunch in the **Holy Hill Cafe**.
- With time to explore the grounds, several pilgrims climbed the 178 steps up the **Scenic Tower** at Holy Hill. Many had the sweat to show for their efforts.
- Many visited the **Chapel of St. Therese** and/or walked the hilly **Stations of the Cross**, before we departed for the day.
- On our return trip we viewed the movie, “The Scarlet and the Black,” one of **Fr. Chris’** favorite movies that takes place during WWII. Afterwards he gave the DVD away in a drawing.
- **Dinner in Dyersville**, included a blessing of all items purchased at the gift shops.
- As we were heading to dinner there was a downpour, but all survived.
- We then returned to **St. Pius X** around 9:30 PM as planned.



The Basilica of St. Francis Xavier...
as we arrive in Dyersville on Day 2.

The Basilica has been a Catholic treasure among the cornfields of Iowa for 125 years, welcoming visitors to an experience of both beauty and prayer.

Visit the Basilica website www.xavierbasilica.com

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion:

The following text (and a few on page 4) is from **Kim Smith's** Facebook page. She has done a beautiful job of describing her photos. Thank you for sharing, Kim.

On Day 1, we were at the **Our Lady of Champion Shrine**. The 1859 apparitions of Our Lady of Champion to Belgian seer, **Adele Brise**, are the only approved Marian apparitions in the United States. Note that these apparitions occurred the year after **Our Lady appeared to Bernadette in Lourdes, France in 1858!**

Part of our Lady's message to Adele was: "I am the Queen of Heaven, who prays for the conversion of sinners, and I wish you to do the same. Gather the children in this wild country and teach them what they should know for salvation. Teach them their catechism, how to sign themselves with the Sign of the Cross, and how to approach the Sacraments. That is what I wish you to do. Go and fear nothing. I will help you."

To learn more about this apparition and the Peshtigo Fire, click the link below:

<https://championshrine.org/our-story/>

Here are some photos from Day 1 of our pilgrimage. Captions have been added to the photos when it is helpful.



Photos:

(Top, left): **Fr. Chris** leads the Rosary on the bus;

(Top, right): Pilgrims and **Fr. Chris** on the bus.

(Left, center): Our bus driver **Mike Mitchell** as we approach our first stop, Our Lady of Champion.

(Above): The bus at our first rest stop.

(Left): Entrance sign to The Shrine of Our Lady of Champion.



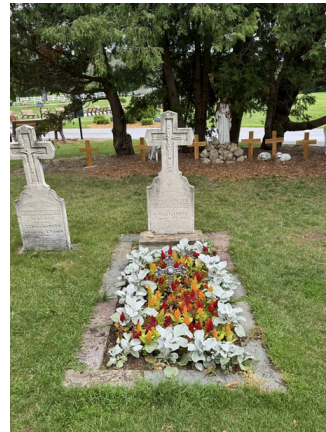
Photos (4):

(Top, L.): OLOC Grotto

(Top, R.): Statue of OLOC as Adele Brise described her.

(Left): Gravesite of Adele Brise.

(Bottom): Sign by Adele's grave.



Adele's Gravesite

Adele Brise, the seer of the Blessed Virgin Mary, died on July 5, 1896. Her simple gravestone reads, "Sacred Cross under thy shadow I rest and hope." She is buried alongside some of her companions who helped her on her mission and children who were taught at the schoolhouse. Many stop to pray at Adele's grave, reflecting on her life and asking for her intercession in time of need.

OLOC (Our Lady of Champion)



(Left): Inside the **Adoration Chapel** ... it is near this chapel and the **Adoration Oratory** (one floor below) where Our Lady of Champion is thought to have appeared to **Adele Brise** in 1859.

(Below): After lunch, OLOC Pilgrimage Coordinator, **Kathy Ciha**, (Pictured in pink) gave a History Talk on the Shrine and the Marian Apparitions.



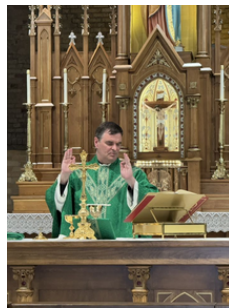
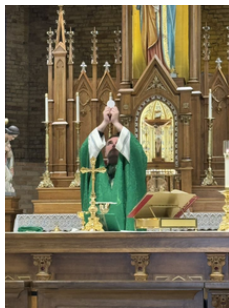
(Above): The Statue of Our Lady in the Adoration Oratory.



(Left): This sign marks the sacred ground preserved from the Peshtigo Fire in 1871. (Right) Photo of the area.

The Sacred Ground Preserved from Fire

The path along the Rosary Walk outlines the original grounds to which many faithful people from the surrounding area fled during the Great Fire on October 8, 1871 (commonly known as the Peshtigo Fire). Lifting a statue in procession, they prayed the Rosary all through the night, asking for the intercession of the Blessed Mother. The fire burned around the perimeter of the Shrine but never crossed over; some even said that the wooden fence posts along the boundary were charred on one side and untouched on the other. On the morning of October 9th - the 12th anniversary of Our Lady's final apparition to Adele - the fire was put out, the sacred site where Our Lady appeared was preserved entirely, and all those who fled there were saved. The grounds were described as "An emerald isle in a sea of ashes."



(Left): Fr. Chris gives his homily at Mass at the Adoration Chapel. (Center & Right): Eucharistic Prayer.



(Left & center): **Our Lady of Fatima** Grotto; (Right): **St. Francis of Assisi** Grotto

(Right): **Our Lady of Champion** was originally known as **Our Lady of Good Help**. The name was changed to identify the location where Mary appeared, Champion, Wisconsin.



The Apparition Chapel

The sacred space near the Apparition Chapel and the Oratory is believed to be where Adele saw the Blessed Mother in 1859.

The current Apparition Chapel is the fourth chapel to have been built on the grounds and was constructed in 1942. The original chapel was built in 1859, the same year the apparition took place, by Adele's father, Lambert Brise. Only 10 ft. x 12 ft., the small chapel was built for the Brise family to pray at.



Photos: (Top 2): Relics of the 12 Apostles and other saints.

(Bottom, l): Reliquary containing wood from the two trees (Maple and Hemlock) between which Our Lady appeared to Adele Brise.

All are located in the Adoration Oratory.

Although the maple and hemlock trees where the apparitions took place were cut down, their tree roots were recovered and preserved. These are two of the last remaining pieces of those roots.



Fr. Chris praying the rosary with pilgrims on the Rosary Walk.



(Left): One of the signs on the Rosary Walk.

The Mysteries of the Rosary on the **Rosary Walk**. The **Rosary Walk** traces the footsteps taken by the faithful who prayed for Mary's protection during the Peshtigo Fire in 1871. You may start at either end of the walk as the Mysteries appear on each sign, in order, as you are walking the path.

On Day 2 of our Marian pilgrimage we went to the **Basilica and National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians at Holy Hill.**

Originally 1,409 feet above sea level, “Holy Hill” was the highest elevation in the southeastern part of what is now Wisconsin. For more information about the history of the Shrine, visit www.holyhill.com



Pilgrims with **Fr. Chris** (back left) in front of the Basilica at Holy Hill. (Kim Smith is taking the photo.)

(Above): **The Holy Hill Basilica**, up close and from a distance.

(Below): **1858 Cross** - The oldest relic at Holy Hill.



(Left, center): Nave of the Basilica; (Right): Beautiful stained-glass windows throughout the church representing the life of Mary.



(Left): **Fourteen members of Court #1768** attended the Pilgrimage.



(Right): **Outdoor Way of the Cross**: The entrance is at the Eleventh Station and concludes at the Fourteenth Station, located just outside the Lower Church. It features nearly life-size figures sculpted from Bedford stone by Joseph Aszklar of Milwaukee. This is the 14th Station of the Cross.



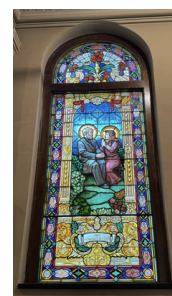
Shrine Chapel: Located just off the **main Church**, the Shrine Chapel houses a rare statue of Mary. The youthful Virgin Mother offers her Son, Jesus Christ, to those who kneel before her. The statue was made by the Pustet Co. of Munich and was exhibited at the 1876 World's Fair in Philadelphia.

Discarded crutches are outside the **Shrine Chapel**, representing healings that have taken place as the power of Mary's intercession for her son's healing mercy. The earliest recorded healing dates from 1847 when the wife of a farmer was healed after going to the hill to pray.



Chapel of St. Therese: Also called the **Lower Church**, this Chapel, located one level below the Main Church, is dedicated to **St. Therese of the Child Jesus**, popularly known as the **Little Flower**. Considered possibly the most popular saint of recent centuries, she was a Discalced Carmelite nun from Lisieux, France who died in 1897.

Stained-glass windows of the life of **St. Therese** are found on both sides of the chapel. In this window, Therese as a young girl asks her father Louis' permission to enter the Carmel Convent at Lisieux. This conversation took place in their backyard.



(Left): **Fr. Chris Podhajsky** concelebrates Mass with **Fr. Mark-Joseph DeVilis**. (Right): Fr. Mark-Joseph talks about the history of the Shrine.



(Right): **Billie Burhite, Anna Johnston, & Noreen Koch** climb the **Scenic Tower**. The Tower stretches 192 feet from its base to the tip of its spire. Those who complete the 178-stair climb will find a breathtaking panoramic view of the Kettle Moraine area.

